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ROSE DOUGLAS;

OR,

SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY PARISH:

BEING THE

Autobiography of a Scotch Minister's Daughter.

BY

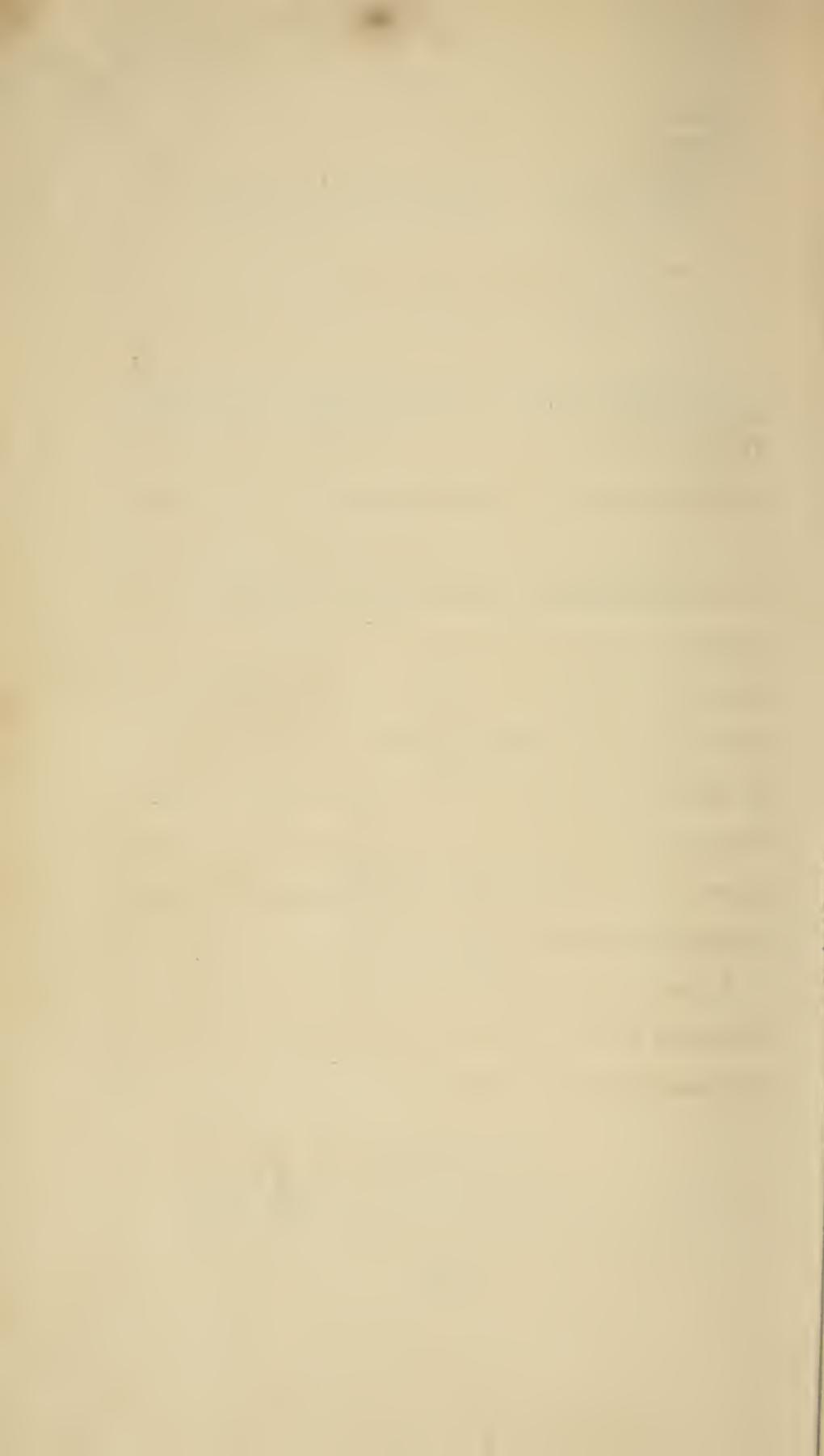
S. R. W.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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DEDICATION.

WHILE reading lately the preface to a work by a highly esteemed and popular author of my own country, I lighted upon the following passage: “ He who dedicates, more than expresses his gratitude. By his choice of a patron, he intimates also, as if by specimen, the class which he would fain select as his readers ; or, as I should perhaps rather express myself, he specifies the peculiar cast of intellect and range of acquirement from which he anticipates the justest appreciation of his labours, and the deepest interest in the subject of them.”

I need say nothing more. This little Work is dedicated to the “ Ministers’ Daughters” of Scotland, by their affectionate Sister,

A MINISTER’S DAUGHTER.

P R E F A C E.

IN sending forth to the world this “Autobiography of a Minister’s Daughter,” it may be needful to state, that the early portion was written many years ago, when the life therein described was fresh and familiar to my mind. It was thrown aside for a long time; but, by the advice of a kind and judicious friend, I subsequently resumed my narrative, and it was nearly completed when a recent and popular work, “The Life of Mrs Margaret Maitland of Sunnyside,” appeared.

I hesitated to intrude upon ground which might thus seem to be pre-occupied, and that so worthily. But these scruples were overruled by more competent judges of such matters than myself. I was reminded that there is no essential similarity between the stories —that any apparent resemblance is rather in some exterior relations than in the incidents delineated, or

in the general current of the thoughts ; and I am emboldened to hope, that my plain unpretending narrative may not be unacceptable to the class of readers to whom such “ simple annals ” possess an interest. Whatever character may be assigned to this work by a discerning public, it is at least drawn from no other source than my own experience and observation.

S. R. W.

EDINBURGH, February 1851.

ROSE DOUGLAS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PARISH.

A wild and silent tract in truth it was,
With heathy moorland stretching far and wide
To meet the purple hills. But 'mong those lay
Some green and sheltered dells, with woods and streams,
Where dwelt a simple race—our Home was there.

I WAS an only child. My father was a clergyman, or as it is designated in this country, a minister of the Church of Scotland.

The parish over which he exercised his pastoral care is situated in the upper district of Lanarkshire. The scenery is somewhat wild and moorland. The close neighbourhood of the hills, however, redeems the waste from the sameness which generally attends such landscapes ; and though bare, it is not monotonous. One portion of the parish possesses a good soil, and is finely wooded ; but, upon the whole, black moss and purple heath are the characteristics of the district, and the population is somewhat scanty and scattered.

It was principally composed, at the period of which I write, of small farmers and their labourers ; men who in general were born on the same soil which their fathers had cultivated, and whose habits of life were frugal and simple.

The dwellings, or steadings (as they were called), of the farmers, were mostly situated at considerable distances from each other ; some of them in very lonely situations ; but their inhabitants were accustomed to the solitude, and were sufficiently interested in their own pursuits.

The rest of the population, which consisted of labourers and a few weavers and other artisans (some of whom held small feus, and were deservedly considered a respectable class), was contained in the various small villages scattered among the moors. The habitations which formed these little groups were hardly to be discerned from the waste on which they were situated. Low, rude, and irregularly clustered together, scarcely differing in colour, and not much in height, from the broken soil around them, by the eye of a stranger they might almost have been overlooked. A small patch of cultivated land, redeemed from the moss, generally lay to the front or rear of these cottages, on which the inhabitants raised (almost promiscuously) oats, potatoes, and green kail. Wretched as these dwellings were in outward appearance, they often possessed much homely comfort in their interior arrangements. There were the warm and kindly peat fire, around which in the evenings the

whole family usually assembled, the well-arranged *bink*, and the corner *aumrie*, whose open door afforded the stranger a glimpse of various articles of old-fashioned china and crystal. One thing was never missing in the apartment, a spinning-wheel, the “gude-wife’s” pride and solace, and which itself spoke of industry and comfort.

The inhabitants of these cottages resembled their dwellings. Although rude in their external appearance and habits, they were industrious and honest, and possessed of much shrewdness and sagacity. Few of them could be called illiterate; many of them had read much, though the works they perused were all of one class. Controversial writings on religious subjects were the favourites amongst them—a few songs and ballads formed the only variety. Still their knowledge was derived from the pulpit as much as from authors.

Weary and toilworn though the hard-wrought cottar might be, his evenings were often devoted to study. Seated in his own chair by the fire, and surrounded by his family silently plying their tasks, he would occasionally read aloud for their benefit, making of course his own comments as he proceeded, what appeared to him to be striking and appropriate passages from some work, the composition perhaps of one of Scotland’s old but able divines. At such times he was generally listened to with quiet and even devout attention; the children were hushed, and indeed were fully aware of the consequences that would follow the interruption of such an employment. The farmers and cottars’

hearts were thus often the scenes of much piety and scriptural knowledge. Many of these men were descended from some of Scotland's martyred champions in the cause of truth. Such lineage was their glory and boast ; and was perhaps a means of keeping awake that spirit of inquiry, and that noble enthusiasm which once animated thousands, and adorned our annals with martyrs.

On the Sabbath, however, the cottager appeared to the greatest advantage. Arrayed in his best and well-preserved suit, and accompanied by his family in the decent and sober garments becoming their station, he was to be seen in his place in the humble church, listening to his pastor with not only the eagerness and devotion of a Christian thirsting for instruction, but with the ability and acuteness of an able though homely critic. In the evening he carefully catechised his family, without exception, and then concluded with solemn devotional exercises. Such, O Scotland, were once thy peculiar children. Such, I trust, are many still, though the seeds of indifference and unbelief are now thickly sown even over thy purple hills, and among thy secluded valleys. Still, though the beauty of thy national character seems fading away for ever, there will surely in some of thy solitary glens, and in the lonelier recesses of thy mountains, be left a remnant, who, with the primitive tastes and habits of their fathers, will still unite in loving and reverencing that faith for which these fought and died, sealing their testimony with their blood !

The parish of Auchtermuir is situated at the distance of several miles from the county town ; and as no great road lay in our direction, we led a very retired life.

There were indeed several families, not exactly in our immediate neighbourhood, but within walking distance. Nothing, however, like daily or even weekly intercourse took place between us. The ease and constant movements of modern society would have been felt by them, not only as wrong, but irksome, requiring hourly attention to dress, and breaking in upon all habits of order and frugality. In their eyes they would have been associated with idleness and vice. Formal calls were therefore only exchanged once or twice in the year, and occasional tea-drinkings brought us together ; each family, unless visited by sickness, making it a point to assemble their neighbours once, and at most twice, every year.

There were the surgeon and his wife. They were our most distant neighbours, with the exception of an old widow lady, who, with only one servant, lived in a very solitary house near the hills. There was the schoolmaster's family. There were three elderly maiden ladies who rented an old-fashioned mansion-house, a mile and a half from us, on the road to the town ; and a writer to the signet's family from Edinburgh, consisting of father and son, two young ladies and their former governess. This last family only lived among us during the summer months, and were very proud, very stiff in their manners, and somewhat dis-

agreeable. These were the only families within visiting distance. A few lairds (in England they would be called small proprietors) there were around us, most of whom were unmarried, and led pretty hard rough lives. We occasionally met them at some of the tea-drinkings I have mentioned.

The principal proprietor and patron of the parish seldom visited his mansion-house. Indeed we knew but little of him. Report described him as an old man of very retired habits and peculiar tastes,—something of a misanthrope. He was a baronet of old descent, and possessed a large estate in Ross-shire in addition to his property with us. His family, which consisted of an only son and three daughters, never honoured our neighbourhood by a visit, and a few old servants were only to be found year after year at the house.

It was a fine old place; half ruinous indeed from neglect, and not imposing in extent, but striking and picturesque. It stood almost buried in wood, a short distance from the manse. The interior was gloomy and inconvenient, and but scantily furnished. Long cold stone passages, rooms in ranges, to which you ascended or descended by short flights of steps, creaking stairs which betrayed every footstep, and a kitchen fireplace which might have held half the population of the parish on its benches, claimed at least respect for their antiquity.

On one side of the house, and extending partly along the back, lay the old-fashioned garden, inter-

sected with formal walks and gigantic hedges. The walks were mostly grass-grown, and the hedges had overshot all limits. Every thing within or without the building wore an air of neglect, or, as a stranger would have supposed, poverty. The house, as I have said, was closely surrounded by thick woods, which Sir Robert did not neglect, as they were periodically thinned—he knew the value of timber. In short, it was just such a mansion as may be seen in the present day in almost any part of Scotland, where want of society, or want of means, induces the owner to leave his dwelling to comparative decay.

From my childhood upwards, I enjoyed free access to the house and grounds, which latter were not extensive. The old housekeeper was a regular attendant upon my father's ministry, and my greatest pleasure, even when a child, was to wander with her through the dreary passages, whose narrow windows were obscured by ivy, and among the desolate apartments. The fading portraits on the walls were objects of peculiar interest to me, as representing the heroes of the many legends with which my companion regaled my ears. To each belonged a separate history and charm. They were the waking dreams of my childhood. The echoes of that venerable mansion are still sounding in my ears, and recalling images of bygone days. They are melancholy as the knell of departed friends, for they speak of joys that return no more.

The house, I have said, stood but a short distance from the manse. Its woods sheltered us on one side.

The road swept past its ancient and massive gateway, formed by an arch, and surmounted by a greyhound couchant, to our dwelling. The manse lay in a nook occasioned by a sudden sweep of the river. The road terminated with us, so that we were truly most retired and sequestered—not lonely, we never felt it so. With the exception of those who came purposely to visit us, or a few boys on occasional bird-nesting expeditions, we saw no creature save on Sabbaths.

The manse of Auchtermuir and its little church were situated, as was the old custom, close by each other. They were upwards of a mile from the nearest village. All manses of ancient date seem to have been built on the same plan. My father's was small, but unlike most, it was compact and comfortable. It contained few rooms, but our family was not a large one. It was a pleasant dwelling, so quiet and solitary. A rustic gate opened on a short entrance-road, bordered on one side by lilac trees and a hedge of sweet-briar, and on the other by a line of noble beeches, which made it a very shady, sweet lounging-place in summer. There was a stripe of ground strewn with gravel, wide enough to turn a carriage, in front of the house, and beyond this was a piece of turf kept always beautifully smooth, surrounded with a border of flowers which was under my particular care, and was called by the servants, "Miss Rose's garden." Two pear trees, famous through the parish for their fruit, for my father understood gardening, covered the front walls, and the little porch which sheltered the door was gay

with honeysuckle and the small twining rose. What a bloom and beauty were there in the beginning of summer, just as the sweet spring was leaving us! What a flush of blossoms on the pear trees, like new-fallen snow, almost concealing the small windows of the old-fashioned house! What bunches of lilac, large as a child's head, along the whole pathway! What auriculas and polyanthus, and what a sweetness and fragrance blended from the whole! Oh! it was a sweet spot!

Behind the house lay the garden. It was of tolerable extent, and surrounded by a double hedge of great height and thickness, kept always carefully trimmed. An opening in it on one side, secured by a little gate, led into that part of the glebe which was usually kept in pasture for the cow. The garden was principally devoted to vegetables and fruit, the latter of which we sold, sometimes to great advantage, to a person in the neighbouring town, who supplied the Glasgow markets. My father's stipend was small, but a good fruit-year added considerably to our income. We had a few flower-beds under the windows, which my father personally superintended, as the trees and vegetables, in addition to his other employments, required all our servant's attention.

Opposite to the manse was the parish burying-ground, in the midst of which stood the little simple church. It was built in the form of a cross, and was very rude and ancient. On its outer walls were several monuments, old, defaced, and principally be-

longing to the great family of the neighbourhood. The churchyard was visible from our upper windows, but the thickness of the shrubs and trees concealed it from our sitting rooms, which were on the ground floor. A low and ivy-covered wall was the only separation between it and our small shrubbery. My little bedroom looked full upon it, through an opening in the trees, and I remember in my young days, before I knew what real sorrow was, how sad and yet how strangely pleasing it was to stand in the window, and gaze upon the shadows made by the church walls, and on the moonlight sleeping quietly on the surrounding graves. It was a peaceful and a lovely scene, and I was a dreaming girl then, but I have often since thought (though it is a foolish fancy to mention) that I could sleep the long last sleep happier there than in any other spot.

How habit can reconcile one to things ! To any one unaccustomed to such a situation, the near neighbourhood of a burial-ground, and especially in the times of which I write (for I am an old woman, my friends), would have been disagreeable and repugnant. I did not feel it so. I had been habituated from my childhood to look upon it, nay, even to love it ; for in the bright calm evenings of summer, my father would often lead me to my mother's grave, and there tell me such tales of her goodness and worth, and of that happy and glorious land to which she had fled, that my soul, child as I was, was filled with tenderness and wonder. To me, therefore, it was associated with

beautiful hopes and yearning affections, unsullied save by the sadness which clouded my father's brow when we visited it ; and its vicinity awakened no superstitious feelings.

In my early days, the traces of those gloomy superstitions, which had their origin in remote and barbarous ages, had not yet vanished before the increasing light of instruction and civilisation. In so retired a district as ours, they were almost in primitive force. The churchyard was an object of peculiar dread ; and even the close proximity of the manse was scarcely felt a sufficient protection by the benighted rustic, whose evil fate led him near to its precincts.

I have remarked that the river swept near us, not so broad and majestic, of course, as it appears farther down the valley, but still a considerable stream. It was almost concealed from our sight by the trees, but we caught glimpses of it winding away in the distance, with its green banks sloping to the water's edge. And many a patient angler have I watched from the opposite side, a whole summer's noon, dipping his line into the water, and sometimes gazing curiously at our little paradise, as if he coveted such a resting-place

CHAPTER II.

A COUNTRY CLERGYMAN—MY CHILDHOOD AND
EDUCATION.

My father was the pastor then,
A man of meek and simple grace :
There was no eye in strath or glen
That did not love to see his face.
My sisters, and we brothers three,
He taught to tread the path he trod ;
But, ah ! no soother now had he,
My mother was with God.

MY father had obtained his living through patronage ; but his people truly loved and esteemed him. Previous to his presentation, he had been tutor in a family nearly connected with Sir Robert Crawford, the patron of Auchtermuir. There was a young lady in the house who was a poor relation. An attachment having been discovered between the quiet thoughtful tutor and the gentle girl, whose position was so like his own, except that she received no salary, a family council was held, when it was finally resolved that Sir Robert, then a dashing young man of eight-and-twenty, should be petitioned to present Mr Douglas to the living of Auchtermuir, which happened fortunately to be then

vacant. As Sir Robert graciously inclined his ear, the matter was soon arranged. Glad to get rid of my mother, whose maintenance they felt a burden, all preliminaries were quickly despatched ; the marriage took place in the presence of the family, and the bride, dismissed with as few presents as decency warranted, followed her husband to her new home as to an earthly paradise.

There they arranged their plans. Loving one another, anxious to perform the duties of the situation in which God had placed them, tremblingly alive as both were to its calls and responsibilities, they set themselves down with much prayer and humility to the execution of the task. Thus they lived for some years. Attachment soon sprang up between the minister and his flock. They saw he was in earnest, and valued him accordingly. *She* helped him as only a pious and loving woman can do, and, but for one thing, they might have been too happy. Child after child had been born, and then suddenly removed from them. My mother's constitution was delicate. Her children, till I was born, never survived their infancy : it was the only saddening circumstance connected with their union. The utmost care could not prolong the existence of the infants beyond a few weeks. At last I was born. My mother seemed to recover better than she had ever formerly done ; and the midwife, who had attended her during all her confinements, cast a gleam of hope on the parents' hearts by unequivocally declaring me a healthy child, and likely to survive.

Alas ! my life was purchased at the price of that sweet mother's. A week after my birth, she began to droop, and within six weeks, a rapid consumption separated her from her sorrowing husband and the infant who had been given to their prayers. She died "strong in faith," comforting her husband, and leaving her blessing for their child.

Her death had a great effect upon my father's spirits. He was naturally quiet and reserved, and he now seemed to shrink from any society into which duty did not call him. He was submissive. His head was bowed meekly to the stroke, but he drooped under it. It was sanctified to him, but there was not an hour of the day in which he did not miss her. She had been his helper in every good work, his soother in all trials, his constant, zealous, and most affectionate companion. She was the spirit of his home, the wife of his youth. Ah ! poor father, how desolate he was !

It was long, of course, before I could fill even in a small degree the place of her he had lost. Unconscious child ! ignorant of what my birth had cost, I rapidly threw under a healthy country nurse. From the first, though rather a small infant, I was lively and vigorous. My father's anxious eye, constantly as it watched me, could detect no symptom of that decay which had formerly proved so fatal. God, who had seen good to remove the desire of his eyes, seemed mercifully purposing to console him by sparing this little one.

I was carried several times every day into the par-

lour by my nurse to be exhibited, dressed with a little black ribbon on my tiny cap in memory of my mother ; and when I grew older, and essayed to use my limbs, I was often left for a time by his desire to crawl on the carpet beside him. I soon learnt to love, and to wish to be with him. I can almost fancy, though my age at the time makes it doubtful, that I have a remembrance of the wistful look of his face as he watched my childish movements through the room. I was named Rose after my mother, and fortunately I resembled her. Years wore on, while each added to my strength and growth, and my father's anxious looks gradually softened down. His cheerfulness increased, and his health, which had somewhat drooped, revived also. I was seldom long absent from him. But, while he reared me with the utmost tenderness, I was early trained to obedience. If I obtained leave to be with him in his study, I must take my doll and remain quiet, otherwise I was gently dismissed. I followed him all about the garden and fields, sometimes even into the nearest cottages, where the “motherless bairn” was always kindly welcomed.

I was the pet of the house. The two servant-girls spoiled me, and let me do just as I liked. The old man-servant, who had been with my father since he came to the parish, was as tender as the rest. He liked me to toddle about the garden after him, gave me daily rides in his wheelbarrow, and often kept red-cheeked apples in his pocket for me. Honest old John ! how well do I remember that half quizzical

face, red as one of his own apples, and furrowed by approaching age,—that clear shrewd eye, that was half hidden beneath his shaggy eyebrows, twinkling at times with such sly covert humour, especially when addressing “women-folks.” Then his dress—the coarse blue coat, with its large metal buttons,—the corduroy shorts, and the thick woollen stockings meeting them at the knee,—the blue bonnet with its red tag surmounting all. I was his plaything, his companion ; and many an hour, when the rest of the household were engaged, was I committed to his care. He dearly loved flowers, and taught me to love them too. Nothing but beauty and order ever met my eyes, except in some of the poor cottages which I occasionally entered. My father’s tastes were simple and refined, and he sought to cultivate mine accordingly. The presence of beauty must refine those in constant contact with it, and every year developed my sense of the beautiful,—a source of exquisite gratification where it exists. It may be carried, however, into an extreme, unfitting one for the rough and ugly realities which attend life. It is unfortunate when it is so.

Till I was ten years old, I received no lessons except from my father. How beautiful and impressive they were! In early childhood his knee was always my seat, while he poured into my ear the simple and sublime precepts of the Scriptures; and when I grew older, a stool at his feet was always my morning and evening position.

The scene is still before me,—the little parlour with its neat but simple furniture ; the old oaken cabinet, with its strange fantastic carving, that used to puzzle my childish imagination ; the bright and glowing hearth ; and especially the ancient leather-covered chair, in which my father always sat ; the light from the candles which stood on a little table near him, gleaming on his pale and thoughtful brow, and gentle yet melancholy features. Oh ! how often does that scene return to me, till I can almost believe that I hear the clear low voice of other years repeat, as I sit again in childhood at his feet, some solemn and interesting passage of biblical history, or call on the God he served to bless and protect his motherless child. In after-days, when fate had removed me far from my early home and all I loved, how often have these tones come to me like a voice in the wild desert, whispering peace and consolation.

There being, of course, no proper school near us, my father, when I had reached my tenth year, was somewhat puzzled what to do with me. In whatever was mental, I had certainly no need of any other instructor, as he himself was eminently qualified for the office. But there were other acquirements indispensable to one of my sex and station. My father would have been exposed to much anxiety on my account, as neither his limited income nor his tenderness permitted him to entertain the idea of sending me to any distant seminary, if my kind friend the housekeeper at the Craiglands (Sir Robert Crawford's place) had not come

forward and offered her services in training me to all those important and housewifely duties, which it was necessary for me to learn.

There was great kindness in this offer of Mrs Johnstone's, which I need not say was gratefully accepted. But my visits to the old house were already so frequent, and my prattle so amusing to the old woman, who was one of those to whom children, as if by instinct, attach themselves, that my company had become almost necessary to her. The house, too, was very lonely, especially in winter. I possessed another recommendation in her eyes—I was a motherless child. She was quite competent to teach me all that it was really necessary I should know. She was a mistress of needlework, and enjoyed great reputation among her neighbours for the skill with which she made preserves and nourishing broths and jellies for the sick.

I now spent the greater part of every forenoon at the Craiglands. My arrival generally found the old housekeeper in a small matted apartment, near the kitchen, which was devoted to her peculiar use. "It was warm," she said, "and suited her rheumatism." There would she be sitting, if it was summer, in the deep embrasure of an old-fashioned window, in her own high-backed chair, for she loved no new inventions, with her knitting on her lap, her large Bible open upon a little table beside her, and her green spectacle-case as a mark between the leaves. Thus would she sit, while the breeze rustled among the ivy

which overhung her window, scarcely, however, disturbing Puss, who, nearly as reverend-looking as her mistress, lay on the sill, basking drowsily in the sunshine, and dreaming doubtless of past joys and ancient captives. In winter, the scene was only so far changed, that the good dame's seat was removed from the window to the hearth: in all other respects it was the same.

How I loved that good old woman! And she indeed repaid my affection with the care and tenderness of a mother. She knitted me warm woollen stockings for winter. She herself prepared all my under-clothing, and kept it in proper order. The most tempting sweetmeats, made by her own skilful hands, were her daily gift; and no doubt, till I was of an age to take a deep interest in the wild tales and traditionary lore, of which she possessed an uncommon store, and which afterwards produced a powerful impression on my mind, these formed the principal inducement to my visits to the matted chamber.

By the time I was sixteen, I had acquired as much knowledge of the details of housekeeping, and of the now almost neglected art of needlework, as was to be expected from the pupil of such an adept in both as my good and kind friend Mrs Johnstone. But, at that period, my mind became engrossed by a newly discovered pleasure. In my rambles through the old rooms, I had found in the library, as one of the apartments continued to be called, a parcel of old romances.

This species of composition was entirely new to me, for my father's shelves contained only volumes of a grave and solid description, with the exception of the classics, and some lighter works of English literature, and I plunged into it with avidity. Whole mornings were now spent in the secluded library, in utter forgetfulness of everything but the volume I perused; and when compelled to quit it, the earliest opportunity saw me hurrying back to the same spot. The influence of these works over my imagination was soon perceptible. Every other occupation grew, as long as they lasted, irksome and unsatisfactory. Brought up in simplicity and retirement, and entirely ignorant of the world, I was charmed by the pictures of life painted in these books; and for the first time sighed over the seclusion in which we lived. I began to weave romances for myself—I fancied a hero in every stranger; and a wandering pedlar I often transformed into something very suspicious.

I did not like to confess to my father the nature of my new studies. Something told me that he could not approve of them; and unable to resign a gratification to which I had become so partial, I was silent on the subject, though my conscience loudly checked me. Mrs Johnstone indulged me too much, and was too ignorant of the nature of the works I perused, to interfere with my pastime, though she warned me against sitting in the library for fear of cold. The old servants indeed shook their heads, and wondered what

Miss Rose could see in that old gousty uncanny-like room. But, in spite of their warnings, time wore on, and I continued my visits, undisturbed by either ghost or goblin.

CHAPTER III.

Thou rememb'rest the house—the home of our childhood ;
High and white were its walls, stained with the damp of years :
There afar did we dwell from the noise of cities
 In the old, old time.

OUR household consisted of two female servants and one man. John, the man-servant, was an important person. He had been long with us ; and exercised more authority in the family than my father himself. He had the care of the glebe,—which, though not large, was a good one,—the garden, and the horse. He was honesty itself, and my father had full trust in him. Though I grew up under his eye, he never treated me but as a child. I was still at sixteen to him but the “bit lassie,” who, twelve years before, had been accustomed to trot beside his wheelbarrow, and picked his pocket of the apples which he placed there for the purpose. He petted me still as a spoiled imp ; but he paid no attention to my orders, unless enforced by my father’s authority. He reigned supreme over the other servants ; was always grumbling at their laziness and want of housewifely thrift ; and indeed was

never satisfied. He found fault with the way in which Peggy managed the cow, which he pretended to trace in the butter. He objected to the porridge and broth ; and in short led them a very restless life. Nothing pleased him more than to raise them from their beds at an early hour. I sometimes thought he had a malicious satisfaction in rising betimes himself. He would station himself behind the kitchen-door, and demand admittance till the girls were forced to yield. He would then stalk in, and light his pipe at the fire, uttering many caustic remarks on their love of ease ; and, satisfied that he had gained his point, proceed to his work till breakfast-time.

He lived in a small cot adjoining the stables, the arrangements of which were all conducted by himself. John was a bachelor, and indeed openly expressed his contempt for the other sex, “ who,” he said, “ still bore about them the deceiving tricks of their mother Eve.” I was the only female allowed to cross his threshold. When a child, I often followed him there; and nothing delighted me more than to tumble his goods and chattels into confusion, thus ensuring him a *redding up** for every visit I paid.

He had originally been a dissenter, and still had some peculiar notions of his own about church-government, with which he enlightened every one except my father. Of him he stood somewhat in awe, at least he never broached his opinions before him. My father

* Putting in order.

was considered a learned man ; and John had a great respect for learning, having been twice in Glasgow, and seen the college there,—a wonderful place he thought,—and ever after regarded with reverence all who had studied within its walls.

We had not many visitors, I have already said, to disturb the quiet of our house. Some of my father's gray-haired elders occasionally dropped in of an evening to retail the little news of the parish, or to tell of some sick person who was desirous of a visit from the minister. Sometimes the pastor of a neighbouring parish would ride over to call for his brother minister, and take a cup of tea with us. The schoolmaster would now and then come in, to beg (if it was the proper season) a few slips of rare flowers, or to have, if possible, a little argumentation with my father, who would gently endeavour to avoid it, yet not so as to give offence. But still we were often left to ourselves for days together. We did not feel the solitude oppressive however. I had my house-keeping and my work to occupy me. I had also my flower-beds and my books, for my father had made me a good scholar. There were, besides, Mrs Johnstone and the old library at the Craiglands to resort to, whenever my father was busy and I wanted variety. My father had his parishioners, the sick and dying, to visit, his discourses to prepare for Sabbath, and his books and garden to amuse him, both of which he loved. So the want of society was scarcely felt by us.

The only events of importance which interrupted the quiet tenor of our lives were the half-yearly sacramental occasions, or preachings, as they are generally called in the country. It was a very busy as well as solemn time then in the manse. Several clergymen, some of them from parishes nigh at hand, others from a greater distance, assisted my father at these times, and the latter, of course, took up their abode at the manse. Deeply impressed by the solemnity of his duties, every moment which was not absolutely required by the calls of hospitality was spent by my father in retirement, and the care of our guests principally devolved upon me. We had some godly ministers among us at that time, though others were very careless; and my father was particular as to whom he invited. I was well acquainted with all of them, and loved to have them with us.

Performed with simplicity and earnestness, this holy ordinance is peculiarly touching and beautiful. The peasantry of this country have always been distinguished for the zeal with which they attend its celebration. At Auchtermuir multitudes came flocking to the tent-preaching which always accompanied it. It took place in the sunny month of July, when the days were at the longest. The churchyard, where the tent was placed, was early in the day crowded with strangers from the adjacent parishes, some from greater distances than one would believe in these times, and many came even from the town. Then no one counted ten miles too far to travel to a sacrament.

The young and the old, the rich and the poor, were seen sitting on the same gravestones, or resting promiscuously on the grass. In general there was great decency preserved in their deportment, or if some of the younger hearers did occasionally exhibit signs of restlessness and levity, these were amply redeemed by the air of deep and devout attention manifested by the more grave and elderly. To them, indeed, it seemed a feast on which they loved to linger.

The manse, on this day, was open to all who desired refreshment. A cold dinner was spread early in the forenoon in the parlour. The gentry were attended to there, and the poor were made equally welcome in the kitchen. The expense was trifling, for baskets of vegetables, and sometimes a lamb, or a side of mutton, would be sent as presents by some of the neighbouring gentlemen,—and poultry from the farm-houses would also arrive. The strangers generally brought provisions along with them, with which they retired, during a pause in the services, to some shady spot, slaking their thirst afterwards at a little runlet by the roadside. All, however, returned in time to hear the closing discourse of the day. The minister selected for this duty was generally chosen for his popularity. How sweet and impressive these evening addresses were ! The church doors were closed, and the congregation, amounting often to thousands, assembled beneath the open canopy of heaven. Field-preachings, as they are called, were common things in those days, when church accommo-

dation was limited, and many associations were connected with them. There were few families amongst our peasantry whose fathers could not tell tales of dark midnight services, when wind and rain beat on the heads of the devoted few assembled on the bleak hill side, or in the wild moss *hag*. The old spirit had not yet burned out, the same severe unyielding principle, wanting only circumstances to call it into action; the same love of devotional exercises glowed in the bosoms of these men as in their fathers'. They were still a stern deeply meditative race,—a race whose names are worthy to be transmitted to the latest posterity, as the faithful of their country.

To return to what I was describing,—the evening sermon. The scene was beautiful in itself: how much more so when viewed in its sacred character. The churchyard, as is often the case, was surrounded by large trees, which sheltered the hearers from the setting beams of the summer sun. Beneath their shade sat many an aged patriarch,—men who had witnessed repeated scenes of the same kind, and who doubtless looked upon the present as their last. Lovely family groups were around, and tottering children, too young to be left at home, ran gaily among the graves in which their fathers reposed. The language of the preacher drew vigour and animation from the sight before him, and the psalm which followed the discourse was always sung with a fervour which expressed the deep feelings of his hearers. Thus, amidst the beauties of nature and the solemn memorials of

the dead, rose the voice of prayer and of praise, more touching in its simplicity than the loftiest strains in the proudest temple, and reaching direct to the heart.

Of course, the reader will understand that this description refers only to the summer sacrament. In winter, tent-preaching was unnecessary and impossible —the state of the weather and the roads hindered all strangers. We had then only our own people, and the services were shorter, and in the church.

My father and I frequently visited the poor of the parish together. I knew every individual of them, and in my own solitary walks would often rest in their cottages. I liked nothing better than to sit down beside some old *granny* in her chimney-corner. The recital by these ancient crones of events which took place in their early years, so rich with traits of shrewdness, and sometimes even illuminated by a gleam of true poetry, were to me delightful. I admired their homely good sense, and strong natural expressions, and only secretly wished that they would keep their cottages a little cleaner.

The farm-houses, I grieve to say, were not much superior in this respect to the cots of the poorer sort. Indeed, except in point of size, their outward appearance was not much better, and within they were almost equally sluttish. The farm-houses, however, always possessed a spence or parlour, which was in better order than the kitchen, being generally reserved for the reception of visitors. Thus, we were often detained in the passage, or at the door, when we

visited a farmer's family, till the shutters of the room were opened, and the free light admitted, the first time probably for many days, into the small and musty-smelling apartment. A few articles of a better kind of furniture stood there,—the gudewife's chest of drawers, or perhaps a large press with folding doors made of some dark wood, probably walnut-tree, a few mahogany chairs, and a table of the same material,—all in execrable order. A piece of carpet was then a rare thing, even in the houses of substantial farmers.

We were always received at these houses with a kindly welcome. They liked a friendly visit from their minister. We could not come too often. Most hospitably were we entertained. It would have been an outrage upon all old customs to leave a family without partaking of their hospitality, it mattered not what was the hour. "It wad be an unco thing," said the mistress of one of these farm-houses upon one occasion, "to ha'e it said through the kintra, that the minister and his dochter were in our hoose, and left it without breaking bread—Na, na." So we never ventured to infringe upon established rules but that one time.

Sometimes we were invited to drink tea at these farm-houses. It was at what would be now considered a strangely early hour. What an important evening that was at the farm! Some neighbouring farmers' families were always invited on these occasions to meet us. Our place of entertainment was, of course, the spence—they never used the word parlour then.

The servants and younger children remained in the kitchen, though sometimes they obtained glimpses of the company through the open door. As the party in the kitchen never dreamed of lowering their voices, their conversation at such times mingled strangely with that carried on in the room. But no one minded it. There was very little ceremony at these primitive tea-drinkings. Sometimes, for example, a bare-armed, bare-legged servant girl, fresh from the byre or the potato field, quite insensible of indecorum, would show herself at the door, and summon our hostess out for a moment, with “Mistress, you’re wanted ben;” and her mistress would go and return presently, without deeming any apology at all necessary to her guests.

What a display of good things did the tea-table exhibit on these occasions! Proud was the hostess, too, amidst all her fatigues, which gradually brought her countenance to match the colour of the bows in her cap, of her showily patterned china, her resplendent tea-tray, and her cocoa-nut sugar-basin hooped with silver, brought from abroad by some relative, who had crossed the seas, and returned full of strange marvels, and spirit-stirring adventures, to excite the wonder of his simple friends. The table literally groaned beneath the weight of the things heaped upon it. There were not only piles of bread and butter, but quantities of fried ham, pickled tongue, and cheese. There was no want also of sweet things, for those who preferred them, though most began with the solids. These included short-bread and currant-bun,

and different jams and jellies, in old-fashioned crystal dishes. Ample as the feast might be, the viands soon vanished. When the tea-cups were filled, and the demands of the mistress for more hot water, from the stout gaping servant-girl, were silenced for a time, my father was requested to ask a blessing, and then the company fell to.

The more youthful portion of the party, consisting of rosy lads and lasses, were always seated formally by the wall of the room, their loud laughter checked into low giggles by the presence of the minister. The seniors were arranged in the post of honour, to which I also was admitted, near the fireplace. Each comfortable looking "gudewife" was arrayed in one of those ancient silks, some of which have been preserved to raise the envy of the present generation, and had a handkerchief spread carefully over her knees, to protect it from stains. A silk gown was not so easily obtained in those days, and was an heirloom in a family. The more elderly men congregated together, and spoke of their crops and the markets, or listened to my father's conversation.

When the tea-things were removed, the punch-bowl was introduced, which was superintended in turn by the "gudeman," while his wife, released from her labours, took her place among the other women. Many gibes and jokes flew about under its influence, but all in a spirit of good-humoured raillery. The merry-making never lasted long, or was carried too great lengths. The party broke up at an early

hour ; and as these meetings of friends generally took place at full moon, we had always a lovely walk home afterwards. My father rather liked to encourage these entertainments. They brought the people into closer union, and made them more neighbourly, and better acquainted with each other. I never saw that they led to any excess ; and undoubtedly, the parishioners liked their minister better, and did not respect him the less, for these opportunities of easy intercourse.

CHAPTER IV.

PARISH CHARACTERS.

Old Andrew was a sturdy wight;
A kind and honest heart had he:
He fed the poor, upheld the right,
And was the king in Cambus-lea.

THE most frequent scene of the entertainments I have attempted to describe in the last chapter was at the house of a miller, situated on the banks of the Clyde, from which it and a few neighbouring cottages borrowed their name. The miller was what is called in Scotland a *bein* man, that is, wealthy for his station in life. Old Andrew Liddel was a fine though decayed specimen of a Scottish yeoman of the better class. In his youth he must have been upwards of six feet in height; but an accident (on which Andrew was always unusually reserved) necessitated the use of crutches. Still in his old age he was a commanding figure, and his long gray hair hung around a countenance marked with benevolence and shrewdness, not to mention a tolerable portion of self-importance and irascibility. All of these qualities he was well known to possess.

The miller's helpmate was of a different nature. Her notions were as narrow and contracted, as her husband's were generous and kind. She was come of a family noted too in the country for their mean and parsimonious habits. But her disposition could only indulge itself in low and petty things; such as scrimping the servants, when Andrew was not there to interfere (a thing he never permitted), or in substituting inferior articles for home consumption, whenever she could venture to do so.

A son and daughter were the offspring of this ill-matched couple. The daughter, in early life, had made what is called a Scotch marriage, with a low and dissipated character, a circumstance which wrung Andrew's honest heart, for she was his favourite. Some of her children were occasionally visitants at the mill. As for herself, she was rarely there, for the place of her residence was at a distance, and she had become, under the treatment of a brutal husband, a careworn and spiritless drudge.

The son in appearance resembled his father, but in disposition was too like his mother. He was his father's principal assistant in the mill.

Andrew, besides his mill, rented a small farm, kept several cows, and was altogether in a thriving condition. The mill-house was a comfortable dwelling of the kind. The mill itself was only a few yards distant from the dwelling-house, overhanging the Clyde. It was a green sunny spot; and the merry click of the mill, and the rushing waters, with the sunbeams

dancing upon them, made it the most cheerful little place in the parish. Old Andrew himself was a striking and appropriate object in the scene, seated as was his usual custom in fine weather on the sloping bank which descended to the river, his crutches laid beside him, and his gray locks waving in the wind from beneath his broad blue bonnet. One of his grandchildren was generally by his side, playing with one of "auld daddy's" supporters, a thing too heavy for it to lift, while the old man laughed and sported with his infant attendant.

But what a roar of welcome did he utter when he perceived any favourite visitors, and my father and myself were of the number, approaching the mill. Slowly, and with caution, raising himself from his recumbent position, for he was very lame, he would seize his crutches, and advance towards them with huge strides, bawling out welcomes as he proceeded. He would then usher them into the house ; nor was he content till every good thing in it was set before them.

Andrew was a stanch supporter of both church and state. He feared God and honoured the king ; and it was not altogether safe for any one, even under his roof, which hospitality in general made sacred, to differ from him on these subjects. Many a tough battle he and our servant John had together. They were fairly matched ; for if the miller had the better in point of lungs, John was more than his equal in pertinacity and inflexibility. Andrew was not slow

in discovering this ; and much indignation it caused him. But the minister's man was a sacred person, and he prudently smothered it. So at last he generally cut the argument short with some such speech as, “Houts, man, dinna deave folk ; ye ken nougnt aboot it ;—wull ye tak a dram ?” And he would produce his bottle as the best means of closing the dispute ; leaving his opponent grinning in secret triumph at his victory. Few people cared, like John, to provoke the wrath of the stout old miller ; and his toasts, “the Church, may it ever flourish,” and “the King, God bless him,” were in general acknowledged with all respect by both dissenters and radicals, for we had a few of the last mentioned class of individuals amongst us.

Andrew was also a firm upholder of my father's authority through the parish, and countenanced no one, either by giving them relief or employing them, who did not stately attend the kirk. Bad weather and good, Andrew himself was always there, being conveyed in his cart. He had his own peculiar ways, however, of testifying respect for my father : he was quite indifferent to the means by which he attained his object. I shall give one instance in explanation.

There was in my father's session a very troublesome individual, who took every occasion of asserting what he called his independence by opposing the minister. He was supported in this by a wrong-headed obstinate person, one of our small proprietors, who was his landlord. The office of parish schoolmaster having

become vacant, several candidates offered themselves for the place. Among them was a brother of the proprietor mentioned, who united to very mean abilities not the very best of reputations. However, both the elder and his landlord were clamorous for his election. You see, reader, we had sometimes crosses even in our quiet parish.

It chanced on the forenoon of the day on which this weighty affair was to be settled, that Elder Tuthope, on his way to the meeting, fully braced for opposition, passed near to the mill, which was his shortest road to the place appointed. Andrew, who, as usual, was seated on the sunny bank before his house, no sooner observed the pawky old man crossing the field, than, suspecting his errand, of which he had heard something, and determined to frustrate it, he shouted after him, and the elder was compelled to obey the summons. Then ensued many reproaches on the miller's part, that so near a neighbour should think of passing the mill, without giving him (Andrew) a call, and tasting of the gudewife's bottle. In vain the elder pleaded haste and the nature of his errand. Andrew would take no denial, forced him into the house, and forthwith compounded a jug of hot toddy, which he insisted on his guest's liberally partaking of, for the double purpose of "keeping out the cauld" (it was a day in June) and giving him nerve for the decided part he was to act, which the sly old miller had no difficulty in extracting from him. It has been whispered that the water which formed one half of

the toddy was somewhat adulterated. At all events, Tuthope reached his own house by six o'clock in the evening, having first had a pretty long sleep in one of the miller's beds ; and next morning when he awoke he had a confused recollection of numerous jugs of toddy, which he and the hospitable miller had discussed, but nothing further.

Of course, the meeting went off quietly. The heritor, unsupported by his colleague, was compelled to yield to the force of numbers. A respectable young man was appointed ; and Elder Tuthope, breathing vengeance against his ensnarer, and ashamed to show his face at sessions (for the story by some means got public), soon threw up his office, and joined a body of dissenters some miles off.

Andrew in general, when questioned upon the subject, would shake his head gravely, and affect the profoundest ignorance. But with his own particular cronies he chuckled over the event, and had no hesitation in acknowledging how he had “ bamboozled ” the elder.

My father never liked the story to be mentioned in his presence, for Andrew, with all his faults, was an especial favourite of his.

Another of our most noted public characters was the parish betheral, or bellman, as he was generally called, in reference of course to his office of bell-ringer on Sabbaths. Old William was an original of his kind. My earliest recollections can recall no change in his appearance, which was reverend and respect-

able. Time seemed to make no impression upon him. He never grew older. He was little and spare in figure. He still wore the same suit of rusty black on Sabbaths as he had exhibited twenty years before, and his hair, which was no grayer, was carefully combed down above its collar. To his other occupation he added that of gravedigger. To such an employment one would suppose nobody can be partial, and yet William, I believe, had a kind of professional satisfaction in the constructing of a grave. At least, he loved to talk of his art, and would calmly and scientifically enlarge upon horrors that made the flesh creep and the listener shudder.

William the bellman, arrayed in his grave-digging habiliments, was one of the bugbears of my childhood. To my childish imagination he constantly bore about with him the smell of the charnel-house ; and I remember being often frightened to sleep by Lizzy Lightfoot, the girl who attended me, by the threat of wrapping me in old William's clay-covered coat if I did not lie quiet,—an alternative which silenced me immediately.

The bellman was somewhat of a cynic. He was formal and pedantic in manner ; very radical, or, as he translated it, liberal in his opinions, and fully considered himself, the minister not excepted, the most enlightened man in the neighbourhood.

William was a married man, but had no family. He and his wife, Kate, lived in the village nearest

the church. He treated his wife with most contemptuous indifference. He suffered her to remain under the same roof with him, but they might be said to live apart. William provided his own meals, and prepared them too. Kate had to cater for hers—she got no assistance from him. Even when she was on her deathbed, he showed the same grudging and unnatural spirit, and the poor creature, during a somewhat tedious illness, might have actually suffered from want, but for the charity of her neighbours. He himself dug her grave and laid her in it, with the same composure and indifference he testified upon all occasions ; remarking to the bystanders, as he smoothed down the turf above it, that “ the auld woman was fortunate in having such a fine saft day for her burial.”

The only creature to which William seemed attached was a small wiry terrier, which, after his wife’s death, became his sole companion, and was the detestation of all the junior population in the parish. Touzy, as his master called him, was the ugliest of his race, and of a temper that manifested itself in barking and snapping at every thing and person—the bellman excepted. They were constantly together. When William pursued his avocations in the church-yard, the dog kept watch beside the grave, and wo to any intruder who ventured in—Touzy’s fangs in a moment would be at his shins. Even on Sabbath the dog accompanied his master to church, lying

at his feet during the service ; and, as if aware of the sanctity of the place, he was one of the quietest and most orderly of the congregation.

William the bellman, in addition to the crime of being “one in authority,” was viewed with a kind of horror by his more youthful neighbours, since they had discovered that he did not scruple to apply certain dingy pieces of wood, picked up in the churchyard, and universally believed to be fragments of coffins, for the purposes of fuel. Many an urchin has stolen with curious eye to the old bellman’s window in the twilight, and peered through the chinks of the closed shutters, dreading to behold he knew not what.

William, however, was a particular favourite at all the farm-houses within a circuit of several miles. The bearer of news is always welcome in a remote country district ; and William was deservedly regarded as the oracle of the neighbourhood. Not a birth, marriage, or death (the latter of course) took place without his cognizance. He treasured up every petty scandal also for the ears of the gudewives whom he visited in his rounds, as the understood price of his entertainment. His importance seemed always to increase on the making of one of these calls, as he named them, and his step relaxed into a more dignified walk as he approached the house. His appearance was certainly welcomed at most places. The “Eh, sirs, here comes auld Willie !” bringing all within the dwelling instantly to greet him, and to hear the news ; which William, however,

like an experienced man as he was, did not communicate hurriedly, but by degrees and at fitting intervals. To be sure, a glass of the gudewife's best whisky, or an invitation to pause and take a share of the family dinner, had generally the effect of unbending his dignity and subduing his reserve wonderfully. But still, as if afraid of condescending too far, he never entirely relaxed the solemnity of his manner. When invited to stay dinner, he always expected to be asked to say grace, and the one he pronounced was generally of an interminable length.

William liked best, however, when he could sit down beside some old cummer* in the chimney-corner, while the younger members of the household were engaged with their tasks. He liked a cup of tea, with a moderate lacing of usquebaugh, to make it sit comfortably on the stomach. It was at these times that he shone as a newsmonger; and in the intervals of sipping the tea, would shake his head gravely, and utter many sage reflections upon the evil defections of the times, the impending ruin of both church and state, and the grievous backslidings of the neighbourhood.

It was a practice of my father's to make periodical visits to various portions of his parish through the year, for the purpose of religious examination among his flock. These were called *questionings* by the people; and being announced from the pulpit, were always well attended. At each of them William was

* Gossip, an old woman.

a regular assistant. As an official, he either considered it indecorous to be absent, or, as some supposed, he had an eye after an invitation to partake, along with other favoured individuals, of the beef and greens, and the roast "*chucky*," which those who could afford insisted on preparing for the dinner of the minister, and which followed the dismissal of the meeting. At all events, he seemed restless and dissatisfied till the invitation was extended, which, from the old-fashioned manners of the times, his lingering behind others always compelled, though the gudewives, however glad to see him on other occasions, were then barely civil to the "*greedy body*," as they called him. To frowning looks and short speeches William was however indifferent, if he secured the great object of his wishes—his dinner.

Between the miller's helpmate and the bellman there existed great animosity, springing principally from his forward behaviour on the occasions when the meeting chanced to be at the mill. Her grudging disposition barely tolerated the presence of more important guests; and her temper was consequently sorely tried, when the kind-hearted old miller, whose maxim was always, "Fill the house,—the more the merrier," in dealing out his invitations never failed to particularize William, who, indeed, took care purposely to place himself in Andrew's view, aware he had nothing to expect from his other half. In vain did his indignant spouse hint that, "there was no room,—every place was filled up :" all such reminders

were answered by her lord and master with a loud “Wheugh,” which there was no resisting; and William took his place at the board-end in triumph. Nor did it at all avail that the hostess neglected him, and regarded his proceedings with an evil eye, when the jolly miller was ever ready to replenish his trencher, and to press him in stentorian accents to “keep on.”

It was also in vain that the enraged matron devised plans to prevent the bellman from attending these meetings. Sure as the day came round were William’s sharp and observant features to be descried on my father’s right hand in the miller’s barn, and she knew there was no hope. The attention, too, which Andrew paid to him was adding gall to bitterness. William’s peculiarities were a source of great mirth to the miller, which made him somewhat of a favourite; and this annoyed the good woman exceedingly.

“It was a sair trial,” she said to a sympathizing neighbour, “to see folk forcing themsel’s into anither’s hoose without sae muckle as leave speered, and eatin’ o’ the best, and drinkin’ o’ the best, that never saw a beef bane o’ their ain frae Whitsunday to Martinmas, and wi’ as little gratitude too to the givers, as if it war ane o’ their ain mill spokes. But,” she supposed, “they maun submit to it, as Andrew wad aye ha’e his ain way.”

William, on his part, regarded the miller’s wife with great abhorrence. “She was,” he said “a pitifu’ and a penurious creature, wha, far frae makin’, like that

holy and esteemed woman, Dorcas, (Acts ninth and thirty-sixth), coats and garments for the poor and for them whilk needed them, wad even refuse a fellow-creature a morsel of meat or a drink of water." But William, secure in the favour of the miller himself, set her at defiance, and though declaring that every bite he swallowed under her roof went nigh to choke him, proved himself upon each occasion to be a good and active trencher-man.

One other character we had in the parish deserving particular mention. This was an old weaver in one of the villages, or *touns*, as the people called them, whose name was Lawrence or Lowrie Walker. Lowrie was not an elder, though well meriting to hold that office. He was a Sabbath-school teacher. When my father became minister of Auchtermuir, there was no Sabbath-school in existence there, but one was soon set in operation, and Lowrie, before long, offered his services. He was an excellent teacher. He had a power of arresting the attention of the young that was quite remarkable, and he early secured my father's approbation. Of course, his language was somewhat homely; but the children understood him all the better. In summer evenings they met in the church, and in winter in Lowrie's own dwelling, where every inch of room was occupied. My father sometimes assisted him in his disinterested labours, and when school was closed would often bring him to the manse to tea, and to have a little quiet conversation, for Lowrie was no common man.

He was a person of a peculiar order of mind, vigorous and penetrating. He had a deep acquaintance with the various workings of the human heart, and had severely studied his own. He was a rigid Calvinist in creed, and had evidently meditated much on the deeper mysteries of our revelation. His mind was rather of a stern and gloomy cast, and his imagination seemed to dwell with an awful intensity on the horrors of punishment, while the love, and peace, and purity of the Gospel, were much less enlarged upon. This sometimes made his conversation terrible. When I was a very young girl, I would often steal out of the room that I might not hear him, for there was a fearful reality about his descriptions that haunted one.

I think I see him at this moment seated on the opposite side of the fireplace from my father, bending slightly forward in his earnestness, with a hand resting upon each knee; his cold clear grey eye filled with a solemn meaning, as it gleams from under his shaggy eyebrows, now at my father, now at me, as we sit silently listening to him. I used at such times to think, as I looked at both, that they were no bad representations in themselves of the Law and the Gospel. My father's benignant look and spirit well pourtrayed the latter, while Lowrie's sterner nature and unflinching severity were as much in accordance with the former. Still, we had few to equal him.

He was very eloquent—rough graphic eloquence it was however. He was much respected by his neigh-

bours. Next to the minister, the youthful delinquents of the parish stood most in awe of Lowrie Walker. If any boy from Lowrie's small village ventured on a Sabbath morning to go a-wandering, it was with fear and trembling he returned. The boldest dreaded his stern rebuke. He was also very useful in attending deathbeds, and would pour forth prayers beside them that reminded one of some wrestling saint of old,—so humble were the confessions, so solemn and impressive the appeals he made. He was a kind of John Bunyan in his way. By his own acknowledgment, he had come through a somewhat similar course of spiritual training. I never read the history of that celebrated worthy, without, in my own mind, associating him with Lowrie Walker, the old weaver.

CHAPTER V.

A WITCH.

Not oft her form was seen
With heavy step to cross the miry green,
Or seated in the sunshine by the door
With listless gaze upon the scene before ;
But still my fancy peopled all around,
And with mysterious horrors marked the ground.

I HAVE already observed that our visits were always welcome to the poor. There was, however, one solitary dwelling among the many where we were kindly received, whose door was shut against us, and into which my father's ministrations could never penetrate. This abode, for various reasons, possessed a peculiar interest in my mind. Its only inhabitant, strange to say, was a woman. I know not when I heard this woman first mentioned, or when the suspicions concerning her began to make some stir in the neighbourhood; but for many years previous to my attaining womanhood, she was almost universally shunned and detested. And yet, there was nothing violent or hostile in her demeanour to awaken this feeling. It is true, she maintained no intercourse

with her neighbours ; never entered their dwellings or invited them into hers, and any communication which she was obliged to hold with them was of the most abrupt and ungracious kind. But yet, there seemed no sufficient reason for such suspicions and decided animosity as she was regarded with. To me she appeared as a link separated from the chain of society, and without a wish to be again united.

Her appearance (but she was seldom visible) corresponded with her habits and the austere life she led. Her looks were haughty and commanding, and evidently far superior, though wasted and repulsive from their harshness, to those of her own class of life. There was something, indeed, in the whole aspect of this woman that roused curiosity,—a something that never failed to attract the eye, though the impression left was far from pleasing. I could not reconcile with reason the various fancies which she excited in me, and was almost weak enough to join with the people in their surmises concerning her character and the powers which they believed her to possess. Never, indeed, did one seem in appearance better fitted for the exercise of supernatural power. The keen and eagle-like eye, whose glance remained fixed on your own till yours sank beneath it, the sharp and commanding features, and the tall upright figure unbent even by age, were all in unison with it.

By those who professed to know something of her early history, she was said to be the daughter of a farmer, once in flourishing circumstances. To much

personal beauty and haughtiness of spirit, she thus added good expectations. As might be expected, she had many suitors ; but her proud and lofty demeanour soon repulsed their advances. It was whispered that the farmer's daughter was ambitious as well as proud, and that she aspired to a higher match than became her station in life. One young man, it was rumoured, she had encouraged, but finally rejected. He was said to have gone afterwards to sea, and perished miserably in an engagement with the enemy ; and his heartbroken parents (for he was an only son) had never forgiven her who had been the cause of their sorrow. Years wore on—she herself remained unmarried. It was never known what effect her lover's death had upon her, for she received the account with composure. But people did say that her looks were never the same after that time.

Misfortune at length came upon the farmer. Several bad seasons in succession, and severe and unusual losses among his cattle—which men pretended to say were the retribution of Providence for the pride of the family—brought the old man down. One by one, his sons, and lastly his wife, were swept into the grave. At last, heartbroken by his numerous misfortunes, he himself died ; and thus Christian Lindsay, whose proud spirit still bore her up beneath the eyes of the world, was left an orphan, and dependent for support on her own exertions. Her once boasted beauty was faded. The farmer left only enough to

pay his debts, which were strictly discharged. His daughter then left the parish, eager no doubt to escape from the scene of her former prosperity, where her fall was scarcely pitied, and no one knew whither she went—she made no confidences.

Many years afterwards, when the Lindsays were almost forgotten except by the older inhabitants, it was rumoured that she had returned, and had silently settled herself down in the neighbourhood of her early home. But no one presumed to question her; and she remained, as she evidently wished, undisturbed,—perhaps she thought undiscovered. She supported herself by spinning and knitting stockings, which she principally disposed of in the county town. If she had any other means of subsistence, it was not known. She asked relief of no one.

An evil name is soon acquired. Whether in revenge of the unusual reserve of her manners or from other circumstances—silence and solitude, however, are quite sufficient to account for it—the stranger ere long began to be looked upon with suspicious eyes. Her habits were watched. It was observed to her prejudice, that instead of joining in any intercourse with those around her, she rather carefully avoided it; and several ebullitions of passion, occasioned by their prying behaviour, completed the impression her previous conduct had made on their minds. In a country place where few events occur to excite interest, the imagination must feed on what it can obtain, and is liable to exaggerate. However, reserve

of manners among the poor is so rarely to be met with, that there was some reason for the feelings which the inhabitants of Auchtermuir entertained towards this woman. I know not if the object of all these fears (for the feeling among the country folks was as strong) perceived the impression she had made on the minds of those around her or not, at least, she showed no uneasiness under it. She evidently desired no intercourse with any one, and was perhaps well pleased to be rid of it on such terms. The times when such suspicions would have been dangerous had passed away. She was seldom seen far from her dwelling, which she had chosen for its solitude, except when she went to dispose of her wares in town, and even then generally but in the dusk of the evening, when she was less liable to encounter observation. She never attended church, or was seen farther than the little shop in the Sauchiebog village, which was distant half a mile from her house, where, whatever customer might be forced to wait, she was always promptly and anxiously served,—the old woman of groceries observing once with a knowing wink to a neighbour, that “They needed a lang spune that would sup wi the deil, and that it was aye safer to fleech a witch than to flout her.”

Exaggerated reports of her manner of life and her supposed attributes became every day more widely circulated. No tale, I suppose, is too absurd to obtain a believer. I have no doubt but that half of the misfortunes in the parish were before long placed to her

account ; and many a sagacious countryman have I seen gravely shake his head and express his firm belief in her arts. The neighbourhood of her cottage began ere long to be deserted ; and, at the time to which I allude, it was no unusual thing to find a labourer who preferred an additional walk of two miles on a cold evening and after a day's hard work, to the risk of passing her dwelling in the twilight.

Her habitation was admirably calculated for the prosecution of those arts in which she was said to be an adept. It was of the very poorest description, and stood by itself at the roadside on a lonely part of the moor. This road, though indeed it was little better than a mere bridle-path, was esteemed by the inhabitants who lived near the hills a short cut ; but, as may be believed, it was seldom used by them. To confess the truth, I know not if I was myself entirely free from a feeling of awe on approaching it. At all events, I often contemplated the low brown walls and mossy roof of the cottage, which was visible at a considerable distance, with a strange mixture of sensations, in which I know not if curiosity or fear had the greater share. The thin blue smoke rising faintly from the moor and attesting her presence there, filled me with indescribable emotions, and with an ardent desire to know the history of the solitary being who, shunned by all, seemed indifferent to all. I have often, actuated by a strange fascination, wandered near her dwelling, and have occasionally encountered the repulsive old woman herself ; but there was always

something in her manner which checked me from accosting her, and we passed in silence. The cottage was not her own. Her rent was always punctually paid, though I believe the owner would willingly have refused the money if he had not dreaded betraying his feelings towards her by so doing; and perhaps suffering in consequence. As it was, he bitterly lamented having let his house to such a tenant, especially as he was well aware that whenever she might choose to leave it, so odious had the spot become in the minds of men, he might vainly expect to obtain another occupant.

My father endeavoured to soften the prejudices of the people against her; but, though in general they yielded implicit conviction to his opinions, in this instance there was no persuading them; and having vainly tried to open a communication with the woman herself, he at length relinquished his well-meant endeavours.

At length loud murmurings began to be heard. In the spring of 17—, there was great mortality among the cattle in my father's parish. Christian Lindsay was accused as the cause. Such ignorance may seem improbable at a period so near the present time, but it is nevertheless true. She had been seen among the cattle in the field of the farmer who now held the farm which in former days her father had possessed. He had been a principal sufferer in the parish, and it had been ascertained as a fact that, on this particular morning, more than one of the cows

had sickened which till then had not been affected. This was considered sufficient proof of Christian's guilt. The farmer was enraged at the losses he had sustained, and was with difficulty restrained from venting his indignation upon the person of the criminal. And so great a sensation was created in the neighbourhood, that a large body of the parishioners, headed by no less a person than the bellman himself, who owed the honour to his well known powers as an orator, waited upon my father at the manse to solicit his advice under the pressing state of matters, insinuating, however, that the most advisable course in their opinion was immediately to summon the guilty person before the presbytery (a proceeding which could not fail, they thought, to intimidate her), and there oblige her to give such an account of herself as might satisfy that reverend body, as well as the inhabitants of Auchtermuir, whether she was a fit neighbour for christian folk, or the “deil and his cummers.”

To this proposal, which was pompously made by the bellman, while those who accompanied him stood in admiration of his eloquence, occasionally confirming the story by various nods and interjections,—my father said as little as possible. He promised, indeed, to consider the case more at his leisure ; tried to disarm their superstitious fears ; and, as that would not do, he finished by advising them to wait a little ; he himself thought the woman in question insane, and they could have no proof of her guilt in the case described.

Here, however, a herd-boy they had brought with them as evidence was thrust forward, who, by dint of divers promptings and pushings from behind, was made to tell his story. He had been in a remote part of the field, it seemed, on the eventful morning, and had seen Christian enter it. He shared, of course, the common feelings regarding her; and, to conceal himself, he had hastily crept under the hedge, so that she could not see him. She had first looked carefully around her on entering, as if to make sure she was not observed, (here the whole party significantly shook their heads), then sitting down amongst the cattle, she had begun to wring her hands and to rock her body backwards and forwards, moaning and weeping all the time as if in great distress. Terrified at witnessing this scene alone, which I suppose he considered a kind of incantation, the boy at length contrived to extricate himself without observation from his hiding-place. He hastened home (a considerable distance) with his story; but when several of the family repaired to the field they found the old woman gone, but instead of her, lo! there were two of the cattle lying on the ground groaning and stricken as with sudden illness. This was the story, and it certainly in some sort justified the suspicions of the honest country-folks.

My father at last dismissed them, assuring them that he would consider of everything most likely to allay the ferment in the neighbourhood, and would besides take an early opportunity of once more seek-

ing an interview with the woman herself,—who, he learned, had not been visible since the morning described, but which was nothing unusual, as her neighbours sometimes lost sight of her for days together—and try if it were possible to induce her to give some account of herself, since that appeared the only way of quieting the minds of the parishioners in regard to her. So saying, he sent them away, not more than half satisfied, however, and still desirous of bringing the case before a public court for examination.

CHAPTER VI.

CONTINUATION OF THE WITCH.

The wild bird twittering on the heath,
The breeze that swept the glen,
She better loved to listen to
Than hum of busy men.

My father did not forget his promise of endeavouring to obtain an interview with the old woman. For her sake he felt it must be gained. He pitied her as a lonely and deserted being, whose eccentricities had exposed her to the suspicions of the plain and sober race among whom we dwelt. The following morning, therefore, seeing him lift his hat and walking-stick, I guessed his intention, and, eager to gratify my curiosity, I asked and obtained leave to accompany him on his errand of kindness and compassion.

It was on a clear and bracing morning that we set off on our unusual visit, mild also for the season of the year, which was the beginning of April. A considerable degree of frost was still perceptible in the mornings, but now a thousand dew-drops sparkled in the sunshine, and the delicate spiders' webs which stretched

from bush to bush were glittering as with diamonds. As we crossed the fields on our way to the woman's hut, the timorous hares started from the furrows in which they were reposing, and scampered from before us. All nature was alive—the birds from their merry carolling seemed to feel the enlivening breath of the spring, and the pasture land looked green and inviting. My spirits rose in sympathy with the universal gladness displayed around me ; and as I gazed on the bright prospect glancing in the sunshine, and listened to the simple music of nature, I felt that this was a beautiful though a sinful world. My father seemed to share in my feelings. He bared his brow to the morning breeze, and, as his eyes rested on the clear blue sky above us, he softly exclaimed in the words of the Psalmist—“ O Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth ! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.—When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ; what is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou visitest him ? ”

After a considerable walk, we reached the moor on which at some distance the old woman's dwelling stood. From the manse it was distant more than two miles. We had gradually become silent and lost in our own reflections. The prospect meanwhile grew more wild and solitary, and the road rougher and more unequal. We passed few houses, but one dark cluster of huts was visible at a short distance rising like a

broken mound upon the moor ; and we met only one individual upon the road, who, walking briskly towards the village, touched his bonnet respectfully to my father as he moved on without interrupting us.

Black moss and waving heather were now all around us, and the scene was as dreary as possible, though still possessing the peculiar charm of wildness and solitude. At times the shrill cry of the lapwing (the Scottish *peesweip*), which we had alarmed by too closely approaching her nest, echoed over the waste, but all besides was silent. Black pools of stagnant water, or the upright stones, grey and weather-beaten, probably marking the spot of some ancient cairn, that occasionally presented themselves, alone varied the monotonous surface of waving heath. Sometimes a tiny rill trickled across our path, soothing the ear with its feeble music ; or a few black-faced sheep, struck by the sight of our moving figures, raised their heads at a little distance, and gazed timidly on us till we passed ;—all was desolation and solitude.

Across this uninviting region did my father and I then continue to advance, our thoughts probably similarly occupied. Mine were fully engrossed by contemplating the object of our visit to this spot, and in reflecting on the character which the woman held among her simple neighbours. Was she in reality a maniac, as my father supposed ? or was it blighted hopes or unexpected misfortune that made her seem an enemy to her kind ? Such things had been. I could not suppress a certain feeling of uneasiness as

every step brought us nearer to her dwelling. Considering the nature of the errand on which we were come, we could not expect a cordial reception ; and, though my curiosity regarding her was still as active as ever, it was with much dread that I calculated the chances of awaking the stern old woman's resentment by our intrusion upon her solitude. It was too late now, however, to think of this ; nor in spite of my fears could I have resolved to allow my father to proceed alone ; so I continued to walk by his side, and confined my apprehensions for the time to my own bosom.

Looking around me, I secretly acknowledged how appropriate a scene she had chosen for the austere life she led, so separated did it seem from all human neighbourhood. She appeared secure from all intrusion but that of those agents she was said to employ, and of those who could not interfere with her, the wild but peaceable tribes of nature. So powerful an impression indeed had the loneliness of the scene upon my mind (already excited as it was), that every moment I expected to behold the old woman herself, so much in character did her stern and commanding appearance seem with the objects around us ; and at every withered stump or mossy stone that presented itself I involuntarily started, believing I beheld her.

The road, or rather path, for it had now nearly dwindled into that, wound in a circuitous direction through the moss. Now it sunk into a hollow, through which a wild and moorland spring wandered on amidst

a scanty sprinkling of brushwood, and now ascending from the dark bottom, it gave to view the wide and open moor broken into many inequalities, and extending to the bare and purple-looking hills. It was on ascending from one of these hollows, with my thoughts occupied as I have already described, that, casting my eyes forward upon the moor, the rude and neglected walls of the recluse's dwelling became first visible, and, pressing my father's arm, I suddenly paused and exclaimed—Old Christian's cottage, sir !

My father also stopped as my movement directed, and we both continued gazing for some moments on the scene before us. The sun was sparkling cheerily upon the hundred little pools which speckled the waste, and far away the faint blue smoke which curled lazily on the air from some humble cottage denoted the presence of man. But the most prominent object in the view, and which was now within a short distance of us, was the solitary dwelling we had come to visit. Before Christian came to it, it had been occupied by a shepherd, who watched a farmer's sheep on the hills. The cottage stood with its front to the road, the sun gleaming on the sole window which lighted the interior, and on the moss-grown thatch. It stood on a slight declivity, like that from which we had just ascended, and a small potato-patch, which the inmate herself cultivated, stretched up the slope behind. The rays of the sun, however, lent little cheerfulness to the aspect of the dwelling, which was rude, damp, and miserably ruinous. So wretched and lonely

indeed did it seem, that I could scarcely credit that any living thing, especially an old and consequently helpless woman, could exist there. There was a paltry shed attached to the house, beneath which a few peats (her own casting too) were loosely piled. A stone seat was by the door, and resting on it was a small pitcher for carrying water from the neighbouring stream.

The woman herself was not visible, but as we more nearly approached, and our footsteps had become audible on the rough path, the first sign of actual life appeared in the form of a miserably lean-looking dog which started up from the threshold of the door, to the side-post of which it was tied, and, gazing on us, uttered a long and melancholy howl. There was something plaintive, almost ominous, I thought, in the low cry of the animal echoing over the silent moor ; and while my father continued to walk on, I hung back and hesitated. He, however, was unconscious of my uneasiness, and led the way by the rugged and splashy path to the door of the dwelling. The dog made no resistance to our near approach. He had again laid himself down on the flag at the threshold, and, with his eyes turned watchfully upon us, seemed to regard us with what I now fancied a wistful and piteous expression. There was no sound from the interior of the cottage, nor any sign of life except this animal : all looked cold, cheerless, and uninhabited. There was even no smoke, at least that I could distinguish, from the little stick-formed chimney. I drew my

father's attention to this circumstance. "I trust she is not ill," he said; "it would be very dreadful, as she is alone."

When my father said this, I suddenly recollected what the men had mentioned the previous day, namely, that she had not been visible since the morning she appeared in the field. That happened on Monday, and this was Thursday. I felt agitated at the thought. We paused for a moment to collect ourselves in front of the house. My father then knocked at the door, which was closed, for admittance. The wretched-looking animal I have described, which, if left there as a guard, was a very insufficient one, now raised himself again, but it seemed with some difficulty, from the ground. It was with no hostile intent however, for, crouching towards our feet, he appeared like us to await an answer to the summons we had made. No answer apparently was to be made. We waited anxiously enough, and timorously enough on my part at least, for some minutes, but all was silent as before. Then my father again rapped, and louder than formerly, so that any one unless incurably deaf could hear him, and again we paused, listening for approaching footsteps, or some intimation that we might enter.

"She must be absent from home, Rose," said my father to me, when this second summons produced no response, "or she must be ill, which God forbid."

The dog seemed to understand our language as we stood conversing at the door, or perhaps our gestures were intelligible to him. He again laid himself down

in front of it, and endeavouring to push his nose beneath it, he uttered another of those long wailing cries which had startled me before, and which superstition always regards as an evil omen. He had no sooner done so than a faint sound reached our ears from the interior of the cottage. It was very low, but I thought it resembled the groan of one in pain, disturbed perhaps by the noise of the animal. My father's hand was immediately on the latch, and bidding me follow him quietly, he gently pushed open the door, which was frail and unfastened by any bolt, and we entered the house. I followed him closely, but with trembling steps, my mind filled with apprehension for the state of the inmate. My former fears were almost forgotten in comparison with my present one.

On the door being opened, as usual the first thing which presented itself was the narrow and generally disagreeable passage which in our Scotch cottages leads into the inner and commonly (as in this instance) only apartment in the house. It was encumbered with rubbish, pieces of broken wood, mostly sticks picked up here and there for firewood, an old spade and hoe, a broken tub, and various articles of the same kind. The clay floor, for flags are a luxury not always found in such habitations, was miserably damp and dirty. A few potatoes were spread on a little straw at the extreme corner of the passage ; while, as if more forcibly to express the neglect and poverty which in every respect were so conspicuous, there

yawned directly above the spot on which they were laid a fissure in the roof, through which the heavy rains of the past season must have poured without hindrance. All this I was able to note as we groped our way through the dusky passage towards the door of the woman's apartment.

The noise we necessarily made on entering awoke no challenge from the interior, and having his apprehensions of the old woman's illness increased by this strange stillness, my father hastily pushed open the inner door, which was ajar. I followed him closely, indeed clinging to him, and we found ourselves at length in the inner apartment, and stood for some moments the awed and silent spectators of a painful scene.

The room, into which we had thus intruded ourselves, was damp, dark, and confined. Through the unceiled roof, from which the sod and heather employed to cover it hung as if threatening to fall on our heads, the light of day in many places made its appearance. The very little furniture there was (and which my eye, unaccustomed to the gloom, did not allow me for some minutes to note) was of the very meanest description. The apartment was lighted only by the one small window which fronted us on approaching the cottage. Where the glass was absent, and the whole window was nearly in that condition (thanks probably to some mischievous herd-boy who had ventured near), the air was simply excluded by means of rags, which, though maintaining warmth in the apart-

ment, rendered it proportionally gloomy and close. I shrank back with a feeling of dislike and loathing upon entering. One reason, perhaps, was, that it was a different scene from what I had somehow expected to see. I did not expect to meet with absolute comfort certainly ; but still not the abject misery and suffering which one glance around those bare walls painfully conveyed to the mind. The sight struck my heart with a sensation of cruelty and injustice, such as I had never experienced before. I felt sick and faint. No fire was upon the hearth ; the scanty white ashes that lay on it were cold, and might have been so for days ; a sickly and oppressive smell was diffused through the room, which I have heard since called the smell of death. All told a tale of misery and cruel neglect.

It did not take many minutes to notice these things ; and then we gazed anxiously round the dark hovel in search of the bed. We were standing between it and the fireplace, so that we did not observe it at first. The wood and plaster which covered the back of the bed also formed the wall of the passage by which we had gained admittance. The bed was enclosed by boards, as is the custom in Scotland in poor cottages, and had a sliding door in front. This was at present open, and something like the form of a human being lay stretched within the recess. In another moment, we were made certain of the inmate's presence, probably in consequence of her being disturbed by our appearance. As we stood motionless in front of the bed, a

shadowy figure slowly, and with apparent difficulty, raised itself amidst the gloom of the nook in which it lay, and gazed with a ghastly stare into the apartment. It sunk back almost immediately, however, as if unable for the exertion, and a hollow groan reached our ears. We hastened by one impulse to the bedside. “ She is dying, papa,” I said in tones of horror. But I was mistaken. The power of utterance, indeed, seemed denied to her; but the sufferer was sensibly alive to our presence. Her whole body was agitated by some convulsive emotion; and it was distressing to see the vain attempts she made to raise herself and address us. It was very evident that our observation disturbed and annoyed her in no common degree; but all her efforts to repulse us were vain and impotent. It was awful to look upon her. There she lay, bound as it were hand and foot, with her dull glassy eyes fixed upon our faces, as we bent over her—eyes on which the film of death was evidently gathering: her teeth set, and her long and emaciated fingers plucking wildly at the tattered coverlet, which barely covered her. I gazed on her with horror blended with pity—Was this wretched and forsaken being really dying?

I looked eagerly round the room in search of some trace of food. I could see nothing. Was it possible there was nothing in the house? If so, who could tell how long she might have lain there, and been in want of it. I commenced a search. There was something lying on a sunkie, or three-legged stool, which

stood on the cold hearth, that caught my eye, and which I at first thought might be bread. It was only a half-finished stocking. As I laid it down, I noticed that many of the stitches had been dropped: perhaps while the worker was struggling with the illness which had prostrated her. A few rough shelves, surmounting a kind of rude dresser, stood against the wall—two or three plates, and a cracked basin and cup, were upon them, all thickly covered with dust. In the basin I found a single handful of meal. This, with the exception of the mouldy-looking potatoes in the passage, was all the food that I could discover in the house. She was starving, without doubt. What could we do? How I now regretted that I had omitted to take the little basket of cordials with me, which I often carried when I visited the sick poor. I was perplexed what to do. No fire, and nothing that I could see to strike a light, so that I could have cooked the meal; and then the time that must elapse before we could procure assistance!

“I can at least give her meal and water,” I said to my father. “I can fill the pitcher at the stream.”

“Quick, then, my love; for one of us, at least, must go immediately for assistance,” he said.

“I hastened to leave the cottage, and, seizing the pitcher, which stood on the stone seat, I ran down to the stream. I filled the little vessel with the sparkling water, and returned with my burden to the house. If I had not been so occupied with my task, and my thoughts also busily engaged, I might have observed

the figure of a man coming from the direction opposite to that by which we had approached ; but I did not perceive him. The poor dog I have already mentioned, who had no doubt remained fastened at the door ever since the illness of his mistress, whined piteously in my face as I again drew near him. His look said so plainly, “ release me,” that, laying down the pitcher for one brief moment, I hastily unfastened the string which confined him. He was scarcely able to creep into the house, which he immediately attempted, however ; and proceeding straight to the bedside, he vainly endeavoured to spring upon it. At length, he laid himself down in front of it, and with his eyes moving from my father to myself, he seemed to watch keenly all our motions.

During my absence, the sick woman had become less agitated. I poured some water into the cup, and sprinkled some meal upon it. With my father’s assistance, I then (though with some reluctance) raised her head on my arm, and held the water to her black and parched lips. She swallowed the draught eagerly, with an avidity, indeed, which shocked and startled me. She looked for more. I turned to my father, but he shook his head, and said, “ Not yet.” I laid her back on her sordid pillow. She then turned her eyes earnestly upon us both. She looked at us for some moments, and then her eye was attracted by a movement of the dog’s. She attempted to call him by his name ; but her voice was almost inaudible, and did not reach the animal. Thinking it might please

her, I lifted him in my arms, and placed him on the bed beside her. He feebly attempted to wag his tail, and to lick the hands which were rigidly extended on the coverlet. It was a last effort of nature; for he suddenly stretched himself out, and became quiet and motionless. The old woman possessed affection, at least, for one thing. She again raised her sunken hollow eyes to my face, and tried to speak. I stooped down to catch the words. "Give him something," she said in a broken but distinct voice: "he is dying for want of it." I hastened to obey her; but, on attempting to raise him, I saw it was needless. Want, and perhaps the sudden joy of being restored to his mistress, had completely exhausted his strength; a slight tremor, hardly perceptible, passed over the limbs for a moment—the poor faithful animal was dead.

On observing the expression of my countenance, for I was much distressed on her account, the woman drew the dog quickly towards her. She gazed long and wistfully upon it, and lifted one after the other the lifeless paws, which drooped heavily down as she relinquished them. She seemed to forget our presence, and a few large tears slowly trickled down her hollow cheeks, and fell on her dead favourite. But in a few minutes she recollected herself, and gently pushing the body from her, she turned her face to the wall, and drew the covering over it. Some muttered words escaped from her, which I could not hear, and then a deep sigh.

It was now absolutely necessary that either my

father or myself should go to seek assistance. One must remain with the woman, in common humanity, as it was evident she was in a dying state,—but which was it to be? My father left me to settle it, and I was hesitating about it, for a certain nervous feeling came over me at the thought of being left alone in such a situation. All the stories I had ever heard of Christian Lindsay came rushing to my recollection. I thought of the wild moor, the utter loneliness of the spot, whose silence was only broken by the hum of the wild bee, or the chirp of some moorland bird, and the time that must elapse before my watch could be relieved. I had never watched by a deathbed before. My thoughts were in too great a tumult to allow me to make use calmly of my reason; and the superstitious fears implanted by servants in childhood having been only dormant all this time, not extinguished, began to take possession of me. I stood hesitating then, ashamed to ask my father to remain, and trying to feel what was my duty in the circumstances, when my eye was suddenly arrested by a shadow hovering in the doorway. I started back, and looked fixedly towards it, to convince myself that I was mistaken. But no, there it was upon the wall of the passage visible enough, occasionally shifting in its position, as the thing or person that caused it was or was not stationary. I had sometimes heard of such things in the country, for they were often a topic of conversation at cottage firesides, as dreadful shapes, and unearthly visitants, being permitted to be

present at the deathbeds of the obstinately impenitent and desperately wicked. A cold horror seized upon me, and, clinging to my father's arm, I pointed with trembling finger towards the door.

My father looked where I directed him, with some surprise at my emotion, and also observed the shadow. "Come in, whoever is there," he said ; and presently, in answer to the summons, a grey-haired head, most familiar to us both, first made its appearance, carefully scrutinizing the room, and was presently followed by the whole person of the bellman ; for it was old William himself. I must confess I drew a deep breath of relief, as he advanced cautiously into the room, his hat in his hand, gazing curiously and apprehensively around him every step he made. My father expressed surprise at seeing him here, and William hastened to explain.

"Ye see, sir," said the bellman, "I have been up at the Rumblingsykes. Wee Merran's ill wi' the measles, and the granny she's sair afflicted wi' the rheumatics. And seeing you and the young leddy coming alang the moor road, as I came owre the bent, I thought I might as weel gang hame by the short cut mysel'—it 's no used muckle noo, sir. And wha kens, said I to mysel', as I came down the brae, but I may be o' some service to them,—it 's no a canny errand they 're gaun on."

"Well," said my father in answer, "it is fortunate that you have come. You must go immediately, William, to the Sauchiebog (a cluster of houses about

half a mile off), and send some assistance here,—this poor woman, I fear, is in great distress. My daughter and I will wait till you return.”

“ Ay, ay,” said the bellman, somewhat surprised at this information, and turning, as my father spoke; his eyes, which had never been at rest since he entered, scrutinizingly towards the bed, “ and sae she is really o’erta’en at last. Weel, I didna think it would be permitted much langer (he moved nearer the bed, endeavouring to obtain a sight of the form which lay on it). Weel, lucky,” he said, “ how’s a’ wi’ ye the day?—Hech, sirs ! I think the woman ’s gane.”

This exclamation escaped him as, venturing to advance to the bedside that he might obtain a view of the old woman’s face, his experience told him that she lay, if not dead, at least in a state of insensibility. I hurried to the bed, being by this time ashamed of my fears, and saw that it was as the bellman said. William now busied himself in giving me directions.

“ We maun open the window,” he said ; “ but it ’s a’ stuffed wi’ clouts, I think (he tore them out, and threw them on the outside). Now, there ’s the air coming in, and she ’ll sune come to,—the house had the smell o’ a dead-vault. That ’s right,” he continued, as I began to bathe the pale sunken temples ; “ but for a’ that, she will be a kirkyard job or lang, —or I ’m muckle mista’en.”

My father again reminded him of the imperative necessity of instantly setting off on his errand, and William prepared to depart.

"I shall gang wi' a' speed, sir," he said, "and lay out the money as ye say. I have nae doubt the session will consider the day's wark I will lose. Fare ye weel the now." He then left the cottage, and hurried away on his mission.

The admission of fresh air into the room, and the water with which I had bathed her face revived the old woman ; but she was evidently sinking, and took no further notice of us. She occasionally moaned, and was restless. I could do nothing more for her till the bellman returned. My father prayed beside her, and we hoped that she understood him ; but I rather fear she was not conscious. I sat down beside the window on a low stool, leaving the only chair in the room for my father's use, and we both continued silent for a long time.

It is a solemn thing to watch a dying person. The deep-drawn breathing of the sick woman alone interrupted the stillness which reigned in the room. My father sat shading his eyes with his hand, absorbed in meditation, while I gazed out upon the bare moor, and thought of many things that I had never so thought of before. I sometimes stole a glance at the bed, but there was no further change.

There were two old women in the small hamlet of Sauchiebog, who had a trifling allowance made them by the kirk-session, and eked out their living by attending any sick person who wanted them. It was for these women my father had despatched William. Neither, he was well aware, would venture alone ;

but it was doubtful if the prospect of gain would induce them to come at present, even in company.

At length, after many weary minutes, which had seemed like hours, had passed, our ears were gladdened by the sound of voices and footsteps without, and presently the bellman's sharp countenance appeared at the door, flushed by the haste with which he had performed his errand, while the faces of the two nurses peered dimly behind him, with a half curious, half alarmed expression pourtrayed in both of them. "They are here, sir," said the bellman with an important wave of the hand towards the door, to intimate the presence of those for whom he had been despatched.

"If the minister is sure there is nae fear," said the eldest of the women in a hesitating voice, which, while it expressed anxiety to please, showed also some doubts as to the propriety of the present movement.

"There is none, my good Elspeth," said my father, advancing to meet them and to calm their fears. "There is nothing here but what must happen to us all. As a Christian, I recommend this poor dying creature to your care,—you must not credit the foolish stories that are told of her." He then advanced to the bedside, and spoke kindly and earnestly to the sick woman; but she was evidently in a kind of stupor, and was probably too ill to observe what was passing around her. He advised the women, one of whom had began to kindle a fire, exclaiming all the

time on the want of every necessary thing in the house, to endeavour to get her to swallow some nourishment immediately, and I promised on my return to the manse to despatch a messenger with some cordials.

The women, however, seemed uneasy as we prepared to take our departure, and conferred together in hasty whispers. I began to be afraid that their fears might induce them to desert their post, in spite of my father's injunctions. But at last they took the bellman into their confidence, who, after a show of unwillingness, appeared to acquiesce in some proposal they had made. As we left the house, the old woman who had first addressed us, and who seemed the most experienced, as well as intelligent, of the two nurses, followed us. She stopped us after we had crossed the threshold.

"And, if ye please, sir," she said, curtsying respectfully to my father as she spoke, but still showing signs of hesitation in her manner, "what are we to do wi' this auld wife? Ye ken yersel' she has na a very canny name. However, if it's your pleasure that Jean and me should bide wi' her a' nicht"—

"It will be a great kindness, indeed, Mrs Bryce. As I said before, you have nothing to fear; and you may depend upon it that your trouble will not be forgotten."

"Aweel, aweel, sir, ye ken we are but puir folk. But I wad do muckle to pleasure you; and Bellman Willie has promised to bide wi us as lang's he can,

sae we maun e'en mak' the best o't. But she's an awfu' woman to wait on."

My father repeated his promise of recompense, which seemed to have a cheering effect upon the old nurse, for her countenance somewhat brightened. Bidding her good-day, we walked away. She turned to go into the cottage; but just as her foot was on the threshold, she suddenly paused and cast a wistful look after us. Some thought had evidently glanced across her mind, for she hurried after us. We turned, with some anxiety, to know what it might be. She came up to us, and laid her hand beseechingly on my father's arm, and looking up in his face, exclaimed, "Oh, sir, pit up a bit prayer for us the nicht;" then with a relieved mind she hastened back, and we saw her enter the cottage.

We diverged a little on our way home to call at the doctor's house, to ask him to visit the sick woman. We found him just returned from his morning round, and prepared to sit down with his wife to their dinner; but he promised that he would start with as little delay as possible for the moor. We then turned homewards. When we reached the manse, I immediately sent off one of the servants with the things I had promised to Mrs Bryce the nurse.

When Nanny returned from the moor, she brought a message from the nurses that the patient was no better, and that they could not get her to swallow nourishment. William the bellman was still there.

On the following morning when we came down

stairs, we were informed that Eppy Bryce, the nurse, was sitting in the kitchen waiting to see my father. I observed an unusual air of mystery in Nanny's face while she made this communication, but took no notice of it, as my father gave orders to show the woman into the parlour. On being admitted, her countenance at once proclaimed what she had to communicate ; the wretched woman who had met with such sad reverses of fortune, and had so long been the dread and aversion of her simple neighbours, was now beyond all human enmity—Christian Lindsay was dead ! She had never fully awoke from the state of stupor in which we left her. The doctor had called to see her during the afternoon ; but the nurse's experience had not deceived her, for, on examining the patient, he had declared her beyond help, and remounting his horse, he rode off without more words. She died near midnight, passing away so quietly that her solitary attendants scarcely knew when she ceased to breathe.

“ And oh, sir,” said the old nurse as she concluded her sad narrative, “ it was an eerie thing for Jean and me to be our lanesel’s wi’ her, and she sic a woman. I was aye fear’t for seeing the enemy himsel’ beside us, as little doubt he was, though invisible to us. I’m sure I prayed the Lord that her saul might be reisted frae him. But oh, sir, when we came to dressing out the corp (it’s a sark o’ my ain, sir, I was obligated to gang for and to pit upon her) my vera heart was wae. It was a humbling and a sorrowfu’ sight. She had na a rag amaint on her back, though

the best pairt o' her claise was on her, and the vera banes were cuttin' the skin. I'm fear't, sir," continued the old woman, shaking her head and sinking the tones of her voice as she spoke,—“ I dinna like to say it, but it's my ain belief that the puir creature had little complaint but starvation, and sae I jealousy Dr M'Whirter thought too, for he minted as muckle to me. She was a fellow - creature, sir,” added the honest nurse, wiping her eyes, “ and my heart is heavy about her. But I forget,” she continued,—“ after her death we found this paper in her bosom. It's sair rumpled and worn, and we were na athegither sure o' touching it,—it might be a compact, ye ken, sir, wi' somebody ; but I judged it best to bring it to you ; ye may mak' something o't.”

So saying, she produced from her pocket a dingy piece of paper folded in the manner of a letter, and with a black silk string tied round it. She handed it to my father, and then looked curiously towards it and lingered. My father first examined one side and then the other. He seemed to hesitate about opening it. I was as anxious to know its contents as the nurse could be, and offered him a pair of scissars to cut the string. He took them, severed it, and opened the paper, which was really a letter.

Reader, what do you think was the letter which this poor, persecuted, half crazed old woman had carried in her bosom? It was a letter addressed to Christian Lindsay in the days of her youth and prosperity. It was from one who loved her, and whom it

now seemed she had secretly loved in return. Alas! how her own ambition had probably blighted her happiness. It was from the young man who, stung by her apparent coldness, had left his home for the sea, and was written on the evening before the engagement in which he fell ;—as if he foresaw his fate, he sent her his forgiveness and blessing. His words were few, but they were earnest and simple, and must have pierced her heart. It was as a voice from the dead that letter to me ; and oh ! what crowds of strange thoughts and sad reflections did it conjure up. Youth and beauty glided past, and were followed by dark and repulsive forms breathing remorse and misery. I dared not dwell upon them. In neglect, in poverty, and, finally, in death, had the stricken woman cherished this memorial of her early years, and none knew the remorse and anguish that were probably concealed under an appearance of coldness and misanthropy.

And this ended the witch's story. As Eppy Bryce said, "the paper was nae contract wi' the deil after a', and she daured to say the minister was in the right." However, the country - people would never be persuaded to the contrary. And at this very day, the spot on which her lonely dwelling stood is still held in dislike, and is called the Witch's Knowe.

On entering the kitchen during the same afternoon to give some orders, I found the servant-girls much excited. The younger nurse, a woman of a weak superstitious mind, had called at the manse during the forenoon. Prejudiced against the person she was en-

gaged to attend, the deathbed of the sufferer had to her been surrounded by unnatural portents and signs strange and fearful. These had all been communicated to her eager and horror-struck listeners, who, with heads huddled together, and speaking in whispers as if afraid of the sound of their own voices, had neglected their work to listen to the revelations of the old sibyl. They were now by themselves, and conferring so earnestly on what they had heard, that my entrance was for some minutes unobserved.

“ She has had a fearsome end,” said Nanny, the youngest of the two girls ; “ nae wonder the lowe burnt blue a’ nicht, as Jean Jaup says it did, and that she aye felt as if there was something awfu’ ahint her back, and sae daur’t na look round. Gude safe us ! if it disna make ane’s flesh grew just to think o’t.

“ Deed does ’t,” said Peggy in turn ; “ and to think o’ Bellman Willie—weary on him—leavin’ the puir bodies to their lanesels after promising to bide the nicht,—ane wad think he was use’t to sic sichts ; but I’se warrant he was fear’t as weel as ithers. I wonder Jean didna gang hame hersel’. I ken I wadna hae staid for half the parish.”

I now inquired if they knew when the corpse was to be buried. “ Ou aye,” Nanny immediately replied, “ Willie the bellman had already got orders frae the minister and some o’ the session to houk her grave—a dyke-side was guid eneuch for sic folk—and she was to be buried the morn’s afternoon.”

I was also informed that the cottage which con-

tained the dead body was at present shut up. It had been immediately deserted after the hurried dressing of the corpse. No one would remain in it ; so the house containing its ghastly tenant was left undisturbed till the funeral. How fearful was the solitude of the moor that night, with its solitary dwelling and dead inhabitant ! It haunted me in my sleep.

In the evening, knowing that old William must be engaged at the grave, I strolled over into the church-yard. I occasionally did this when I knew him to be there, as I liked to listen to his quaint remarks. I had not seen him since we had left him the previous day at the cottage. On pushing open the gate, which the old man had left unfastened till his labour for the night was over, I at first could see no appearance of him. The sound of his mattock, however, with which he was breaking up the earth, was not to be mistaken, and guided by it, I at last observed in a remote nook his well known coat suspended over a tombstone, while his constant companion, the dog, kept watch beside it. Advancing nearer, I saw the old sexton's head making itself occasionally visible above the surface of the grave, which seemed now nearly completed. The terrier pricked up his ears as I approached, and uttered a low growl of dissatisfaction ; but he was familiar with my appearance, and I did not dread him like others. The old man looked up and recognised his visiter. He greeted me with a formal nod, but continued his labours as if they did not admit of interruption. Accustomed to his humour,

I stood quietly beside him contemplating the pit he had dug, well aware he would soon weary of remaining silent. In the meantime I looked around me.

The spot selected for the grave of Christian Lindsay was in a portion of the churchyard set apart for the burying of strangers or those paupers who had no family burying-ground. There were few graves within it. It was a neglected part of the churchyard. Long rank grass and nettles mostly covered it; and the earth seemed dark and damp. Occasionally the sexton paused from his more severe labour of breaking up the soil to ladle out the water which began to fill the grave. It was a repulsive sight; but William seemed indifferent to it. He laid down the spade and seized the rusty can he used for the purpose, and again resumed his spade with his usual coolness. A few old trees stretched their huge and unsightly roots around, and threw a gloom over the desolate spot. It lay also in the shadow of the wall, so that sunshine seldom visited it; and it looked a fitting resting-place for the shunned and the friendless to lie in. It was a place where no one could expect to see a mourner.

"It's ten years," said the bellman, at length breaking the silence, "since I dug a grave in this corner. The first o' a' was for silly Will, the puir thing that use't to gang through the kintra selling prins and needles, and sic like—ye'll no mind him. He sickened in Tammas Steel's barn, whaur he was allowed a pickle strae, and at last died. We were a' vext for Will, puir fallow. Ay, and there's a bit o' him

enoo," said he, interrupting himself and stooping in the grave ; " I was sure I was trenching owre near to his lair ; but, ye see, there was nae stane to mark it, and the graves they wull sink wi' time. It's twenty years since he was laid here. Weel, he 'll no quarrel wi' wha 's to be his neebour—na, na, death ends a'."

I drew back hastily, and with a shudder, from the unsightly object which he carelessly tossed upon the heap of loose earth beside me. The bellman continued—" I was thinkin'," said he, leaning upon his spade and falling into a moralizing vein, " before you cam', what a queer thing death is. Mony aane that I hae seen laid in this vera kirkyard, ay, and help't mysel' to pit them there—some too in this vera spot whaur we 're standin', do I mind, young, stout, and as if they wad wear for ever. Weel, weel, it 's a lesson to us a' to be ready, and no to slumber as the fulish virgins did. Huz folk see mony queer things."

" You must, indeed, have seen many changes, William," I said ; " but will you tell me why you dig Christian's grave here. I thought the Lindsays were buried close to the church." " And sae they are ; but wha 's gaun to lay her by her decent kindred ! Besides, the gudeman at the Overtoun, her faither's auld farm, has a bairn buried there, and he 'll no hear o't, for he says it 's his lair. She 'll do vera weel here. But we were talking aboot changes—ay, it 's an unsettled world this. I sometimes sit by my bit fire at nicht, and think on a' the things and folk that I hae kent

since I was a halflins callant, till my vera heart seems to grew.

"I can understand your feelings," I said; "you more than any one in the parish must be aware of the uncertainty of life."

"Ay, ye may say that," replied the old man, still pausing from his work and leaning on his spade. "It's noo three and thretty year sin I got the kirk-yard, and mony a ane hae I kent come into the warld in that time, and mony a ane hae I laid in the grund. I was here before your faither himsel', woman.—Weel do I mind his placing. Auld Peter Pirnie, the Deepholes weaver, wha was elder at that time—yon's his grave yonder awa wi' the muckle headstane—and had been sae lang under Mr Drone, the former minister, use't to say, that it was a blessing to the people his coming, for that vera year there was a harvest gathered in, the like of whilk for abundance hadn'a been seen in the memory o' man: Peter use't to look on it as a spiritual sign of the rich fruits we were to draw frae his ministry; and truly, in Mr Drone's time, the sauls of the people were in a manner fasting, for he was a cauld, thowless preacher, and gied them naething but scraps o' fizzenless morality which led to little profit. But your faither's succession brought new light to us, and wrought a change."

Afraid that William was about to enlarge upon his favourite subject, the one at least on which he fondly thought he displayed most learning, I hastily avoided the dangerous topic, by alluding to our meeting at

Christian Lindsay's cottage on the previous day, and asked what had been his serious opinion of the woman.

"What did I tak her to be!" he exclaimed in a loud voice, and looking up in my face with astonishment and pity, at my simplicity, I suppose. "What suld I tak her to be but ane o' those o' whom Scripture saith, Thou shalt not suffer them to live, Exodus twenty-second and aughteenth verse," (William prided himself on his memory and knowledge of the Scriptures). "Mair by token, gin she had only leeved a hunder year back she wad hae gotten a tar-barrel to her tail, and muckle gude wad it hae done her—the grawsome carline."

"So you really think she was a witch?" I said.
"I do not, William."

William made no answer to this, beyond muttering something about "women and bairns," which I rather think was not complimentary, but which I took of course no notice of. He now relapsed into silence, and worked away with renewed energy at the grave, which had been at a stand-still during our conversation. He continued thus for a short time, but at length, evidently wearying of his task, he collected his tools, which he threw out upon the heap, and then scrambling out of the grave—"I may stop noo," he muttered slowly, but not as addressing me; "ony wee bit mair enlargement that may be needed can as weel be dune the morn;—it's ill to stress man or beast."

He went to where his coat lay, and while putting it on he glanced his eye at me. I saw he had still no objections to be questioned, for all his haste.

“Come, William,” I said, “all the parish know you to be a wise man.” (The bellman’s rigid muscles began to relax.) “I should like to know your real candid opinion of this woman, and what are your reasons for thinking her a witch—witchcraft, you know, is out of date. Such a learned man as you are said to be must have a good reason for what you say.”

“Ahem,” coughed the sexton, gratified by this compliment to the abilities which he rated so highly, but endeavouring to conceal it under a deeper shade of formality than usual. “Ahem, what you say may be vera true, vera true indeed—I’ll no deny but I hae a faculty o’ lookin’ into things as weel as my neebours. But,—ahem.”

“You thought her a witch then indeed,” I said somewhat impatiently.

“Hout, ay,” said the bellman evasively, for he was not quite ready for this call on his reasons, having in truth none at all to give, unless determined prejudices may be counted as such,—“that is, a sort o’ witch. Bad eneuch, bad eneuch;—but there’s ane could tell ye mair aboot her than me.”

“And who may that be?” I inquired eagerly, interested in this intelligence.

“Hout,” said the bellman, who was now perfectly communicative, “wha suld it be but Gibby Galloway, the laird’s gamekeeper. He was herd-callant at her

faither's ain farm mony a year, and kent baith her and her folk langsyne. She was a braw lass in thae days by a' accounts. But what's beauty but a fading flower,—and she was unco for pride, whilk however hath had a fa'. It was Gibby that fand her oot when she cam back to the parish, and little she thank't him for 't, he has telt me. He could tell mony queer stories aboot her, that could he, and especially aboot ae joe she had that she often met at a place in the muir where three stanes staun,—ye 'll ken the place. (I nodded.) Gibby used to watch them there frae amang the heather; but their last meetin' was an angry ane, and the lad went to sea direct after and was killed. The lass never looked the same after 't, he said, and then cam' her faither's misfortunes. I'm jealousin' that after a' she's had her ain weird. And muckle mair, I doubtna, could Gibby hae telt me aboot her; but he's a close chield, and it's puing wi' rapes to get ony thing oot o' him ava."

"And did he suppose her what people say?—Where is the gamekeeper to be seen?" I asked.

"Ae question at ance,—he thocht her nae better than she should be, I tell ye, though he seemed to hae a kind o' compassion for her too. Whaur is he—he's far awa by this time, I reckon—he's awa to anither situation wi' some grand laird or yerl in the north—I kenna what they ca' him. But I convoyed Gibby a bit mysel' this morning, or I might ne'er hae heard o't."

"But did he never speak to you of her before?" I

asked. “ I should like to know what he remembers of her young days,—poor changed woman !”

“ Oh,” replied the bellman, “ thae unsettled chields, moving often frae ae place to anither, hae muckle mair to divert their memories than huz quiet folk that are content to bide at hame. It’s weel kent too that a close mouth catches nae fleas. Forby that, I could guess frae Gibby’s manner”—Here he suddenly interrupted himself (Touzy having roused his attention) and turned hastily round.

“ Ye little, gude for naething, mischievous black-guard, that I should say sae,” he exclaimed to my surprise, irritated apparently out of his usual propriety, “ I’ll learn ye to come creepin’ that gate to meddle wi’ my things—weans are a perfect abomination in the matter o’ mischief. Wha’s aucht ye, callant—what brought ye here ?” he demanded, shaking a little boy of six years old by the collar of his ragged jacket. William, in spite of Touzy’s protection, was often visited at his work in the churchyard by the village children, who sometimes hid his tools, and amused themselves by otherwise tormenting him. Only a few days before, some of the school children after their dismissal had wandered down to the churchyard, and aimed slight missiles at him and Touzy from the summit of the wall, where the dog of course could not reach them. All this was in William’s recollection, as he shook the intruder repeatedly—Touzy meanwhile standing at bay, as the boy was held by his master.

"What is 't ye want?" he again inquired in the same tone.

"Naething," answered the trembling captive half crying, for William's office of beadle gave him a position of awful authority among the more youthful parishioners, and his present aspect was not encouraging.

"Naething! What are ye—what's your name?"

"Jock," answered the terrified prisoner.

"And wha do ye belang to, sir? Tell the truth."

"I'm Peggy Tamson's laddie." (Whimper.)

"And what took ye here, Jock—eh? If ye come here ony mair, mind, if I dinna pit ye intil that hole, and see what 'll come o' ye than," pointing sternly to the open grave as he spoke.

"It was my mither that sent me," blubbered the awestruck intruder, upon whom this formidable threat seemed to make a deep impression.

"Did your mither bid you come here, sir, and work mischief?" demanded the angry man of spades and mattocks.

"Na—she telt me to gang to the kirkyard, and—and say, ye were wanted at—at hame." The sexton whistled.

"At hame!—ou, that's anither affair—anither death, I suppose. I heard Johnny Bell wasna likely to pit owre.—Weel, gang awa back to your mither, like a gude laddie, and say that I'm just comin', and dinna come near the kirkyard ony mair."

So saying, he dismissed the little urchin, who had

trotted a mile to do him this service without even thanks. The boy wiped his eyes with his knuckles, and gladly hastened off, turning often round, however, to look at the scene of his late alarm. Touzy, as in duty bound, attended him to the gate, and having there indulged in a parting explosion which induced the boy suddenly to take to his heels, trotted quietly back again to wait upon his master. William hastily deposited his tools in the porch of the church where he kept them, carefully locking the door after having done so. I bade him good night, and turned homewards, amused by his eccentricities, and deeply regretting the departure of Gibby Galloway.

It was a beautiful afternoon on which Christian Lindsay was buried. I was standing near the gate when I discerned at some distance the little band of attendants—I cannot call them mourners—with my father at their head, winding down the road. Owing to the distance of the cottage from the churchyard, the coffin was conveyed in a cart. Occasionally some bend in the road hid them from my view; then they would appear again moving beneath the drooping branches of the trees, which seemed to wave sadly over them: they drew nearer and nearer, and now the dull measured sound of their tread was mixed with the rumbling of the cart. They were six in number, including my father. They were the elders of the parish: no one else would undertake the duty, so it devolved upon them. They approached solemnly and decently. No careless glances or whispered re-

marks broke the solemnity which the presence of the dead imposed—all was quiet and orderly. Their steps were slow and feeble, for the distance was considerable, and some of them were aged men. I thought, as I gazed on them, that some of them would probably ere long be borne on the same path. But how different would be the procession—how different the feelings from those which influenced the attendants of Christian Lindsay to her long home ! Children, affectionate relatives, mourning friends, would doubtless be there—children sorrowing for the parent they had lost—brothers, for the brother with whom they had grown old, and whose heart was knit to theirs—and friends, for the kind and trusting companion. Alas ! here was one, once the loved and the cherished of many, (who could read her past history, or weigh her motives ?) without a friend to shed a tear over her, or a kindred hand to smooth the sod above her head. Her existence had been a sorrowful blank for many years. As for the never-dying soul, where was it now ? I checked myself in my judgment,—that was known only to her God.

Unpitied and uncared for, the grave was her best resting-place, though a stranger's hand laid her there ; for there the weary and the broken-hearted might rest and be forgotten. My heart swelled within me, as image after image of desolation presented themselves to my mind. Whatever may have been her faults—crimes perhaps, I cried—surely even in this life she

has suffered bitterly for them. Oh ! God, let me not die alone or unregretted.

I continued to gaze on the little mournful procession till it passed me. The churchyard gate stood open. The coffin was lifted out of the cart, covered with the parish mortcloth, and they then entered and moved slowly down the path. Old William was in attendance. I advanced close to the wall of the churchyard, from whence I had a distinct view of the grave which was yawning for its tenant, and of the group which was approaching it. The mortcloth was removed when they reached it, and the plain black coffin exposed to view. Slowly and silently was it lowered : then came the dull rattling of the clods, that sound which all have *felt* ; the mute act of reverence which seems to bid farewell for ever to the unconscious dust ; the mourners turned to depart, like men glad that their task was accomplished ; and William was left alone to his duty in the churchyard. My father and the elders joined me, and we all went into the manse.

So ended the history of her, who was first the beauty of the parish, and latterly the hated, shunned, and suspected Witch. Not even a rude stone marks the grave where Christian Lindsay sleeps. Some say that the curse of her lover's parents clung to her ; but the curse at least of a proud, unsubdued, resentful nature did. But we will let the dead rest.

CHAPTER VII.

A COUNTRY DOCTOR.

ABOUT two miles from the manse, close to the public road, was a small neat two-storied house, situated in the midst of a well-kept garden, with a field adjoining it. A little green gate, and a gravelled path, bordered on each side with a sweetbriar hedge, belonged to it. Everything was in high order about the place. The pipes on the walls, and the barrels for receiving the water which ran from them, were freshly painted ; the door was a bright green, and the little brass knocker shone like gold. Not a weed disgraced the flower and vegetable beds. The interior of the house was quite as orderly,—no spot was ever seen on the white-washed lobby or staircase ; dust was a thing unknown there, even in the darkest corners ; and the kitchen, with its tins and saucepans, was as bright as a furnishing ironmonger's shop. It was evident, at a glance, that children were strangers there.

It would have puzzled a traveller to decide who the owner of this neat little place might be. It was too

small to belong to the gentry, too trim and orderly to be the property of a mere laird ; so it was generally supposed by strangers to be the manse, though the church was not in its neighbourhood. A minute's introduction into the interior would have set all right. In spite of the extreme cleanliness which reigned around, a peculiar and most unpleasant odour was always to be discerned. It was a smell of medicines. Of course it was the house of the parish surgeon.

We had never possessed a medical man of our own till a few years before I grew up. When illness occurred, some surgeon, miles off, had to be summoned, which occasioned both trouble and delay. All felt it therefore a satisfactory thing, when a stranger appeared, announcing his profession, and willing, if proper encouragement was given, to settle among us. At first he rented a room in one of the largest cottages, where he had attendance in a rough kind of way. Some at the commencement were doubtful about changing their doctor ; but perseverance, and a few successful cures, gradually established the reputation of our Esculapius, and his practice rapidly increased. He purchased a horse (a clumsy-looking animal it was), and began to talk of a house. But the doctor (as he was called, though he had no diploma as yet) was prudent, and did not hurry himself. He knew that the simple proposal of such a thing placed him in a favourable light, and showed that his circumstances were improving. He was aware that the effect of such hints upon his

neighbours would be an increase of respect and confidence towards him. So it proved. The gossips, however, began to scrutinize the parish for a house to suit the doctor, and (not to lose time) for a wife also. The latter, however, was much easier to find than the former, for there were no houses to let that they could at all consider suitable ; but there was more than one young woman for the doctor to select. They might have let the doctor's affairs alone with all safety,—he knew what he was about.

In his rides about the country, he had gradually made himself acquainted with the family history and circumstances of all within his range. He was a calculating and prudent man. While he joked with the lairds and farmers, and had a grim smile ready for their bustling wives, he always looked askance on their rosy-cheeked but portionless daughters. The doctor, since business had prospered, had increased in self-consequence, and, moreover, had a constitutional suspicion of women, at least of the young and lively ones. He felt embarrassed and awkward also in their company. He was not a young man, neither was he a talkative man ; on the contrary, he was grave and taciturn. He was not aware of his own imperfections,—if he had, his mind might have been at rest as to the chances of his being inveigled into a match. He had a tall, gaunt figure, big and bony. He was besides deeply pitted with the small-pox, and his hands and feet were of an enormous size. He was altogether most uncouth, and the tones of his

voice were in unison with his person, loud, coarse, and highly accented. Seeing him jogging slowly along the rough moorland road, or swaying backwards and forwards on horseback, as the animal descended one of the hilly paths from some farmhouse where he had been visiting, he seemed one of the most unlikely persons on earth to attract a woman's eye,—so stiff, formal, and ungraceful he looked. To be sure he was prospering in life. He had already as much practice as he could attend to,—even the gentry called him in,—and perhaps some might forget the man's ungainliness in the prospect of a comfortable settlement. If any did, however, the doctor was not for them.

He was accustomed every day to pass in his rides, sometimes more than once, the neat snug house I have described. It was a place just to the doctor's taste. It was spruce and handsome, and had such a fine exposure. Everything about it, too, was so orderly and respectable. The doctor secretly sighed for the possession of it. His admiration increased gradually to such an extent that, at length, if his business for the day did not lead to pass the gate, he would make a circuit for the purpose. No one suspected the doctor's thoughts.

Now, the owner of this desirable property was a middle-aged—to speak correctly, I should say elderly spinster. She had inherited it from her father, a retired grocer of some wealth, who had purchased a little land in his native parish at a low rate, and built a house upon it. It was a handsome respectable

house, as I have said ; and there he and his daughter Miss Babby had lived for many years. It was strange that, being a kind of heiress, she was suffered to remain so long unmarried. But Babby had her own share of pride, and thought few entitled to address her. Besides, Babby, like our friend the doctor, was remarkably unprepossessing in her person. Her figure was lanky and angular,—more masculine than feminine in its outlines. Her features were very plain, and no one could overlook the appearance of a beard. She had long taken to wearing caps and a front, even before the doctor came to the parish ; but nobody knew exactly the date of her age, as she was born during her father's residence in Glasgow. In addition to all these, it must be confessed, serious drawbacks, she was accustomed to take snuff, and was of a peevish, avaricious disposition. Her father had been dead for several years, and Babby had succeeded to all the property, including a handsome sum of money lent out on good interest, and on the best security. She was an independent, nay more, a rich woman. But what was the good of her wealth, as her neighbours said, when it was hoarded up, and never put to use ? The poor were never the better for it, for her only charity simply amounted to the putting a halfpenny in the church plate on Sabbath, when, dressed in her invariable black silk manteau, she sailed majestically into the porch. She kept one servant to wait upon her, and occasionally employed a man to work in the garden. There was no rest for Miss

Babby's servants. She herself was as active as a bee, and had a constitution that seemed to defy weariness. She was up early and late poking into corners, and detecting dirt in places which no one else could see. Her house was the picture of freshness and order. You smelt black soap and bees-wax, call when you might,—she was always cleaning. When the servant was not employed with this, she was busy in the garden. At little expense Miss Babby kept her walks and plots free from weeds. She herself used often to labour there, attired in an old battered black silk bonnet, and a pair of coarse gloves which had been her father's. She kept a cow also, and the milk and butter she did not herself use she sold to the poor, or sent, at least the latter, by her servant to town. The things I have mentioned were not the worst of Miss Babby, for she not only worked her servant to death, and quarrelled with her constantly, but she grudged her her victuals. However, she did the same to herself. The people said she counted out the potatoes, and measured the meal ; but that I will not answer for. She had enough of faults without that.

It was on this spinster and her comfortable property that our calculating doctor's regards were fixed. While he left unheeded the younger and more blooming portion of the neighbourhood, he was warmly attracted by the evidences of wealth which surrounded Miss Babby. They threw a halo round her, which not all the beauty on earth could have presented to the doctor's imagination. But what prospect had he

of ever being connected with them? There seemed little in reality. Miss Babby seldom mixed in society, except when she shut up her house for a few days every year, and went to pay a visit to some of her mother's relations in her native town. She was also shy of new acquaintances; and though the doctor occasionally saw her, in his journeys past her gate, it was in such a fleeting manner, that he had barely time to lift his hat and politely (at least as politely as he could) salute her. She herself did not seem to covet his further intimacy,—and she was never ill. There would have been some chance if this had taken place; for a medical man attending upon a patient has good opportunities, if he can avail himself of them, while the heart is softened by sickness, and perhaps filled with a sort of gratitude to himself. The case was hopeless. Even Miss Babby's servant never complained of illness,—that indeed would have been tantamount to an instant dismissal. But our doctor did not despair.

At last his patience was rewarded. Miss Babby, for the second time in her life (the first was at her birth), required a doctor. She had missed a foot in descending a ladder in one of her outhouses, where she had been looking for eggs, and had fractured her leg. Her terrified servant, having in vain attempted to lift her, and shocked at the groans which the movement produced, hurried away in search of the doctor. His lodging was fortunately not far off. She burst into his room, breathless and overcome, where

he was sitting,—his rounds for the day over,—prepared to enjoy himself over his tea. The tray was before him, and he was just sugaring his first cup. The doctor stared at the intruder, whom he hardly knew.

“Come awa, come awa, doctor!” she exclaimed. “For God’s sake dinna sit glowrin’ there—Miss Babby’s faun frae a ladder, and, as sure’s death, I think she’s killed.”

The doctor was up and off in a minute. The opportunity was at last come which he had so long looked for. I need not say he congratulated himself.

The courtship began from that day. Miss Babby’s leg was slow of mending; at least the doctor was very cautious in allowing her to make use of it soon. He found it necessary, also, often to examine its progress; and what more natural than the doctor’s constant anxiety to know how his patient was getting on? Miss Babby might have demurred to this, if the vision of a forthcoming bill had been before her eyes; but happily her medical attendant had early relieved her apprehensions by attributing his visits to friendship. She had no objections to take advantage of his skill on this understanding; and confined to her hair-cloth sofa, unable to look after her house affairs, with no employment beyond questioning and scolding her servant twenty times in an hour, she soon wearied for his visits, as a relief to the unvarying sameness of the day. She began to watch for him, and to wonder if he delayed his coming a few minutes after his cus-

tomary hour. She would also sometimes ask him to drink tea and spend the evening,—all which were promising for him. The doctor proceeded slowly, but surely. His refusal of payment had been a great point in his favour. It showed, moreover, that he could afford to lose money,—an important matter in her calculations. He roused himself, too, to amuse her, and carefully treasured all the news he could gather in his rounds for her ear. He was not a handsome man, as I have already said; but she began, ere long, to think his swarthiness comely and manly-like. Miss Babby was well aware, however, of what she was about. She early detected his object. Women, even the oldest and most unlikely, are seldom blind to such demonstrations as the doctor's. Of course they were not very refined,—they suited her best as they were. It must have been amusing to watch the courtship of this uncouth couple: she grim in her condescension, and he most unlover-like in his assiduities. It was the mirth of the neighbourhood; for the doctor's frequent visits, even when Miss Babby became convalescent, were too marked to escape observation. He was watched going and coming. But it was not long before the doctor answered the jokes and hints of his neighbours with so knowing an air, that suspicion began to change into certainty. Miss Babby had surrendered. She had weighed things well. She had felt very lonely during her illness, and she had experienced the comfort of companionship. Confinement, too, had somewhat

quieted her activity, and changed the current of her ideas. She was flattered also by the doctor's attentions, and thought him a very clever man, which, I believe, he really was in his profession. But she loved independence, and was, moreover, dubious of his means. A hint of this brought them both to terms. She understood that the doctor had some little patrimony,—not much, but not to be slighted hastily. But his receipts for the year settled the matter. Miss Babby Stevenson became six months after the accident Mrs Dr M'Whirter.

They were married by my father in her own parlour, and the loving pair immediately afterwards departed in a post-chaise, which was hired from Lanark, for a tour, which extended two days. They returned on the third, and, without more ado, settled themselves down in the bride's house, to which the doctor's chattels were conveyed.

Mrs M'Whirter was much the same person as Miss Babby had been : her housekeeping was not much changed. She still kept but one servant, and as there was but little chance of the happy pair being blessed with offspring, their establishment was not likely to increase. A one-stalled stable was added to the premises for the doctor's horse, and a back entrance made that he might ride up to the same, and a proud man was the doctor to call that house and stable his own. The king of ancient Babylon, as he gazed from his palace-roof upon the gorgeous city, rich with the spoils of old barbaric magnificence, was not more

inflated with pride than was our worthy doctor, as he viewed the long-coveted domain. His seat was firmer on horseback, his outward man seemed absolutely beautified with perfect content. To be sure Miss Babby (I beg her pardon, Mrs M'Whirter) had not laid aside her old propensities when she changed her name. She had still the same love of cleanliness and order, and both the doctor and his horse improved under her management. She brushed and smartened the one, and her vigilant eye superintended the currying of the other.

One thing there was which required long use to reconcile her to: this was the smell inseparable from the doctor's profession. A closet had to be given up to accommodate the drugs, and she took care that it was as remote as possible; but still there was no evading the smell. The opening of the door made her as sick as Bluebeard's wife. And yet within three months, so ardent was her love of management, and so keen her desire for gain, that she herself learnt to weigh out and to sell the medicines. The people said she cheated them.

I believe the late Miss Babby was well enough pleased with the change she had made. She still possessed as much power as formerly (she took care by the bye to have all securely settled upon herself, so that her husband could touch nothing of her means), and she had another inmate to manage. She was secretly proud of her married position, and liked to hear herself called Mrs M'Whirter. She was flattered

too with the doctor's popularity ; and fancied herself the envy of all the unmarried portion of her own sex in the parish, which had a most soothing influence over her mind. She was just as active, bustling, and particular as ever, in spite of the slight limp which resulted from her accident ; but, if any thing, more good-tempered. Though never solicitous for marriage, she was now gratified by it ; and in her own way, she was fond of her husband : and he treated her just as might have been expected—he considered her merely as part of the property.

Once every year did this worthy couple give what Mrs M'Whirter called a “ tea-handling ” to their neighbours ; and to do the hostess justice, there was no parsimony displayed at that time. It was a very brilliant one they gave a few weeks after the wedding. Every family of any gentility within four miles, with the exception of the writer to the signet's family, who would only visit the regular gentry, was invited. We of course had not got the length of sending written invitations in our neighbourhood. A man, mounted on the doctor's horse, was one afternoon despatched with a verbal invitation for that day-week, to all concerned, and an answer was returned by the same individual. No fear of any refusals : no chance of two parties occurring on the same evening : our society was on too limited a scale for that. Every one was aware, too, of what was in contemplation before the invitation came, and had got their best ruffles and stomachers ready. A party in these days was properly valued, I can tell you, when

perhaps six months might elapse before you were invited to another. I know I was always glad to hear of one.

There was much excitement among all invited about the doctor's party. All were curious to see how the new married couple would look together (they had seen them already at church, however), and especially how Miss Babby would conduct herself as a bride. The younger portion of the guests were the most interested, particularly the women, who, without envying her the doctor, felt themselves very indignant at the marriage of a woman of her age. The men treated the whole affair as an excellent joke, and looked forward to the evening with gleeful expectation. The doctor's party formed the only topic of conversation in the parish for the whole week. Even the poor people knew exactly how many tongues had been salted, how many fowls were doomed to be roasted, and how many "farls" of shortbread and dozens of sponge biscuit had been ordered, for the Wednesday evening, at Tam Dickson's the baker's in Lanark, who not only supplied such delicacies, but even wheaten bread, to families for miles around.

At length the Wednesday arrived. It was in the beginning of December, and I remember a keen frost set in that afternoon. We had had several days of heavy rain, and the sudden transition in the weather made the roads like a sheet of ice. It was most unlucky, for there was no time to get the horses' shoes frosted, and the greater part of the guests had to come

miles. No one was missing however. They set out early, while it was yet daylight, and with a man leading the horse wherever the ground was slippery, they managed to get along safely. The danger was in the returning along these rough hilly roads in the dark. But even the women never dreamt of staying at home—they would neither disappoint themselves nor their entertainers.

The only conveyance used by country families in those days—I mean families of the rank of those I am describing—was a covered cart, or caravan, as we called it. Some of these vehicles may still be seen in remote country places. This was merely an ordinary cart, somewhat longer perhaps, unblessed with springs, and with an awning surmounting it. The awning was formed of strong green canvass supported by spars. The upper end of the conveyance was generally entirely of wood painted of the same colour with the cloth, having a small sliding window, thus enabling those within this moving cavern to hold communication with the driver outside. There was a small curtain instead of a door. To ascend into this primitive carriage, you required the aid of a chair, or something equally high. As these carts were long in comparison with their breadth, if the first person who entered was more than usually stout, there was some risk of a capsiz. Such pushing, and struggling, and screaming as I have seen when some fat matron was complimented with the first place. She standing with one foot on the chair, her knee resting on the edge of

the cart, grasping its sides with both hands, red in the face and breathless from exertion, while the driver endeavoured to preserve the equilibrium of the vehicle, and her friends pushed and better pushed at her person till it finally disappeared in the interior. She then made a famous balance for those who followed her. Some of these carts had seats down either side, others a bench across the top and middle. The smaller branches of the family could be stuck along with the band-boxes in the corners. We had one of course,—all ministers had ; for what else could they have had to shelter them from the weather, and to convey them to any distance ? As for gigs, single and double, none of us pretended to them at that time. But the caravan was a most disagreeable conveyance. It moved slowly on account of its heaviness and want of springs. It was very confined and dark ; and then the jolting along those ill-made roads of ours. I never put my foot into one of them if I could avoid it ; the noise and motion were so sure to produce headache. But on this cold December night, I had to do just like others. Fortunately, we had only two miles to go, and it was all even road after we passed the Craiglands gate. It sloped from thence to the river, near which, as I have said, the manse stood ; but it was so gradual that we had no cause to fear.

It was a bitterly cold evening, and a few flakes of snow began to fall just as we left. John was in one of his cross moods. He disliked taking out his beast, as he called the horse, on any evening, more particu-

larly a severe one like this, and did not like leaving the chimney corner himself.

When we arrived, we found numbers before us. I remember that evening well. It was decidedly the noisiest entertainment ever given at Auchtermuir, and my father looked rather grave about it. The doctor and his wife had determined to grace their nuptials by something out of the common. Every family therefore with whom they had the slightest acquaintance was invited. The largest parlour, an old-fashioned low-roofed room, was crowded to the door, and in spite of the cold of the night, it was overheated. Remember, I do not mean to say it was old-fashioned fifty years ago, for then the house had only been built twenty, or thereabouts ; but it would now be considered so. Its furniture was very substantial and formal, being just what Miss Babby and her father had all along used ; but it was so well kept that it shone as bright as the little oval mirror with the spread eagle above, which was fastened over the sideboard. The mantelpiece was rather curious. It was of elaborately carved wood painted black, and very lofty, and many strange curiosities and old-maidish nicknacks ornamented it.

Down the room extended a long massy - legged dining-table covered with tea-things. There was a silver tea-equipage at the head ; but there were relays of teapots of all shapes and kinds in the kitchen ready to make their appearance when needed. Two other ladies assisted Mrs M'Whirter to pour out the tea ;

and their posts were not enviable, for some of the elderly guests, particularly the female ones, were most indefatigable tea-drinkers.

The bride received her company in great state seated in her arm chair, from which she merely rose to make a formal curtsey and to shake hands with each of her guests when they entered. Mrs M'Whirter was attired in a yellow figured damask gown, which had originally been her own mother's marriage dress. She had had it altered to suit the present fashion, and it saved her the expense of a new gown. But it somehow harmonized ill with the bride's wrinkled sallow skin, and stiff ungainly figure. A more subdued colour would certainly have suited her better. She wore a very smart cap, and had been at the expense of getting a new front of hair—certainly it was time to relinquish the old one. But as the new happened to be several shades lighter than the other, one was rather perplexed for a minute or two by the change, till the eye got accustomed to it. Mrs M'Whirter was evidently much impressed with the dignity of her new position, and anxious to have all its honours paid her. She did not think of making herself agreeable to her guests ; and when she was not mechanically going through her tea-table duties, she sat grim and silent amongst us, being a fair butt for the ironical compliments of all the rattling spirits there, and certainly neither she nor the doctor were spared. She was, however, perfectly unconscious of it. She was really uncomfortable through the evening for

want of her snuff, which the doctor had prevailed upon her to relinquish for the time. There was an involuntary movement of her hand constantly in the direction of her pocket I could observe, but a moment's reflection always brought it back again immediately.

The doctor, unlike his usual self, was all fun and joviality. He was evidently satisfied with his new position, and roared with laughter at every joke ; and, as I have said, they were not a few on his married condition. To the ladies he was most gallant and attentive, particularly to the young ones, as if to make amends for his former neglect of them. He himself volunteered a song during the evening, and sang it too, though in so discordant a key that my next neighbour, Mrs Pettigrew, an old lady, whispered in my ear that the mere sound was enough to “speak a bairn.” We had a great deal of singing, some of it very pleasing, though of course uncultivated ; and a great deal of toddy during the evening. The new married couple’s health was drunk with deafening cheers. And at last the fun grew so “fast and furious,” that an adventurous laird pushing the heavy table aside, insisted on the bride’s dancing a reel with him, and dragged her up to the floor. Now, Miss Babby even in her youthful days—which, alas ! were long gone—had seldom been accustomed to dance. She had attended the dancing-school in Glasgow, her native town, certainly, when a girl, but her joints had grown sadly stiff since that time. If you could but have seen her this evening, with her lean upright

figure limping through the dance,—even my father was at last compelled to smile and to turn his head away. The only music, by the way, was the whistling of the company, and as some whistled out of time and others out of tune, the dancing was soon put an end to.

There was many a pretty girl there that night whom the doctor had secretly slighted for his ancient-looking bride, and a strange contrast she was to them ; but the doctor saw his spouse in her goods and chattels. He was quite indifferent to the jokes and innuendoes which the men showered upon him as he sat among them carefully stirring the contents of his large punch bowl with a silver-mounted ladle. The women thought Mrs M'Whirter a greater fright than ever ; but as they looked round the cosy apartment, could not but acknowledge that the doctor had made a good thing of it.

It was a most uproarious affair the doctor's first party ; but most of the guests were of a rough race, and addicted to practical jokes. My father's presence kept them in some restraint ; but they evidently thought the doctor and his wife fair game. We were glad when at an early hour John announced our conveyance, as by that time our host's perceptions were getting dull. The snow had fallen so as to cover the ice, and we reached home safely. I never heard of any accident having taken place that night, though many a cough dated from it, and the doctor was particularly busy the following week. He was not visible next day till the evening ; but Mrs

M'Whirter was early active in getting rid of all signs of the entertainment.

The doctor's party produced fruit. A marriage came from it; and a very different one it was in many respects from the last, for the bride was considered the beauty of the parish, and the bridegroom was a gallant young laird, sensible withal, and who farmed his own property to much advantage. They were in the same rank in life, and were near neighbours. He had ventured to ask, and been accepted, on their way home that night, while the old couple were nodding at the upper end of the cart. So the doctor's party proved a lucky one, and was the means of bringing together again, four months afterwards, most of those who had met there. Mrs M'Whirter and her spouse were of course among them; but nobody minded them then, except when some wag would facetiously inquire at the doctor for the welfare of the young gudewife.

I was at the marriage dinner, which was celebrated in an old ruined tower which stood between the two properties. There were so many friends on both sides, that the bride's father's house could not contain them, and so they hit upon the happy expedient of the ruin. It was one of those peel towers, lofty and square in form, that are so often to be met with in various parts of the country. It was a grim-looking building; but a merry wedding it was that took place within its walls,—the old roof has never rung again to such sounds. On the ground-floor there

were only a gloomy-looking hole intended for a kitchen, for there was a huge fireplace in it, and a well of spring water to serve in case of siege, I suppose, and several dark vaults resembling dungeons. There was a tradition of other dungeons beneath these ; but I never could discover any entrance to them. A winding stone stair, commencing under an arch, with its outer wall pierced with loop-holes, led to the second floor of the tower, which contained one large apartment and two small ones. The large and one of the small rooms were still entire, and here the wedding feast was held. The upper floor of the castle, as we called it, was perfectly ruinous. The peculiarity of the place was quite charming. The contrast between the usually dreary deserted state of the building, and the mirth now taking place within its walls, was most striking to the imagination. It led one back to old times.

The bride was an only daughter, and her father was a man of substance, so things were in good style. He would never have to do the same again, he said, and he would just spend his money freely for once. The marriage took place in the laird's parlour, in the presence merely of the mutual relations, and then the party adjourned to the tower, linked two and two,—bride and bridesman leading the way. Here the rest of the company met them ; but first the *brooze** was ridden, and the successful competitor claimed and obtained a kiss from the bride, and a glass of whisky

* A horse race sometimes practised at country weddings in Scotland.

from her hand. She then led the way to the dinner tables. Up and down the large apartment of the tower,—and it was a very spacious one,—were long tables formed of plain boards, and supported on rough tressels. Across the upper end of the room ran a similar table, crossing the others, and commanding a view of the whole. This was called the bride's table, appropriated to her and the more distinguished guests. Here the bride was led with all ceremony, the bridesmaid and man followed her, then my father and myself, and soon the whole tables were filled, after much laughter and squeezing. There was no place for the bridegroom. It was his duty for the day to wait on his bride and the company ; and I must say he did it gallantly. The bride's father and nearest male relations superintended the various tables. All were covered with the purest linen ; but the necessary articles were most heterogeneous. Here were a white-handled knife and fork, there a black one, or perhaps only a horn spoon, and that an ancient one, in place of it. There were drinking vessels of all forms and sizes, from a simple horn to a crystal tumbler ; but it was no easy matter to provide for such a large company. If there was a scarcity of plates, husband and wife, or lad and lass, were contented to use one between both ; so with drinking vessels. We were not nice in those days.

As for the feast, it was plentiful. We had abundance of salmon boiled whole in the farm coppers. We had early lamb from the laird's own ground,

joints of mutton and beef, barn-door fowls, and enormous pies baked in brown delf dishes, which might have held a sheep. All these were arranged just as the attendants found convenient,—two pies, it might be, together, or legs of mutton intruding upon each other's dishes, and mutually splashing each other with gravy. Vegetables were stuck in all available corners. There were also piles of bread, both oat-cakes and wheaten loaves, in baskets, whole cheeses, and abundance of home-brewed and whisky, but no wine.

The farm-servants and poor families about the property were not excluded, but sat down in the same room with their betters, at the bottom of the tables, or in any corner where a seat could be found, and helped themselves as they liked. There was a dance after the dinner and the tables were cleared away. The seniors retreated into the small room, where punch made in the large wooden milk-dishes stood ready for all the company. The young people, inspired by the strains of two fiddles, danced till past midnight, long after the bride, accompanied by her most intimate friends, had left for her husband's house.

It was a joyous marriage, and, I believe, it was a very happy union eventually. She brought her husband ten sons and daughters, all of whom grew to maturity, and were well settled. She was still a comely good-looking woman, and he a fine cheerful benevolent character, when I attended their youngest daughter's marriage nearly twenty years ago. But

ah ! it was a dull marriage compared with their own. The old tower was still standing ; but the floor of the large room was now unsafe, though the laird kept his seed-corn in a corner of it, and the wedding was held in the dwelling-house. The young people would not have considered such a wedding as that of their parents genteel. But I could not help sighing for the old tower, and the days when the poor man had his corner as well as the rich man his chair.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR NEIGHBOURS AT AUCHTERMUIR.

They are not forgotten—they are still before us—
Still in our souls dwelleth the home of our childhood ;
The low sound of its trees, the streams where we wandered,
In the old, old time.

THE Misses Weir were the three spinster ladies who lived near the Lanark road. They were natives of that small town, but they thought it genteeler to live in the country. They hired a house called Burnside, which was the family mansion of a spendthrift gentleman, who had embarrassed himself by horse-racing, and such other expensive amusements, and who was glad to let it. They had lived here for some time before I grew up, and were considered very superior women. They were respectably though not highly connected, and the house they inhabited gave them a certain appearance of consequence.

Burnside had the look of an ancient family house. It stood in the midst of a green lawn of some size, which by courtesy might be termed a park, and some fine old trees scattered round the house added to its

air of antiquity. The place, however, was just barely kept in order, and had a neglected, decayed look of gentility, which suited the owner's fortunes. The ladies had a comfortable income, but still insufficient to enable them to do much for the grounds. They loved to make a good appearance however, and all in the immediate neighbourhood of the house looked well, as within all was well-ordered and handsome. They had no garden, except a little patch of vegetables out of sight. The large garden was let to an individual in the neighbourhood ; but the ladies and their visitors had the privilege of walking in it when they chose. No one required to know whether it belonged to them or not : if their friends were regaled with fruit in the proper season, what mattered it to them to know it was purchased ?

The house was a large and irregular building, but only one portion of it was inhabitable. In their prosperous days, the family to whom it belonged had made a considerable addition to it, and the new part only was now occupied. The old building was completely forsaken, and the door which communicated with it shut up. Both buildings, with the addition of outhouses, formed a small court behind, which was so weedy and deserted-looking, with a solitary pump-well standing sentinel in the midst of it, that it made one melancholy to see it from the bedroom windows which opened upon it. The old building, though ruinous within, was outwardly quite entire ; its peaked roof was very grey ; but the glass was still preserved

in its windows, so no stranger could guess it was uninhabited. The whole had an imposing effect from the road (glimpses being occasionally caught of it through the belt of plantation which skirted the fence), for you had two fronts as it were visible at once, the old and new buildings standing at right angles to each other. The Misses Weir were fortunate to obtain all this grandeur at a low rent. Most people thought the ruin a drawback, but it certainly added to the picturesque effect of the whole. All the building was white-washed, which contrasted finely, I thought, with the weather-stained roof. It was not a healthy situation. It stood low, on a somewhat marshy soil, and a stream meandered through the grounds, and almost washed the walls of the little court behind. Miss Weir and the two old maid-servants were always complaining of rheumatism. But people could not understand these things in those days. A sloping bank, covered with thick unpruned trees, sheltered the house behind,—a rookery had long been established amongst them, and the solemn cawing of the birds alone seemed to break the constant stillness and stately seclusion of the place. A round lofty pigeon-house, with a roof as peaked and grey and walls as white as the mansion-house, rose among the grounds on one side (well peopled it seemed to be), and on the other was a little pathway, which, crossing the stream by a rude bridge, led to a few cottages which stood at the outside of the fence, concealed from sight by the trees. Here the little urchins

belonging to them would sometimes venture to paddle about in the burn, or to break sticks from the trees, secure from observation. The avenue was a long winding one, and there was a small lodge at the gate.

Of course there was a haunted room in the old part of the building. It was too venerable to escape that claim to distinction. But it had long been shut up, and the ghost had got tired of its wanderings, I suppose, for it never showed itself. Miss Weir, or rather Miss Menie, as she was always called, the eldest spinster, had her apartment in that direction ; but she was the most courageous of the family, and did not mind it. There was a nailed-up door of considerable antiquity communicating with the passage from which her bedroom opened. It had once given access to the old rooms, but since they had been allowed to fall into decay, it had simply been fastened thus. I used to think Miss Menie very bold in sleeping there ; but she declared she had never been disturbed except once or twice on windy nights, when she had heard noises, she confessed. These probably proceeded from some brick loosening in the old chimneys, or some piece of plaster tumbling from the ceiling of the ruins. But I doubt if Miss Menie ever took the trouble of ascertaining. The rest of the family were not so unconcerned. Miss Menie's bedroom being a large one, was at first shared by her youngest sister ; but she had early deserted her, and taken refuge in a smaller apartment in the other end of the house. The ser-

vants were also very timorous, and always arranged Miss Menie's room before nightfall, and in company.

Such a family of old maids! The youngest mistress was forty, and the two servants were somewhat older. They had each their pets too, except I think the eldest, who was the clearest-headed of the family. The servants had the same christian name, which was rather perplexing, as neither would consent to be called by her surname. How their mistresses managed to distinguish them I do not recollect; but the country people settled it easily amongst themselves by early naming them according to their different heights, "lang Jenny," and "little Jenny." They were characters in their way as well as their mistresses. They had served them for upwards of twenty years, and knew every secret of the family, being as regularly consulted as any of the members of it. They regulated the expenses too much as they liked, which was in a very frugal economical manner. The two Jennies had not much relished their removal to the country, and still often sighed with regret for the gossipings they once enjoyed in the Castlegate of Lanark. But they could not bear to part from the family; so they now boomed at their wheels or mended the household linen in the damp dull kitchen of Burnside, instead of performing the same work in their old cosy, comfortable one in the burgh town, and tried to indemnify themselves for their privations by establishing a kind of patronizing familiarity with various of the cottagers' wives.

Miss Jess and Miss Jean were the names of the younger ladies. There was that species of resemblance among all the sisters, both mental and personal, which is often to be observed in members of the same family. Menie, the eldest sister, was however much superior to the others in force of character, but her mind had not been cultivated by reading. Jess, the second, was a large coarse-looking woman, with a masculine voice, and tastes decidedly so. An excellent wright or smith she would have made, if unfortunately she had not been born a gentlewoman. She had a habit of wandering about the grounds with a small hammer and nails in her huge pocket, examining the fences and mending them if necessary. She could pick a lock too, when needed, with great neatness and despatch. I rather think she could repair one also. I have still in my possession a small box of her making, which, for execution and durability, I will match against the performance of any rival amateur of the opposite sex. In spite, however, of such freaks, and as if to make amends for them, Miss Jess possessed one of the softest and most impressionable hearts which ever fell to the lot of a mature maiden of forty-five. She had suffered from no less than six different attachments during her life (she made me her confidante), and most unfortunately they had never been to the right individual, for they were not returned. But poor Miss Jess cherished no malice; she freely forgave them their insensibility. Indeed, she had not the heart to kill a fly. Every

beggar imposed on her, and her sisters were obliged for her own sake to restrain her charities. Her dress, like her pursuits, had always a certain masculine air about it. She wore large rough boots, coarse gloves, and a kind of man's cravat constantly twisted about her neck when out of doors. In short, she was one of those persons one cannot help liking yet laughing at. Jean, the youngest sister, had been a beauty in her time, and she still laid claim to the distinctions resulting from it. It was a pity, considering the susceptibility of her second sister, that her charms had not been shared by her. Jean was coquettish, and affected a somewhat youthful manner and style of dress, which contrasted ill with her time of life. But the rest of the family, in which of course I include the servants, evidently considered her a young thoughtless thing for whom much allowance must be made.

The ladies spent their time in working at tambour frames, and their labours adorned every room in the house, as well as their own persons. They never did any thing else except visiting the neighbourhood and looking after the poor—they did not neglect the latter duty I must say. Besides they had abundance of pets to care for,—cats, paroquets, and canaries. As for the Jennies, they patronized a hedgehog to free them from the beetles which swarmed in the kitchen.

They were visited by all the gentry around us, and were universally liked, being very hospitable and fond of society. They formed a kind of middle rank between the lairds' families on the one hand and what

were called the county families on the other, keeping on familiar terms with both. They had also many acquaintances in Lanark. Unlike the habits of our small gentry, to which I alluded in my first chapter, they liked both to visit often and to be so visited.

I was only slightly acquainted with the Writer to the Signet's family. "Poor and proud" have been the epithets frequently applied to a certain class of Edinburgh gentry, who have the ambition for high life without the proper means to support it. Mr Dundas and his family were of this class. It was rather a pretty place which belonged to them, although on a small scale. They had often visitors from Edinburgh residing with them, during the four months of the year the ladies remained at Hillside, which made them less dependent for society on their country neighbours. But they visited the Misses Weir, and one or two families whom their pony phaeton enabled them to reach.

The family very seldom did us the honour of calling, though occasionally they had no objections to make use of the manse as a resting place on Sabbaths, when they chanced to wait for the afternoon service. Once in the year, perhaps, we had a condescending invitation to dinner sent us, than which nothing could be more disagreeable to me, as the stiff, freezing manners of the young ladies were most embarrassing to a poor little country girl like myself. I believe they could be very frank with their own associates; but I was only—the minister's daughter. Since then, I

have often observed the same spirit in others, and despised it heartily. Town-bred young ladies would do well to take this warning, that their country sisters have sometimes a fair share of discernment, and are not secretly much impressed by this affectation of superiority. The Misses Dundas might have condescended more, and been more respected.

Their brother was not so fastidious. He coursed, shot, and drank whisky with all the racketing lairds and wild young farmers in the district. He was bred for the bar ; but, I suspect, he never attained the dignity of a brief. I sometimes met him and his sisters at Burnside. The Misses Weir were very kind to me, and never had company without inviting me. I liked very much to go to them, for I could sit by one of them, and be quite as silent and observant as I chose ; and I saw a good deal at times to amuse me. Under Miss Menie's, or rather Miss Jess's, ample wing, squeezed into a corner of the stiff settee on which she sat, I could endure the chilling civilities of the young ladies, and be perfectly indifferent to their neglect. They played upon the piano, which I was seldom in the habit of hearing,—and, except that I dreaded having any of their conversation addressed to myself, I passed thus very pleasant evenings. When I first met them at Burnside, I was much afraid they would offer me a seat home in their carriage, as our roads lay for a considerable way in the same direction ; but much to my relief, and to kind Miss Menie's indignation, they felt this too great a favour ; so I

always waited till they were gone, and then set off with Nanny and the lantern for the manse. George, the brother, was much more civil than his sisters, and often seemed inclined to pay me attention ; but I had a little spice of pride of my own, and did not encourage him. If I had, however, I could not have better revenged myself on the impertinencies of his sisters.

I often provoked my quiet gentle father to smile when I returned home from meeting these people, with my anecdotes of the evening. But he always checked me when I got too censorious. I am afraid I had a little failing that way.

I have now introduced you to the principal families about Auchtermuir ; but there is still one individual I must mention, old Mrs Pettigrew, the factor's widow. She lived in a little jointure house left her by her husband, a good way up the hills, with no neighbours except a farmer's family close by. She was quite out of the world ; but her cottage was a very neat place, and she had enough to live on. She was the most dignified little body possible, ever ready to take offence. When you visited her, you required to be as ceremonious as if you were addressing a duchess. She quarrelled with everybody by turns, for she had very peculiar notions concerning etiquette, and people were apt to infringe, without, of course, being conscious of it, on her rules. But she was privileged. Her servant was always commanded to address her by the title of madam. Once one was refractory,— “it was sae daft like, and she was na use't to it.”

She was dismissed immediately. The old lady was very little and spare in figure, quick as a needle, and as sharp. Her eyes were always red and rheumy-looking, and her mouth was drawn together like a purse. She might have sat for the picture of a witch.

What a temper she had! She could have been heard scolding half a mile off. The old farmer, her neighbour, was often called in to settle the disputes between her and her servant. She had some respect for his opinion; and as he generally took part with neither, while he exhorted them both to quietness, each considered him as her friend. It was a great grievance to their decent neighbours at the farm, and one from which they could not escape. The farmer, who preserved peace at his own fireside, thought it hard to be troubled with other people's quarrels; but yet he did not like to offend the old lady, so near a neighbour too, and with a tongue that deafened him. He tried, however, to keep out of the way as much as possible, leaving them to arrange their disputes as they best could. All the milk and eggs she bought,—and she lived on little else,—were not worth the disturbance. “Mak' haste, gudeman,” his wife would cry, for he was a little deaf, “awa to the hill wi’ ye, —the leddy and Nelly are at it again.” And the honest man, rising with a groan from the chimney-corner, would take his stick, and away to the hillside to look after his cattle till the fray was over, and his wife made a signal for him to return.

She was constantly changing servants,—always

suspecting them of waste and intrigues, and hunting them up and down for ever. Few staid with her more than a month ; and the farmer and his wife were heart-broken with the numbers that took refuge with them, declaring that they would rather lie on the bare hill than return to their mistress, and seeking only a night's shelter for themselves and their bundles till they could start for their homes,—of course without wages.

At last, the leddy, as they called her, was sorted with a servant, who proved her match. Nelly showed from the first day that she understood the art of scolding as well, if not better, than her mistress. What a din sometimes reached their ears at the farm ! But by this time they had got accustomed to it. Every morning the mistress dismissed the maid, and the maid renounced the mistress, but somehow by night they always got good friends again ; and Nelly, as if to make amends, would wait on her mistress with double assiduity. The maid was middle-aged, with a face seamed with the small-pox, and had only one eye. In fact, she was a perfect antidote to the tender passion ; but the old lady, nevertheless, still resolutely preserved her suspicion of the concealment of a sweetheart somewhere on the premises, though many a broad grin it occasioned at the farm. Once when in church, to which she was always escorted by the farmer, while Nelly was left in charge of the house, a sudden thought struck her, and she rose softly from her seat and left the congregation. Fearing she was ill, the farmer,

though rather embarrassed at so public a movement, also stole out and followed her.

"What is 't—what is 't, Madam?" he asked anxiously as he reached her just as she cleared the church-yard.

"Ou—it's just that hizzie, Nelly—she'll hae some o' her lads in ; and they'll break open every place in the house and ruin me."

They both hurried home, the farmer with difficulty keeping alongside the impatient and active old lady, and, bursting in suddenly at the back door, beheld—poor Nelly, with her Bible and the Book of Martyrs on her knee, fast asleep by the fire. It was a good joke for the farmer ever afterwards.

Many people wondered why Mr Pettigrew had married her, for she was not young at the time—but indeed she had never been young. She was ancient both in speech and looks when a child, old as a young woman, and old both in years and looks when he married her. But it was a simple case. Mr Pettigrew was a meek, easy individual. Miss Bell Buchan was his full cousin, and dependent on her friends, who did not relish the burden. When Mr Pettigrew suddenly became possessed of a small property in our parish by the death of a distant relation (his profits as a factor had been too small to enable him to keep a wife),—the relations settled it all—Thomas must marry Bell. So Bell bought her wedding clothes ; and poor Mr Pettigrew, a perfect saint in comparison, never dreamt of resisting, and did all that was asked

of him. This was the way Mrs Pettigrew became a matron in her forty-second year.

And now, reader, you are so far acquainted with the society of Auchtermuir. I told you first something about the poorer classes, and now I have introduced you to the richer ones. You can have some idea, though I know an imperfect one, of the manner in which we lived, and of the intercourse we had with one another. Those who like details of bustling life, who love to hear of the whirl and excitement of what is called the great world, will be disappointed in these slight sketches, which only pretend to depict the scenes and characters of a retired country parish, such as they existed many years ago. I have done my best to fix impressions and recall remembrances which declining years already begin to obliterate. It is sometimes pleasing to look back into the past—Alas ! it is often painful too.

We were a happy but simple race : we needed little ; our wants had not yet increased. We had the flowers and the fruits of the earth around us, the green grass as a carpet for our footsteps, and the trees which God had watered for a canopy from the noon-day sun. The gospel was purely preached among us, and I trust it bore fruit in many hearts—What needed we more ?

CHAPTER IX.

A MEETING OF PRESBYTERY AND A DINNER.

You speak truth, Hortensio ;
If pastors love to feast and spend their hours
In indolence and mirth, their flocks are sure
To wander on the mountains.

EARLY one morning, as we were seated at breakfast, in the spring of 17—, a man on horseback rode up to the door, and presently one of the servants entering presented my father with two letters; the one contained a summons to him to attend a meeting of presbytery on the following week, the other was for me : it was from Mrs Purdie, the wife of the minister of Crossford. As the messenger waited an answer, I hastened to open it. These were the contents :—

“ Crossford Manse, Saturday night.

“ Dear Miss Douglas,

“ We were happy to hear from Mr Patterson” (a neighbouring minister), “ who was here last Tuesday night, that the minister and you were in your usual health. I have been thinking for the last month of giving you a call, but we have had an awful

to-do, first with the cleaning of the house, which is no light job, as you know, and then with the illness of one of the servant-lasses: we are now, however, in a way to see our friends. Your father will tell you that we are to have a meeting of the presbytery here next Thursday to examine into the state of our old kirk, which many think is far from safe, and of course we give them their dinner afterhend. We will be happy if you will come along with your father, and the caravan can take you both home again at night, though if you could stay we have a bed at your service, and you need be on no ceremony. You are such a grand hand at the making of sweet things (Mr Purdie, honest man, has never forgotten yon syllabubs yet), that I would take it as a particular favour if you would come early and give me a help,—I am sure I may use so much freedom with you. Jeanie has been very ill with a sore throat, but is, I am glad to say, better, though still complaining. I suppose you have heard of Miss Bess Wardrope's death. She has left all her gear, they say, to the Garnock family, except a bit legacy to the old servant-lass, and so much to keep the cat; she has not left her sister a brown bawbee, though she has so much to do with her small family: but she never owned her after her marriage with the schoolmaster, and she has gone to her grave, poor prideful woman, in the same spirit. I have no more news to tell you, except that your old favourite, wee Johnny, has grown into a big laddie,—we are thinking of a polonie for him already. Excuse blunders, as I

am in a hurry ; and with kind regards to the minister, I remain,

“ My dear Miss Douglas,

“ Your sincere friend,

“ JANET PURDIE.”

“ From Crossford manse, sir,” I said, putting the letter into my father’s hand.

“ Crossford,—I see that the meeting of presbytery is fixed to take place there. I trust they will not find it necessary to pull down that venerable old building.—Well, Rose,” after he had read it, “ do you wish to go ?”

“ Very much, dear sir,—you know good Mrs Purdie will be disappointed if I do not superintend the puddings and pies on such a momentous occasion. Besides, I know she means me to marry Mr Wylie, the new minister of Crossbasket, so of course I must be there. (My father smiled, but shook his head slightly.) Shall I tell John we will require the cart on Thursday ?”

“ Yes, you had better tell John, as he will be busy this week, and he can arrange.”

Shall I give you a specimen of John’s reception of any order that came through me ? It is a picture besides of a class of servants nearly if not entirely extinct.

After breakfast, I went to the garden in search of John : he was planting vegetables on the sheltered side of a high beechen hedge which divided that portion of the garden which was orchard from the other ;

though he saw me approaching, he did not trouble himself to look up or speak to me.

“What a fine morning, John,” I said, as an introduction to my commission.

“The morning’s weel eneuch,” was all the answer I got.

“These seem fine cabbages,” I went on to say.

“Hout—what do ye women ken about cabbages? There’s nane amang ye kens a cabbage frae a kailstock, for a’ your pretence.”

“And have I not heard you say that, next to yourself of course, I am the best gardener in the parish.” He looked up at me for a moment, as I said this, and grinned.

“Ye wadna be stressed, that’s a’,” he answered. “But what brings ye here enoo. I hae nae time for claverin’, if that’s what your wanting. I maun awa when this job’s done to the glebe.”

“Papa wants you to go with us to Crossford on Thursday,” I said. John stopped his labours instantly, and resting both his hands indignantly on his spade, which he planted upright in the ground, he faced me.

“To Crossford—to Crossford, said she!” he exclaimed. “The lassie’s in a creel. What time hae I to gang to such places, I wad just like to ken? Gae wa—gae wa.”

“But you must go,” I repeated: “there is to be a meeting of presbytery; and you know we cannot walk so many miles.”

“Stay at hame, then, or ye may tak’ a chance o’ a

cart on the road—What's to hinder ye? How do ye think my beast's to draw ye after near a week's wark?" and continuing to grumble, he again seized his spade, and began to work with double diligence, and a most dogged expression of countenance. He paused suddenly.

"What are ye gaun to do at Crossford?" he demanded.

"We are going to a meeting of presbytery, as I told you before, you stupid man," answered I, as a matter of course. "Come, don't be cross, John."

"Humph—and what's the presbytery to do at Crossford? Ye'll be meaning, doubtless, to act as moderator!"—Here he chuckled at his own wit, which somewhat mollified him.

"They mean to examine the church, and ascertain if it is safe."

"A wheen masons wad do better, I think," grumbled the old man.

"They are to be there also, John. Now, are you satisfied?"

"Humph—satisfied, said she? It wad satisfy me mair if ye wad keep at hame. But women maun aye be rinnin'. However, ye're but a bairn after a'. Weel, hinny, gae awa enoo, for ye're stoppin' my wark, and we'll see when Thursday comes. But it'll rain a' week, and I hae an unco sair hoast;" and he gave a loud hem as if to clear his chest. I left him thoroughly certain, in spite of the opposition he made, that John would be ready on Thursday.

Mrs Purdie was a favourite of his (and he had few favourites), for she was one of the most hospitable persons in the country, which she could well afford to be, as she brought Mr Purdie at their marriage five thousand pounds.

Accordingly, when Thursday arrived (which, by the bye, falsified John's prediction by being remarkably fine), did he, arrayed for the occasion in his best blue suit and Sunday's hat, appear before the door with our clumsy conveyance. Nanny brought a chair from the kitchen to enable us to ascend, and we were soon seated at the upper end of the cart, with our feet cosily buried among wisps of straw. John mounted with grave deliberation to his own place, gave the word of command to the horse, and away we went, jingling and shaking along the road, while Nanny and Peggy, mounting upon a low wall, watched our progress with much interest till we were lost to sight.

We proceeded so slowly, owing to the ruggedness of the road, and John's care of his horse, that though only five miles distant, it took us two hours and a half to reach our destination, both heartily tired by that time of our dull and lumbering conveyance. The road was not a pleasing one, as we left the hill country behind us, and entered on a bare arable tract, attractive enough I daresay to the mere agriculturist; but I was none.

The village of Crossford was composed of a long dull stripe of houses, quite as dilapidated and dirty as the generality of Scotch cottages are. Some of the

houses possessed an upper story; but most of them had only one. A few cottages stood detached from the rest, and were somewhat more respectable-looking than their neighbours, having little gardens (not particularly well attended to) behind or in front. One of these evidently belonged to the wright (for there was a woodyard close by it, and a sawing-pit), and another to the blacksmith of the village, both dignitaries in their little world. But the village could boast of no beauty of any sort. Dunghills and pigsties in general ornamented the rear of the dwellings, and in front were abundance of gutters and puddles formed by the droppings from the thatch in rainy weather. As we passed, these were tenanted by dirty ducks, and still dirtier children.

The manse lay only a short distance beyond the village, through which we had to drive to reach it. The rumbling of the cart brought many of the inhabitants to their doors and windows, while the children, deserting their employment of paddling with their bare legs in the pools, stuck on to the end of the cart, ambitious of the glory of a drive, and utterly regardless of the whip with which John vainly assailed them from the front. They clung to their position till we reached the gate of the manse, where another bevy of village urchins stood watching the arrival of the ministers. The cart was with some difficulty turned into the narrow entrance, and they then dismissed us with loud cheers. At length we reached the house door, where Mrs Purdie, already dressed in a bright silk

gown, which set off her somewhat portly-looking figure to much advantage, appeared in a great bustle to bid us welcome.

"Come awa Mr Douglas—blythe to see ye baith," she exclaimed with hospitable alacrity, as she assisted us in our descent from the cart, which our shaken limbs rendered very necessary. "Mr Patterson and Doctor Dryscreed are come before you—they're in the parlour with Mr Purdie. We expect a very full meeting. How's a' wi' ye, John. Just tak your beast to the stable—the key's in the door—and dinna spare the corn; and now come this way," ushering us into the house. "Ye maun be sair fatigued wi' your drive, and of course you'll tak something before you go in to the meeting."

My father however declined all refreshment, and at his request was shown into the room where his brother ministers were assembled. I followed Mrs Purdie into the dining-room, where already appeared great preparations for the approaching feast. The leaves of a large dinner-table were extended, and on the window seats and sideboard were heaped plates, glasses, knives and forks, spoons, *et cetera*, in great profusion: a cluster of dusty cobwebbed bottles stood in a corner, and a suspicious-looking jar of tolerable dimensions was beneath the sideboard. The cupboard too, which was partially open, permitted a glance at well laden shelves. The Purdies were always hospitable, but there was evidently a great affair at present in contemplation.

"I have had such a fight a' mornin' wi' the bairns,"

said the good lady, after a sufficient pause had been allowed for contemplating the surrounding glories. "Poor things, it's but natural to them to wish to see a' things, but they canna keep their hands to themselves. I wish Jeanie was a wee aulder, it would be such a help. But now, my dear, ye maun take off your things, and come wi' me to the pantry, unless ye would like a little rest first."

I was not at all fatigued I assured her.

"Weel that's good, for as for mysel I'm dung clean stupid wi' a' this stir, and scarcely ken what to turn to first. But for ony sake we maun take care the bairns dinna ken you're here (it's a mercy they were out o' the way when the cart came), or I'll get no good of you ava." So saying she hurried me up stairs to the small bedroom I was accustomed to occupy when visiting the manse. Here I divested myself of my wrappings, and then accompanied Mrs Purdie to her store-room, which she called the pantry, to give her my promised assistance.

In the meantime vehicle after vehicle rumbled up to the door of the manse, and the hum of voices from the apartment in which the reverend presbytery was assembled began gradually to deepen. Indeed, to judge by the sounds which occasionally reached our ears, even in the recesses of the pantry, I would have supposed the meeting rather one of conviviality, than one of serious men assembled on grave and important business. But some of our ministers, alas! were a reckless set of men, very ill fitted, I fear, for their office,

and their more sober-minded brethren could not restrain them by their presence. Mrs Purdie did not always interrupt her employment to receive the new arrivals. She first popped her head into the passage to recognise the individual, and unless he happened to be a favourite she proceeded no farther, leaving the servant to show such to the proper room, though their own ears, I thought, might have guided them there.

She bustled about in the most active manner, wearing a homely apron to preserve her silk dress from stains—she had provided me with a similar one. Now she was off to the kitchen, whence her voice sounded shrill and high in a lecture to Betty ; and in another minute she would be again at my side, taking up the thread of the story she had dropped, and all with the most perfect composure. I could not help admiring her good temper, and the coolness she displayed in giving me all the gossip of the country-side, with her house in such confusion. All she seemed to dread was an inroad from the children.

“ I have ordered auld Janet to keep them in the nursery,” she said uneasily ; “ but wha can keep bairns in if they are determined to be out ? and if they break in here they will be dipping their fingers in every thing. That was Johnny, enoo—I hope they ’re no quarrelling. Hech sirs—but ye little ken, my dear, what it is to hae a family ; the bearing o’ them ’s naething to the rearing o’ them.”

It was really a busy forenoon. I enjoyed comparative quiet, as unlike Mrs Purdie I had no occasion to

leave the pantry. Poor Mrs Purdie ! her jolly good-natured face, which certainly never was pale, began to grow a fiery red. With her journeys from pantry to kitchen, from thence to nursery, and from nursery to dining-room, the drops of moisture stood on her brow. She however preserved her imperturbable good nature through it all. It was this easy temper that made her so universally liked. Every one, from the richest to the poorest in the parish had a good word to say of Mrs Purdie.

At length my labours were completed. I had done my best, and I was loaded with thanks and praises. "And now," said my hostess, after carefully inspecting for the third time all our preparations, which resulted in much satisfaction, "I think you should take a turn in the garden to freshen you after a' this work—I will send the bairns out to keep you company. Ye ken ye maun look smart at dinner time, for the young minister o' Crossbasket's at the meeting, and he isna matched yet. Oh ! but it's a bonny place, and the stipend 's a chalder mair than Auchtermuir, I can tell you. Na, ye needna laugh that way neither ; ye may gang farther and fare waur for a' that ye hae a bonny face o' your ain. But I maunna say mair enoo, for there 's Betty coming to see about the soup." And shaking her head at me, she hurried away to speak to the servant.

I found my way to the garden as she advised, though I could have dispensed with the company which she had promised me, for the little Purdies were

mostly all rude children, and by this time I was somewhat fatigued, having been constantly employed for upwards of two hours.

The garden lay behind the house. The manse of Crossford was not a very attractive place. The hand of taste was not perceptible there. The house itself was larger than ours at Auchtermuir; but there was no room for comparison between the two in point of neatness and comfort. The situation, too, was bad, near to the village, and almost overlooked by it,—an advantage to inquisitive neighbours, but intolerable to a family, unless, as Mrs Purdie said, “they got used to it.” The house was lofty and narrow, with a small wing on one side containing the kitchens. Garret windows projected from the roof, and the whole building was coloured a dirty white, streaked here and there with green stains, the marks of a stormy winter. A space wide enough to turn a carriage, and very barely strewn with gravel, lay in front of the door, to which one low step gave access. Beyond the gravelled space was a green, in the shape of a crescent, surrounded by some straggling overgrown shrubs, and a belt of trees. A low wall and a thorn hedge encircled this, separating it from the glebe and public road which the house faced; the stable and other out-houses were close at hand. A door, painted of a dingy green, and somewhat insecure on its hinges, opened in a wall on one side of the house into the garden.

In it there was nothing to attract the eye; the orna-

mental there was made entirely to give place to the merely useful. A large round bleaching green, with wooden posts (some of them not quite perpendicular) for drying linen, was near to the house, a pump-well was close by it. Two large water barrels, for catching the rain which ran from the roof, stood close to the walls, and a dog's kennel, surrounded by a stone fence, occupied the space between them. There were a few plots, originally intended, I suppose, for flowers ; but nothing of the kind was to be seen, with the exception of some rose-bushes of the common kinds, and a few plants of apple-ringey and mint. The rest of the garden, which was tolerably large, was appropriated to pot vegetables and small fruit. Of the larger fruit trees there were very few.

A walk, strewn with ashes, and bordered with tall box, in which many gaps appeared, led round this inviting domain, up which I leisurely bent my steps ; but I was soon interrupted by the clamour of voices behind me, which betokened that the juvenile Purdies had at length escaped from their imprisonment. They came helter-skelter through the garden, rejoicing in their freedom from restraint, their voices raised in disagreement, and scratching and pushing one another like little savages. Their ages varied from three to twelve years, and they were five in number. None of them had any claims to beauty beyond healthy ruddy countenances, though Mrs Purdie boasted, when speaking of her offspring, “ they were braw stout

bairns, puir things, and didna put their meat in an ill skin."

The eldest was a girl between twelve and thirteen, tall and awkward, and very boisterous in her manners, when unrestrained by strangers, showing little consideration for those younger than herself, but quiet, sly, and prim when exposed to notice. The others were merely a mixture of the ordinary species of boys and girls, the youngest of whom was spoiled by his parents, and envied by his brethren. Such was the group that, calling upon me to stop, came rushing up and over the garden walk somewhat to my regret and consternation: these did not lessen as they more nearly approached.

"Get out o' the way, Tam!" cried Jeanie, the eldest, who, from seeing me occasionally, had overcome all restraint in my company. "What for are you dunshing that gate?—Mama's sent me to Miss Douglas."

"Get out o' the way yoursel'!" Here followed a blow and some struggling between them, when I interposed.

"It's Jeanie aye maun hae her ain way," said the boy, darting, while he spoke, a revengeful look at his sister, which threatened future retaliation.

"Oh, Tam!" exclaimed the girl in a loud key of expostulation.

"Yes, you do; and mama sent me as weel as you."

"Oh, Tam—what a lee!" again ejaculated the other. "Did she, Phemie?"

Here I once more checked the rising storm, though the children continued to throw spiteful glances towards one another; and having taken notice of them all, I proposed, as a quiet saunter was now out of the question, that they should accompany me to the church, which was the subject of the day's meeting.

"Mama said we were na to gang outside the yett," whispered the most timid of the girls, a little fair-haired thing of five years old, who, compared with her robust and boisterous companions, looked delicate and interesting, and who, I was often sorry to see, was somewhat neglected by those who, in consequence, should have shown her more kindness. But Mrs Purdie's affections were principally devoted to her boys.

"Then we shall not go, Phemie," I said, stooping to caress the little girl, whose fair cheek coloured at the notice she had excited. But her unruly companions were indignant at her interfering with a proposal into which they eagerly entered.

"Phemie's aye frichted," said one; "and I'm sure mama would let us go with Miss Douglas," said another. "I'm determined I'll gang," cried the eldest boy: "Mr Cochrane promised me a ride on his brown mare the first time he came, and old Saunders that brought the beef from the town says he's come; so here we go—hurra!" And he flew down the walk, his next brother followed, both whooping and huzzazing, and they were speedily out of sight.

"Well, they'll get it," said their eldest sister, look-

ing after them with a discontented glance, which showed how willingly she would have followed their example if she durst : the prospect of their punishment was some consolation however. I was glad to be rid of the elder boys, and now walked on in peace with the other children, “wee Johnny” taking possession of my hand, while Phemie, my especial protégée, came to the other side and held timidly by my gown.

“What is the matter with Bella?” I asked of her eldest sister, surprised to see one of the children with red eyes and all the signs of grief, with no apparent reason.

“Oh, she’s a silly thing,” she replied, giving her sister at the same time a shake,—“What are you greetin’ for? I’m sure I didna hurt you. She thinks there’ll be no apple-pie left after dinner, and she’s been crying about it all morning.”

“Weel,” sobbed the disconsolate lover of apple-pie, “ye ken yoursel’ that Mr M‘Gilvray aye takes twa helpings, and sae does papa.”

I could not help laughing. Poor Bella! in her childish heart she hated Mr M‘Gilvray—their mutual propensities interfered. It had a moral.

“And hasna mama promised that we’ll have another on Saturday when uncle Peter comes?” said Miss Jeanie.

“Ay, but Saturday’s no the day,” grumbled the little girl, who would not be satisfied.

“Me want apple-pie too,” now whimpered Johnny,

taking a lesson from his sister, with his finger in his mouth.

"Now, Johnny, dinna you begin, for if there's a bit left mama will be sure to give it to you," said his eldest sister impatiently. I took the children into a rude kind of summer-house which stood in a corner of the garden, and promised to tell them a story if Bella would dry her eyes and think no more of the pie. She agreed to do so; so I sat with Johnny on my knee and the other children grouped about me, and told them stories for half an hour. Then we took another walk, and Johnny, who was a lively though spoiled child, insisted on showing me all his possessions in the garden, a little spade and cart, and such like articles, which were kept in a small tool-house; and so the time wore on.

I was beginning however to grow weary of my situation, as I did not know how to get free of the children, when an old woman who acted as nurse-maid to them appeared at the foot of the walk. "There's old Janet," said Jeanie, who had been silent ever since the story-telling; "mama will be wanting us now."

"Come awa, bairns!" cried the ancient crone, pausing first to take breath and to make herself heard; "come awa like gude bairns, for the ministers are a' back frae the kirk, and the dinner will sune be in."

The children obeyed the summons. I felt it was also time for me to return to the house and make such alterations in my simple dress as were requisite. I

accordingly followed the children, and met Mrs Purdie in the lobby on her way from the kitchen, who further hurried me by telling me that the ministers had concluded their business, and were all assembled in the parlour, impatient, as Mr Purdie informed her, for their dinner. I was not long in preparing myself, and running down stairs, I entered the room in which the company were waiting. I found a large party there. Besides the clergymen, there were several of the proprietors in the parish present, who had attended the meeting to look after their own interests. There were also two ladies, one of them the wife of a neighbouring minister with whom I was acquainted, and the other a Miss Cochrane, the sister of one of the heritors, who kept house for him.

The children were confined to the nursery; but a certain humming and kicking overhead sufficiently indicated the place of their imprisonment. Occasionally, too, the shuffling of feet in the passage, and the peeping in of several small heads at the partly open door, showed that the young folks had partially burst from the restraint to which they had been consigned under the charge of old Janet. At such times, however, Mrs Purdie quietly rose and put a stop to the exhibition by hastily closing the door (which was soon re-opened), after which she returned to her seat and her conversation with Mrs Symington the other matron.

At length, after waiting in spite of the hurry what seemed an interminable period, during which Mrs Purdie had fidgeted and her spouse had grumbled to

no purpose, the door was suddenly thrown open, and a great blousy servant girl, her cap flaming with red ribbons, announced in a loud voice that “dinner was ready.”

All was now joyful alacrity among the company : the ladies were each hastily tucked under an arm, and we adjourned to the dining-room, which was only divided by the breadth of an ordinary passage from the other room. We were soon seated round the dinner-table, where I found myself placed between an old grey-haired minister who was notoriously deaf, and the newly appointed minister of Crossbasket, the already-mentioned Mr Wylie. This latter circumstance, I saw, was duly noted by Mrs Purdie, even amidst her anxiety to observe if all the dishes were properly arranged on the table, and a significant nod of the head testified her satisfaction at the chance which had brought us together.

At the request of Mr Purdie, (who, by-the-bye, was a fat good-natured little man, whose greatest faults were a love of ease and good living, and who, if these were indulged, left most things to the care of his wife), a blessing was asked by the oldest minister present, who also happened to be moderator, and was seated at our hostess’ right hand.

“Jenny, take off the covers,” then said Mrs Purdie. The covers were speedily removed by our two attendants, one of whom was evidently the cook, promoted to the office now that her labours in the kitchen were discharged. A look of complacency gradually stole

over the countenances of the reverend guests as they looked around them, for a good and plentiful dinner smoked before them. There were both cockyleekie and brown soup, (Mrs Purdie was famous for her soups), but the principal and favourite dish was a gigantic round of salted beef at the foot of the table (cured by Mrs Purdie herself, as she took care to inform us) with its usual accompaniment of greens.

“ Ye are getting a very plain dinner, gentlemen,” said the hostess, “ but ye maun just make the best o’t,” her words evidently contradicted by the secret look of pride visible in her countenance as her eye glanced over her well spread board. In her heart of hearts, she knew that no minister’s wife in the presbytery gave so good a dinner to her company. Of course, the highest satisfaction was expressed by her guests, and many jokes (some of them sadly wanting in point) made on the excellence of the feast, to all of which the hostess did “ seriously incline ” during the brief breathing-time allowed her by her attention to the wants of the company. Mr Purdie was as assiduous at his end of the table, and the round of beef speedily diminished in a surprising manner. Mrs Purdie, indeed, seemed quite in her element. She had an idea that she played the part of hostess well, and in old days, I must tell you, it was a very fatiguing one, for unless you pressed your guests with due vigour, you were not considered hospitable. This supposition was sufficient to overcome fatigue, though what with talking, carving, and pressing the

company to eat, her countenance, red enough before, now fairly pained one to look at. She was a salamander all over, face, neck, and dress ; her eye was upon every plate, and she seemed delighted to see the good cheer she had provided vanishing.

" Ye are eating naething, Mr Mucklewham," she would say ; " Dr Auld, I 'm vexed to see you hae sae little appetite,—let Mr Purdie gie you another slice o' the beef. (Jenny take the doctor's plate.) Mrs Symington, I 'm feared your no making your dinner,—try the pigeon-pie, it 's after a receipt o' my ain :—My dear (to her husband), will you see to the young leddies,—Miss Cochrane's got naething on her plate. I 'm sure, Mr Wylie, Miss Douglas will take something mair if you will press her."

In this manner she went on recommending particular dishes, and calling on every guest repeatedly " to make their dinner." Occasionally she indulged in a few private admonitions to the servants, whispering orders, and finding fault if they forgot or blundered in any of their duties, which was pretty often the case. Her guests did full justice to her entertainment, most of them enjoying themselves like men who were not often accustomed to encounter such a dinner. As their appetites, sharpened by their morning's occupation, became appeased, conversation grew more general. Among the listeners was my father, who was always reserved in company ; but his example was followed by few, for joviality was the order of the moment. There seemed, however, a line

of separation drawn between the clergymen and those laymen who were present ; professional jokes and allusions were often made by the former, which the latter had no key to : they were, therefore, somewhat out of their element among the reverend company in which they were placed, and glad when they could edge in a word amidst the hum of laughter and conversation.

The two matrons appeared to enjoy themselves ; for my part I felt tired and stupid. My next neighbour, Mr Wylie, I found to be a common-place person, whose former life had not fitted him to be very entertaining with women. A few remarks only on ordinary topics were exchanged between us after sitting down at table, and now we were both silent. My other neighbour, I have said, was deaf, and misunderstood every word I ventured to address to him : I was ashamed to raise my voice to the pitch suited to his infirmity, and having been peevishly informed that “unless I spoke plainer, I had better hold my tongue,” was glad to do so. My situation was, therefore, no enviable one. Good-natured Mr Purdie, however, occasionally addressed a word to me as I sat silent between these two agreeable companions ; but this could only be at rare intervals, as he had the duties of a host to attend to.

Miss Cochrane, who was seated opposite me, was evidently satisfied with her situation : she was a lively showy-looking girl, a little giddy perhaps, and fond of admiration. She did her best to engage the atten-

tion of the younger men, in which candour makes me acknowledge she perfectly succeeded ; she had a fortune of three thousand pounds to add to her attractions, while poor I had nothing. We were not acquainted : Mrs Purdie had introduced us to each other in the parlour, but she took no farther notice of me.

When the sweet-course came, it was my turn to receive compliments. Mrs Purdie, in the kindness of her heart, could not refrain from informing the company of my morning's assistance : she took the opportunity of recommending, in what she considered an adroit manner (though it covered me with blushes), some of my handiwork to Mr Wylie, assuring him that Miss Douglas was the best at this in the country-side, and calling on my father to corroborate the truth of what she asserted : of course he only smiled.

This gave the married ministers an opening for an attack upon the bachelor. One observed, that he thought the manse of Crossbasket was unco dull and ill seen-to the last time he was there, and that it wadna be the waur of a mistress that kent as weel as Miss Douglas to look after a house. Another threatened Mr Wylie with the penalty attached to bachelorship at the next presbytery dinner, namely, a bottle of wine.

To the great delight of the company in general, Mr Wylie and I both looked confused at this open attack : I believe the poor man was afraid I might take it in earnest ; Mr Purdie chuckled, and rubbed his hands ; Mrs Purdie and Mrs Symington exchanged significant glances, and told me “not to mind,”

while they both seemed delighted with the effect of the joke. As for Miss Cochrane, she absolutely stopped in the flirtation she was carrying on, and for the first time looked fully across the table. At length my good friend Mr Patterson came to my relief, and as he was also a bachelor, and an old one, he succeeded in attracting a portion of the raillery to himself, thus allowing me to regain my composure, which had been considerably shaken by this public attack. Mr Wylie took care not to address another word to me during the evening.

After the cloth was removed, a large punch-bowl of Indian china with glasses was placed on the table. I forgot to remark that during the whole time of dinner there had been an unusual bustle, and a movement of feet in the passage, a scrambling it seemed for the spoils of the dinner, for the servants' voices were often heard in expostulation. All the notice Mrs Purdie took of this (for her husband did not interfere) was to desire that the door should be kept closed ; but when the glasses were placed upon the table, she whispered audibly to the servant to " tell the bairns they might come in now."

Accordingly, after the delay of a few minutes, which were employed, I suppose, in composing their dress by old Janet, the door was thrown open, and the children made their appearance. They advanced according to their ages, "wee Johnny" bringing up the rear. The girls were dressed in white muslin frocks and red sashes, with necklaces of blue beads. The

eldest looked half inclined to be bashful, half to be forward,—the others only looked eagerly to the table in search of the biscuits.

There was a sudden pause in the conversation as they entered, and then a forced alacrity to welcome and make room for them. Children are considered by almost every one except their parents a dreadful nuisance on such occasions, while civility requires the guests to pay them some attention. They should really never be intruded upon large mixed parties. A damp seemed to fall upon the company, conversation was interrupted, and more than one discussion postponed to a more convenient season, the parents and children only appearing satisfied and at their ease. Some formal remarks on the children's growth and ages were made at the head of the table, and Mrs Symington and our hostess compared notes on the height, temper, and inclinations of their different offspring, each secretly claiming the superiority for her own. A look of invitation from me brought Phemie timidly to my side,—Johnny had stolen to his usual place beside his mother, and the others were disposed of among the company. A glass of currant wine was then given to each of them, and by desire of their smiling parents they were in turn compelled to drink the company's good health, naming every individual present, and assisted by Mr or Mrs Purdie when their recollection failed them.

“ How old is Johnny ? ” inquired Mrs Symington, with an appearance of great interest.

"Three years auld last November," answered the mother.

Mrs Symington was quite astonished. "Dear me! he's very big of his age."

"He's a very forward laddie of his years," stroking down the hair of her favourite. "But ye have such fine bairns, Mrs Symington, yoursel'. You can repeat 'The Lord's my shepherd,' and 'How doth the little busy bee,' already,—canna ye, Johnny?"

Johnny took no notice of this question, his attention being wholly engrossed by the contents of the sugar canister which stood near. "Me some sugar, mama," he asked, or rather demanded.

"Repeat the 'little busy bee' to Mrs Symington, and you'll get it," said the proud mother.

"Come, Johnny," said that lady in a coaxing tone.

"How doth the little," began Johnny, but stopping suddenly, he whispered loud enough to be heard, "Mama, Tam's gettin' sweeties from the gentleman."

"Whisht—and ye'll may be get sweeties too," said Mrs Purdie.

"But Tam's gettin' them a'," whimpered Johnny, who, with finger in mouth, sat looking discontentedly at his brother's luck.

"Tam," said his mother coaxingly, anxious to please her favourite, "there's a good callant, gie Johnny some o' your peppermint draps."

"I've just got twa three," answered Tam, who was crunching as fast as he was able, "and I hae nane to gie to Johnny."

"I am very sorry," said the gentleman, feeling again in his pockets; "but I fear"—The search was without effect.

Here we were all startled by a howl from Johnny, occasioned by his disappointment.

"Whisht, whisht, laddie," said his mother, somewhat ashamed of this exhibition, and endeavouring to quiet him. "Whisht, like a gude bairn, and ye'll get a penny the morn to buy peppermint draps." But Johnny was deaf to her expostulations and promises (perhaps he had experienced the deceptive nature of the latter); the noise of course put a stop to all conversation, and drew every one's attention to himself.

"Johnny, Johnny," said his father, knitting his brows and looking up the table.

"For ony sake, Tam," said his mother beseechingly, "gie him the sweeties. Ye bad laddie, are ye no ashamed roaring that way? What will the company think of ye. Hold your tongue this minute, or you'll be sent out o' the room." All was of no avail—the disturbance continued.

"What's this, Johnny?" at length inquired the Rev. Dr. Dryscreed, who sat at the hostess' right hand, holding up a halfpenny as he spoke. "What is it?" again asked the doctor.

"It's a bawbee," murmured Johnny, while smiles returned to his countenance.

"And will ye greet ony mair if ye get it."

Johnny promised; and immediately clutched the halfpenny, which he held up in triumph to Tom.

"Dr Dryscreed's owre kind to you," said the pleased mother, "and you ought to beg the company's pardon." To this Johnny turned a deaf ear while contemplating his treasure.

"It's a fine thing to greet," said Tam spitefully, who was in part to blame for the disturbance, and who had now finished his peppermints. But he was silenced by his mother.

"My dear," said Mrs Purdie, now addressing her husband, who had returned when the disturbance was over to his former conversation,—"My dear, I dinna think you're minding the punch-bowl. A' the glasses are empty, and Mrs Symington and me (winking jocosely to the other matron) dinna mean to content ourselves with ane. Ye ken, Dr Dryscreed, ministers' wives are privileged,—it's a' vera weel for the young leddies to be mim-mouthed, but we're no to be put off that way."

"You are quite right, mem," answered the doctor in his formal pedantic manner, "the creature comforts are not to be despised. I myself am not averse to a quiet modicum at a time—*quiet* you know—(here the doctor emptied his glass and pushed it towards Mr Purdie), and especially considering the care and trouble you must have had in preparing this feast for us, I would vote that you should be found entitled to ane extra."

The doctor was not a long-winded man, so, having delivered himself of this lengthy speech, he drew a deep breath, and looked anxiously towards the punch-bowl.

"Hout no, doctor—it's a pleasure instead o' a trouble, and ane extra, I doubt, might be ane owre mony,—twa is the maist that I can ever take, for I have na a strong head at ony time. Come, Mrs Symington, take off your glass, for it's a while since the minister drank the rising generation, and he's been winking and signing to me to move for the last five minutes."

"Such nonsense, my dear, I only"—

"Na, na, minister, ye needna deny 't; but here we're awa, and ye'll get to your cracks. Come awa bairns, for ye mauna bide here;" and marshalling her brood before her, and followed by us, Mrs Purdie led the way from the dining-room, greatly, as could be easily perceived, to the satisfaction of those we left behind us.

On our return to the parlour we were entertained by an exhibition of the children's accomplishments. Miss Purdie was desired by the complacent mother (who doubted not but her guests were as delighted as herself) to produce for inspection the "braw new shirt she had just finished for her papa, made without help, except the stitching of the collar and wristbands, and the whipping up and sewing on of the frills." This having received the proper meed of praise, was succeeded by some other performance: then Bella was made to dance the Highland fling, which she had learnt from one of the servants—a Highland girl—consisting of various turnings and twistings, and perpendicular leaps in the air; so that we had plenty of

amusement, such as it was. The exhibition was closed by the recital of “The Lord’s my shepherd,” and “How doth the little busy bee,” by Johnny, aided by his mother in those parts in which his memory was defective, which upon an average was once in every second line.

Thus the evening wore on. The two matrons got into close communication. The children romped, quarrelled, were rebuked by their mother, and at last, as they got sleepy, were despatched to bed, not, however, without much crying and resistance. Miss Cochrane and I each occupied a corner of the sofa, and occasionally exchanged a word, or yawned and looked at the fire. She was impatient, I suppose, for the re-appearance of the gentlemen, and I was anxious for my father’s, that we might get home.

Joyful was the sound of the breaking up of the revels in the dining-room, whose distant echoes had all along been in our ears, and at length in came the reverend presbytery by twos or threes at a time, most of them very red in the face, and each rubbing his hands, as if he felt the night very cold.

“Here we are at last, gudewife,” said Mr Purdie, who seemed in a high state of glee, advancing to where his spouse was seated by Mrs Symington, “come to get a cup o’ your tea, to do awa the ill effects o’ the toddy.”

“Deed, minister, we were just thinking ye seemed owre fond o’ the toddy bowl to quit it the night. But ye ’se get your tea,—it’s been masket an hour since,

and we're a' wearying for it;" and rising from her seat, she bustled to the tea-kettle, where the tea-things had been displayed, as she said, for more than an hour.

The room was small,—the party filled it to overflowing. A perfect Babel of tongues arose in it, for almost every one talked, and few seemed inclined to listen,—the effects of the toddy were apparent. The old gentleman, my dinner companion, as if to make amends for his former shortness, sat down by me, and endeavoured to entertain me by a disquisition on church law, in reference to a case then under the consideration of the presbytery. He went by the nickname of "Slow John,"—and prosy enough he was to be sure. I was beginning sadly to weary for our departure, vainly endeavouring to catch my father's eye, who was quietly conversing in a corner with Mr Patterson, when happily the servant opened the door, and announced with a titter that "Mr Douglas's servant had said he wad wait nae langer."

"Rose, are you ready?" said my father. I rose immediately, too glad to go, to mind the message which excited some mirth. I bade the company good night, resisting Mr and Mrs Purdie's pressing invitation to wait "just another hour," and was soon seated in the cart by my father. John was very discontented at being made to wait so long, and scarcely spoke as he helped us in. How glad I was to hear the branches of the trees rustling on the top of the cart, as it moved along to the gate. We turned out

of the entrance ; the long road was before us, and the fresh air blew into the cart—it was so sweet after the fumes of the toddy ! The change from the din and confusion we had left, to the quiet and solitude of the road, was most refreshing. There was no moon, but there was star-light ; and the horse, conscious he was returning to his own stable, moved briskly on. I was happy to be once more alone with my father. I felt how superior he was to most of those we had left.

My father informed me on our way home that he and Dr Dryscreed had been appointed by the presbytery to attend the General Assembly of the Kirk, in Edinburgh, in the ensuing month.

CHAPTER X.

And there were rooms, both large and small, and turrets not a few ;
And dusky holes, and corners queer, that scarce the housemaid knew ;
And ghostly chambers, lock'd and barr'd, with low o'erarching doors ;
And rusty mail, and antlers huge, and spears, and polished floors.

THE period when the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland meets, is in the latter end of the month of May. I would have liked exceedingly to accompany my father to Edinburgh ; for I had never seen our Scottish metropolis. Indeed, I had only been once in Glasgow, when my father took me to visit my aunt, who was his only sister, and married there. I knew, however, that he could ill afford any extra expense, and I kept my wishes secret. He had lived so long and constantly in the country, as to have dropped acquaintance with all his old friends, and he was too reserved a man to make new ones ; so he had no alternative but to live in lodgings during the assembly time. My company would thus have been (not to mention the additional expense) an encumbrance to him, as there was no one he could have intrusted me to while engaged in his duties. So, after he had once alluded

to this, which showed me he had been considering it, the subject was mentioned no more.

My father gave me many charges before he left home. I was to visit the sick in his absence, and more particularly two or three old women, who were so blind, through age and infirmity, as to be unable to read. I was to pay attention to the preacher who had agreed to supply the pulpit during his stay in Edinburgh, and I was to take his place in the Sabbath school; all which I readily promised to do, though with a heavy heart, as I looked forward to our separation for more than one week.

I had seldom been separated from my father. It was some years since he had formerly been appointed a member of assembly, and I was little more than a child at that time. Since then he had rarely been absent a night from his own roof, and we had lived in such close companionship, that I did not know how I would get on alone.

It was early on a Tuesday morning that my father set off for Edinburgh. Dr Dryscreed, the minister of Drumsheugh, was to be his companion to the assembly, and it had been agreed that they should travel in the latter's covered cart together till they reached the city, where lodgings were already engaged for them through some friend of the doctor's.

My father left home on horseback,—John accompanying him on foot to bring back the horse when they had reached Drumsheugh manse. His small valise was fastened behind the saddle. I was rather

anxious about my father's health, for he had been suffering from a severe cold for some time; but I comforted myself with the hope that the change of air might do him good.

He embraced me with much affection, and bidding God bless me, he went on his journey. I mounted hastily to the highest window in the house which commanded a view of the road, and watched the travellers till a turn in it near the Craiglands gate hid them from my sight. My heart felt very sad as I left the window, and thought of the weary days that must pass before I could see him again. But I endeavoured to shake it off, and therefore set about my usual employments; however, these on a sudden had turned distasteful.

It was a melancholy day to me. I could scarcely bear to sit down to my solitary meals. These were in general the liveliest moments of our quiet day, for my father then liked me to chat to him, and I felt the contrast.

I took out my work and sat down in my usual seat by the open window. The bees were buzzing in the blossoms on the walls, the birds were singing merrily about me, and the perfume of the early flowers was very sweet. But I was sad. There was no sound within the house save the ticking of the old clock that stood on the staircase, or the murmur of the servants' voices in the kitchen. My feelings threw a cloud over every thing: the sunshine seemed less bright than usual, the twittering of the birds annoyed me,

and I could take no pleasure in the flowers. At last, Nanny, as she went through the rooms up stairs about her work, began to sing ; but instead of the lively airs she usually carolled, she now chose some melancholy ditty, which unconsciously filled my eyes with tears. To tell the truth, I had been a spoiled child from my birth, and had been trained with such tenderness as to render me almost ignorant of what privation of any kind was. I was therefore easily overset.

I in vain tried to get interested in my customary occupations ; they had all grown dull and irksome. I at last therefore gave up all thought of work, and spent most of the day in wandering about the garden with a book, or in listless attempts at trimming the flower-beds. I missed John's company—I could have talked to him. This will never do, I at length said ; I must not allow myself to get dispirited. To-morrow I must arrange some plan of employment which will at least keep me occupied. I will begin, as my father wished me, to visit.

The mere forming of this resolution renewed my spirits in some measure ; I felt the better of it.

After taking an early tea, I all at once resolved to go over to the Craiglands. Owing to the preparations for my father's departure, I had not seen my old friend Mrs Johnstone for some days, nor paid a visit to the library. I knew the good woman would be wearying to see me, as I seldom allowed so long a time to elapse without visiting her. She had suffered a great deal from her rheumatisms during the past winter, and

did not often venture out of doors ; so she depended very much upon me for society, as Mysie and Bauldy, the two old servants, were scarce fit companions for her.

I felt it was the best way in which I could spend the first evening of my solitude ; so I prepared for my walk.

I pursued my way to the Craiglands with spirits considerably renovated. I found the depression which had hung about me all day gradually yield beneath the influence of exercise and breezy air. It was still early in the evening, and wanted some time of sunset. The trees which overshadowed the solitary road were beautiful in their first fresh greenness, and underneath the beechen hedge was a profusion of primroses and violets gleaming from among the grass.

It was a lovely hedge that. It lay in so snug and sheltered a nook, that its leaves were always expanded when others in more open situations had theirs still wrapped up in their coats ; and the small bank beneath it was as smooth and green as if the fairies held court there.

I soon reached the old-fashioned gateway of the Craiglands. A small wicket on one side was alone left unfastened to admit foot-passengers, who were the only visitors that now made their appearance at the house, and pushing it open, I continued my walk down the dim and grass-grown avenue. This path was as familiar to me as one of our own garden walks, and I loved it much. It was a favourite and constant haunt of mine.

I loved to wander beneath the twilight-gloom of those majestic trees, whose hoary branches were so interlaced overhead as to make the sky invisible even at noonday. Even the neglect, apparent as it was, gave (at least I thought so) a greater charm to the walk. I could sit contentedly for hours at the root of one of these old fantastic trees, watching the sunbeams flickering between the boughs, and streaking in bright patches the moss-grown road, indulging in some poet's dream too fanciful and disjointed for after-remembrance. Oh ! it was such a place for musing in on some still, hot summer's day. There was such a *soughing* in the twisted boughs of the huge Scotch firs which were scattered among the other trees, and such a delicious murmur from the many hidden streams which were wandering on to meet the Clyde, that one's eyes involuntarily closed under their soothing influence. Once, when I was only twelve years old, Mrs Johnstone found me sound asleep at the foot of one of these firs. She always called it afterwards, "Rose's Cradle."

There is something peculiarly solemn and impressive in the aspect of ancient trees, especially those which surround the dwellings of the great and the nobly descended. Their antiquity leads the mind back, back, through a long course of vanished ages to the time when they were in their infancy. They speak to us of mighty changes, of great and important revolutions, not only in the fortunes of families, but convulsing empires ; and these lordly relics live on

amidst them all. They see generation after generation of the masters who own them pass away, and they rear their heads as grandly and as proudly as ever. Compared with us puny short-lived mortals, they represent eternity. How solemn is the aspect of trees !

I grew more and more thoughtful as I wandered on beneath their shade. Before me, at the termination of the long avenue, but half hidden by drooping branches, was the front of the Craiglands house. The brilliant light of the evening sun was gleaming on the small narrow windows, and rested in one bright patch on the grass below. It was a striking picture set in the dark frame of the trees : I stopped to gaze upon it. All was dim obscurity where I stood, but there before me lay that bright sunny spot, sending a ray of light down the avenue like the glance of an eye. I thought I had never looked on any scene half so beautiful or tranquil, and yet it was deserted. How I pitied the possessor ; and those too who had once inhabited these empty chambers, who had wandered beneath these trees—Where were they ?

It is often in such scenes as this that we are forcibly brought to contemplate the briefness and uncertainty of life ; all around is so full of a former time in which we had no participation, no existence. An ancient mansion-house, especially if it be deserted by its owner, preaches a most impressive sermon. But I must not keep you all night in the avenue.

Such reflections suggested themselves to my mind as I walked leisurely on. I was in a mood this night akin to all sad thoughts, but still it was a kind of pleasing sadness which I rather liked to encourage. I was willing to prolong the pleasure I always felt in being here ; all was so still and tranquil as to invite one to meditation. Occasionally the low chirp of some bird in the branches far overhead broke on the delicious quiet without disturbing it ; or the faint breeze, which the evening had awakened, rustled gently among the tree-tops ; but no ruder sound was to be heard.

I was now in the vicinity of the house, but I felt rather disinclined to seek Mrs Johnstone's parlour immediately, so I resolved to make my first visit to the library : this I could easily accomplish unobserved in such an old scrambling house, the servants' rooms being in a remote part of the building.

Turning therefore from the avenue into a green formal walk, sheltered by high hedges of dark holly, I soon emerged through a low arch cut in the hedge to the right upon a little turf esplanade on the east side of the house. This part of the building was entirely covered with old and most luxuriant ivy. Placing my foot on a sturdy branch, which I had often before made use of for the same purpose, I succeeded in throwing open a window, which I well knew was unfastened, as the clasp of the shutter was broke. I then clambered with the help of my hands upon the sill, and stepping lightly down, I was in the dining-

room of the mansion, an ancient apartment, most dreary-looking at present, as the carpet was of course up and the furniture somewhat scanty.

The library was on another floor; so, after carefully shutting the window by which I had entered, and closing the shutters, I groped my way out of the room till I reached the entrance-hall, a gloomy place hung with old armour, on which it opened. I proceeded from this into a low-arched stone passage, where the damp had stained the walls with blotches, and soon reached a back staircase, which I ascended; the faint yelping of a cur in the court behind, upon which the staircase window looked, being the first sound of life I had heard about the place, which to a stranger might have seemed altogether uninhabited.

As I expected I met no one; and, after having followed some of those windings and turnings peculiar to most old houses, I reached the library. The heavy door was ajar, as I had myself probably left it, and pushing it open I entered.

I had only advanced a few steps into the room when I paused, struck by an unusual appearance in its arrangements, and for some moments I stood gazing around me in breathless surprise. There were the embers of a fire within the rusty grate, unconscious of warmth for many a day, a faded and ill fitting carpet was spread upon the uneven boards, books and papers were scattered about, and the apartment had all the appearance of having been occupied, and that recently. One of the large unwieldy chairs, which

had hitherto seemed to me glued to the floor, from my never having seen them moved, was drawn close to the table, on which were writing materials.

Such a change in the hitherto gloomy and deserted chamber had all the effect of magical surprise upon me: I could almost have doubted the truth of my eyesight. Whose influence could have effected this? It was impossible that the good old housekeeper had been seized with a desire to study, especially in an apartment of which ten minutes' occupancy would have secured her an attack of rheumatism that would have lasted for a week; as little could it be old Bauldy, the gardener or universal factotum about the place; or Mysie, with whose superstitious fears I was well acquainted. A thousand vague and unsatisfactory conjectures crossed my mind. Long as I had been in the habit of visiting this room, it had never till now worn any appearance but that of cold dull desertion: it had always seemed my own exclusive property, for no claimant had ever appeared to dispute my right, and its charms, I thought, were known to me only; but this was the case no longer, and I gazed around me in search of the rival who had taken possession of my favourite retreat.

There was, however, no one but myself in the room. As I stood musing thus, a sudden idea darted into my mind, which seemed satisfactorily to solve the mystery: I never thought of the arrival of any of the family, for such a thing had never happened in my recollection. But I remembered that this was

just the time of year when the writer who managed the estate, and who lived in the county town, usually paid a visit to the house, to arrange accounts with Mrs Johnstone and look after the condition of the place.

As soon as this idea occurred to me I felt perfectly satisfied. To be sure, the library was the last place I would have expected Mr Grainger to occupy. Mrs Johnstone's comfortable parlour, I should have thought, possessed more charms for one of his appearance and social habits. But this proved that I was mistaken in my idea of the man ; and really, now that the warmth of the fire had dispelled the damp chilliness of the apartment, and the room was put into better order, it did not look so desolate a place after all. The factor deserved commendation for his taste and literary propensities. He was evidently a different sort of person from what I had supposed,—in short, one who, though necessarily engaged by the dull routine of business, was still capable of appreciating the sweets of learning and calm retirement. He had doubtless chosen to sit in the library for the means it afforded of uniting labour with amusement.

Certain, however, from the lateness of the hour that the factor had yielded possession, and was on his way back to his domicile in the town, I had now no hesitation in entering the room, whose improved appearance I contemplated with much satisfaction. I thought it fortunate that I had come this evening. I raked up the slumbering embers into a blaze, which I fed with

some coals which had thoughtfully been left on the hearth for the purpose ; and throwing down my bonnet on the table, I sought for the book I wanted, and soon established myself comfortably in one of the window recesses. As I did so, I could not help smiling as the idea of Mysie, perhaps, entering to extinguish the fire occurred to my imagination. Whether I would figure as a ghost or a brownie was uncertain.

The room distinguished by the name of library at the Craiglands was, like most of the other apartments in the house, ancient and gloomy. The bookcases, which filled one side of the room, were of dark oak, as was the wainscot, which was in panels. The windows were three in number—they were both narrow and deep, and overrun with ivy ; so, what with the darkness of the wood-work, and the little light which the windows admitted, a certain obscurity reigned here even at noonday. It was a very paradise for a contemplative mind.

Scanty crimson hangings, very much faded, hung round the recess of each window, with the dust of years clinging to them. Some tottering yet unwieldy tables and chairs (the latter having cushions of the same material as the curtains) composed the furniture.

In one corner, however, of the room stood what had once been to me an object of great awe. It was a clock-case of most peculiar form—it looked like an upright mummy. The shape was precisely similar, narrow at the foot and gradually swelling upwards. The face of the clock, too, bore a striking resemblance,

at a short distance, especially when aided by twilight, to the countenance of a human being. This piece of furniture had once been richly gilt, but years had dimmed its brightness, not to mention the damps of the apartment, and its hue was now nearly as dark as the wall against which it stood. It was called in the neighbourhood the “Crawford Coffin;” and many a fearful tale had my childhood heard connected with it. It had been seen, or was reported to have been seen, in other parts of the house at the dead of night; and one old servant was positive to having met it in the very stone passage by which I had reached the library. But as old Matthew was seldom sober after night-fall, perhaps his testimony was not much to be depended on.

With what fear and trembling did I use to regard it when a child, and then hurry away, terrified, that by lingering, it should fall to my lot to be the last to leave the room; and how often have I awakened in the night, after dreaming about it, and fancied that it stood beside my curtains! As years wore on, however, I lost my awe for the old clock, though sometimes in a dark evening, when I had unconsciously sat reading long in the library, I have felt a passing emotion, not perhaps quite of fear, but something akin to it, impossible to describe, (arising, I suppose, from old associations), as its dark unearthly shape stood only half revealed in the twilight, while I passed near it on my way from the room. What fools our imaginations sometimes make of us!

All that I shall say more of the library in description is, that from its quietness and seclusion it was admirably calculated for study. Two of its windows looked out upon a retired grass-grown alley of the almost deserted garden, and the remaining one upon a clump of lofty trees, whose branches approached so near as almost to touch the glass. It was so far removed from any noise, even the little necessarily made by the small household, that the fall of a leaf, or the twittering of the swallows outside, or the buzzing of a blue-bottle fly, which had somehow found its way within, were most distinctly heard amid the stillness which reigned in the apartment.

In this room then did I continue to linger a longer period than I was myself aware of. No one had appeared to interrupt me, so my conjecture as to the factor's departure was probably well founded. Mysie was content to let the fire go out itself: it certainly would have been an unavoidable necessity that would have brought her to the library at nightfall.

The book with which I was engaged was unusually interesting,—it was Dante's *Inferno*. I had long ago finished the romances (indeed it did not take much time to do so in the way I read them), but I had only lately discovered a copy of this noble poem (dreadfully mildewed some of its leaves were), and being able, thanks to my father, to read Italian easily, I had instantly commenced its perusal. I might have carried it home of course and finished it there, but there was a charm in those readings in the lonely

library which I never could resist, and I preferred leaving my book behind me. I could sit and dream here undisturbed, which I could not so well do at home : besides, there was a romantic interest about the dreary empty old mansion, which my little room at the manse had no claim to.

I was so occupied by the work, so fascinated by the awful scenes so vividly depicted, that an hour and a half had glided by without my being sensible of the flight of time. The twilight was fast fading away into greyer and greyer hues ; but I only drew closer to the window, and, unless the light altogether failed me, was not likely to return my book to the shelf for some time yet. Another and another page was yet turned, and I took no note how the moments were flying. I had quite forgotten my intended visit to Mrs Johnstone. And yet the nature of the work which I was perusing might, from its exciting effect upon the imagination, have disposed me to hurry away from such a lonely and fancy-stirring spot. But it did not : it rather caused me to forget myself, and the *eeriness* of my situation. I was absorbed in my book,—my individuality was lost for the time.

I was too intent upon the horrors of the Unseen and the Eternal to think of the lateness of the hour, and the gloomy staircase and passages I had to traverse before I could reach the inhabited part of the house. I read on and on, annoyed at the dimness of the light, unwilling to move, but yet beginning to be somewhat sensible of the necessity for leaving. Still

no nervous feeling intruded itself, though my situation in that room was nearly as wild and solitary, and as remote from human protection, as could almost be found anywhere.

The room was enveloped in shadow. I forget now the exact passage of the poem at which I had arrived ; but it happened, I recollect, just as I had reached (straining my eyes of course) a most exciting portion of it, well calculated to fill the soul with vague and shadowy horrors, and just as I for the first time raised my eyes to cast a timorous look around the darkening room, that my attention was suddenly and fearfully arrested by a noise within, or in the immediate neighbourhood of it.

From its sequestered situation, I suppose, as well as from another circumstance I have already mentioned, the library had obtained an evil reputation. Every old house, indeed, has such traditions, at least few escape them. I had often heard that the library, or some room immediately adjoining to it, was haunted ; but long familiarity, and a sound practical education, had banished my early fears ; and but for the occasional warnings of the servants, I might have entirely forgotten it. Now, however, the old tale flashed upon my previously excited mind,—all the hints and mysterious allusions of the old crone in the kitchen, and even the reluctant consent of Mrs Johnstone to my occupying this apartment. I had never remained so late in it before ; and now, as I thought of its solitude, and the great distance I was from all

human help, I felt my blood grow cold in my veins. I was afraid to remain ; but I was as much afraid to leave my position, lest some frightful and unearthly vision might cross my path, and turn me into stone. I sat still, therefore, for some moments in the window, my heart beating so fast as to be nearly audible.

I at last summoned resolution enough to turn my head and look towards the door, which was the direction from whence the sound had proceeded. Oh ! how were my fears confirmed ! What were my alarm and terror when, through the gloom which surrounded me, I could distinctly observe a figure advancing cautiously and silently (gliding it seemed to me) across the apartment ! Scarcely conscious of what I did, in the agony and mortal terror of the moment, I started from my seat. I would have screamed for aid (though what aid was nigh ?) but utterance was denied to me : my eyes were strained on the figure whose outline was alone visible in the rapidly deepening obscurity of the evening, with a dreadful intensity (if it had been to save my life I do not think I could have withdrawn them) ; every sense was lost in the terror of the moment ; the book fell from my powerless hand with a crash upon the floor, and the place of my concealment was revealed. A cold perspiration burst from every pore : I was nearly fainting.

The phantom (if phantom it was) seemed arrested by the sudden noise made by the falling of the book. It remained motionless in the centre of the room, being nearly opposite to where I stood (my figure

clearly defined against the window-panes), and I felt that its eyes, though I could not see them, were fixed upon me. A few moments, that seemed like hours in my apprehension, passed in silence.

"Who is there?" at length demanded a manly authoritative voice, that sounded in my ears like the call of a trumpet. It was anything but ghostly in its tones.

Oh! the intense relief of that moment. I instantly felt that the being before me, whoever he was, was yet mortal like myself; and the revulsion of feeling was so great as to keep me for some brief instants insensible to the strangeness of my position, alone in such a place with an utter stranger. I was quickly made conscious of it, however, by a repetition of the question put in a still more determined key. And now I felt all the awkwardness of my situation.

I did not know what to answer. What could I, indeed, ignorant of who my interrogator was? So I only trembled from head to foot, and was silent. How I now bitterly regretted the freak which had placed me in such a predicament! The stranger, from his tone, evidently felt he had a right to the room. This now explained the mystery of the fire, and the unusual preparation of the apartment, which I had so satisfactorily accounted for, as I then imagined. I must always be so hasty and decided in everything.

As no answer was returned to the stranger's summons, he seemed to hesitate whether to advance nearer to the motionless figure, which must have startled him

as much as his unlooked-for appearance had alarmed me. I continued standing silent and embarrassed in the deep recess of the window into which I had shrunk at first. Luckily the increasing darkness favoured me by effectually concealing my features. I was hurriedly considering. I had not much time, you may be sure, for reflection; for all that I have narrated took place in a very few minutes; but I was mentally considering whether I had best tell who I was, and my reasons for being discovered here, or make a bold rush for the door at once. The latter was doubtless distressing, and the stranger I was afraid might intercept me in my flight, as he was nearer to the door than I: still I could not bring my mind nor my lips (if it was brought) to the former.

The stranger was evidently waxing impatient. Whether he took me for a spirit or a madwoman, who had some way contrived to admit herself, I know not. But at length he made a hasty movement towards the corner where the bell was; and seeing the way clear, I no longer hesitated. I darted across the apartment, and reached the door just as a vigorous pull at the wire resounded through the house, and flying like a bird through the passages, and down the staircase, I arrived at Mrs Johnstone's room, which I entered, panting for breath, and secured the bolt, greatly to the astonishment, and not a little to the alarm, of its inmate, who was plying her customary thrift by the fire.

My first emotion, after accomplishing this involun-

tary act of security, was to laugh heartily ; my next was to throw myself into a seat and indulge in a burst of tears, the result of my overstrung nerves. These changes appeared greatly to perplex the old house-keeper, and she gazed on me with a half-bewildered air, as if my appearance and the emotions I gave way to were both alike incomprehensible to her. Her air of perplexity had the effect, after the first minute, of re-animating my spirits, and I could not help smiling as I wiped my eyes.

“ Do not be frightened, Mrs Johnstone,” I said, half crying, half laughing, as I spoke : “ nothing is the matter.”

“ What has happened ?—What have you been about ?” asked the old woman anxiously, only half satisfied by my assurance.

“ I have only got a fright,” I answered. “ I was in the library”—

“ Deary me !” exclaimed Mrs Johnstone, holding up both her hands ; “ you must have seen the young laird.”

“ Seen whom—who did you say ?” I asked eagerly, scarcely believing my own ears.

“ Sir Robert’s son — young Mr Crawford. Did you no hear he had come ?”

“ No, I did not.—How strange ! I can scarcely believe you are in earnest.”

“ Deed am I—nae wonder though that ye look sae astonished ; it ’s been a surprise to us a’. He arrived last night without notice o’ ony kind ; sae he had to

leave his groom wi' the horses at the gate till he came down to the house himsel', and sent somebody to unlock it, and "—

"Oh! Mrs Johnstone," I exclaimed, interrupting her—all the circumstances of my encounter with him in the library rushing into my mind—"what will he think of me?—what *can* he think of me sitting composedly in his room?"

The idea of having been discovered by the master of the house seated in calm and apparently rightful possession in the apartment he had appropriated to his own use, filled me with distress and shame. The only ray of comfort left me was, that it had been too dark to enable him to discern my features; yet he would doubtless ascertain who I was.

"But what took you there?" said Mrs Johnstone: "this will be some of your tricks now, Rose, of speelin' in at windows, like what you did langsyne, when you wanted to terrify Mysie, silly thing, and make her believe she saw ghaists in the dark passages. Take care ye dinna get a fright in good earnest yoursel' some o' these days; and speakin' o' that, ye maun draw back the snib of the door again. But, as I was saying, we got a great surprise wi' Mr Crawford's coming; for wha was ever to think o' ony o' the family that haena been here for sae mony years giein' a body a start at last. Every thing was to do, and little time to do it in. I thought once o' sending owre to the manse for the loan o' Nanny, for Mysie's unco feckless now, and was clean upset wi' the flurry—no

that I was muckle better mysel' ; but I had naebody to send, for Bauldy he was awa to the town for a lade o' meal, and I couldna ask the strange groom,—forby that, he didna ken the road, so we e'en did the best we could ; and Mr Crawford, I must say, is easily pleased for a gentleman, for he had baith a bad supper and an ill-aired bed, though I took care the sheets were weel toasted. Weel, after a', it's a heartsome thing to see that the family haena quite forgotten the auld place. I can tell Sir Robert Crawford, and ithers like him, that it's a disheartening thing to them under them, to leave to others what they should look after themselves—a master's eye does muckle good."

I inquired what kind of looking person he was.

" Oh, he's a weel-favoured young gentleman," replied the housekeeper,—" a bonny sight brawer than was his father at his age ; but Sir Robert was neverwhat you could ca' a handsome man. But you will doubtless see him at the kirk on Sabbath. I hear we're to have a young hand instead of your father, honest man. Weel, I will weary for his coming hame again : the place someway disna seem the same when he's awa."

As the housekeeper was rarely out of doors, and seldom saw my father except on Sabbaths, it was not very clear how she could miss his society. But yet she sincerely felt what she said.

" And how are ye getting on, hinny, yoursel' in his absence ?—but ye haena had much experience o' it yet. I hope, Rose dear, you winna do anything sae

daftlike again, as speel in at that window when you hae a door to enter by. And that's true, I will send for Shavings the wright the morn, and see to get it mended. As you say, what would Mr Crawford think o' ye? Dinna you think—But what's that awfu' ringing? I hae heard it twice owre. Whaur can Mysie be?"

As she spoke, there was an alarm-peal sent through the house which might have awakened the dead as well as Mysie, whose deafness was proverbial. I wondered it did not break the old rusty wire.

Having little doubt that the summons related to myself, I started up, and would instantly have left the house where I had caused such disturbance; but my purpose was prevented by Mrs Johnstone, who, while she held forth her hand to arrest my progress, remained in an attitude of listening. In a few seconds the shuffling of Mysie's cloth shoes was heard in the passage, the peal having succeeded this time in reaching even her dull ears. Then there was a pause, while I suppose she was undergoing an examination on my unaccountable appearance in the library.

"He'll be sending for me next," said the house-keeper, smoothing down her white apron in preparation for a summons. "And what am I to say, Rose?" I earnestly implored her not to betray me.

"I'll try, my dear, but I dinna ken what to say. Mysie will be putting it a' to the account of a ghaist; and, to be sure, the library 's a queer place, for a' that ye're sae fond o' sitting in it. Auld Rab Scott,

that's dead and gane, and was body-servant to the present Sir Robert's father, had mony a strange story to tell about it, for he was lang about the house, and kent a' the family stories. I hae heard Rab say—but there's Mysie now."

As she spoke the door was hastily opened, but instead of the old kitchen-servant there entered suddenly into the room a gentleman who could, I knew, be no other than Mr Crawford himself.

"Pray, Mrs Johnstone, can you tell me"—he began abruptly, when his eye lighting upon me where I sat overcome with surprise and confusion at his unexpected entrance, he stopped short.

"Were you wanting any thing, sir?" said the housekeeper rising and looking nearly as confused as I was.

"Yes—no—that is, I wished to speak with you, but another time will do as well," said the young man retreating as he spoke, but not without casting, as I could observe, an inquisitive look towards me. Supposing I heard the door shut, I turned my head rather hastily round: it was only in the act of closing, and I blushed deeply as my eyes encountered the fixed gaze of the gentleman's.

When we were again alone, Mrs Johnstone affected to condole with me in my chagrin; but she was evidently far more inclined to laugh at the occurrences of the evening than to sympathize with me. So mortified was I that I nearly made a vow never more to enter the library, whose unlucky attractions were

the cause of my distress. I was angry with myself—I had behaved like a fool, or, which was as bad, a mere hoydenish romping girl, and I was sure Mr Crawford must despise me.

Mysie now entered, full of the wonderful intelligence of what had been seen that night in the library—the poor creature looked terrified and uncomfortable. She was somewhat surprised to see me with Mrs Johnstone. We thought it but right to relieve her mind, by informing her of the truth, and with a brightened face she returned to her kitchen.

I now thought it time to return home, but suddenly remembered that in my hurried flight from the library I had left my bonnet behind me.

"I'll tell you what, Rose," said the old woman kindly, who must have observed the vexation painted in my countenance, "I'll e'en go up to the library for your bonnet, and when I'm there, as it canna be hidden now, I'll just tell Mr Crawford how it a' happened, and how you came to be in the library unkent. So sit ye there, like a good bairn, till I come back, and I'se warrant I'll make a' right."

She left the room accordingly, carrying a pair of candles with her to serve as an excuse for entering the room. In about a quarter of an hour she returned. There was a smile on her face as she appeared. "There's your bonnet, my dear," she said, "and awa hame wi' ye—and think nae mair o' yon. I hae tell't Mr Crawford a', and he's very sorry for the fright he gave you, and he bade me take your book to ye, and

say that ye maun on nae account gie up your reading for him.—I am to gie ye a' the books ye want.—And, Rose, he says you 're the prettiest little ghost that ever was seen, and that he wad hae nae objection to meet such anither every nicht. Gae awa now, for your cheeks are as red as Mysie's new duffle cloak that she 's sae proud o'.—Gude nicht, my bairn, and tak' gude care o' yoursel' when your father 's awa.—And, Rose (stopping me with a sly look as I was going), I dinna think ye 'll speel in at ony window again after this."

I mentally vowed I never would, and bade her good night. I looked into the kitchen in passing, where Mysie was spinning lazily in the chimney corner, with Bauldy nodding on the opposite side. I did not like to disturb the old man, neither was I frightened to traverse the avenue alone, all our neighbours being very quiet; so I just asked Mysie to light me to a small side-door in the building, and say nothing of it to Mrs Johnstone.

As I looked back, after I had gained a little distance, to the old house, whose gloomy shadows seemed to swallow up every object in their vicinity, and along whose silent mouldering front not even one light twinkled, I could not but marvel at the strange incident of the evening. It need not be said that I regretted my share in it. The occurrence of such an event as the arrival of one of the family at the Craiglands formed an era in the humble history of our little world. My father's absence from home was

peculiarly annoying when I had such a piece of news to communicate. I only wondered that it had not already become public, or at least reached the manse.

The news, I found, *had* reached it during my absence. The servants were busy discussing the subject when I entered, and they were eager to communicate the intelligence to me, in case I should not have heard of it during my walk. I listened to them, but took good care to say nothing of my own adventure, as I well knew that if I did, the story, with a dozen variations, would be over all the neighbourhood by the next morning, especially as Nanny only waited my arrival to obtain leave to take up the large kettle to the nearest *toun* to get soldered. I granted permission; and Nanny in her duffle cloak, with the hood drawn close over her head, and the kettle in her hand, set off for the village, to enjoy with her particular cronies there a confabulation on the wonderful arrival of the young laird, and destined probably to reach home by one or two in the morning, whether with or without escort unknown.

CHAPTER XI.

I SAW nothing more of Mr Crawford till Sunday, though I heard often enough about him. He was said to be a sportsman, and was out during most part of the day with his gun. Nanny went over every day to the Craiglands to assist Mrs Johnstone and Mysie to wait upon him, and she was loud in his praise. He was such a good-looking young man, and so easily pleased. He had been visited already by some of the neighbouring gentlemen ; but Mrs Johnstone had told her he did not care for company :—“ And nae wonder,” Nanny added ; “ what could he hae to say to young Riccarton, that a’ the country kent was just a born blackguard (she was glad to see he had gien up ca’in’ at the manse), or the laird o’ Dunderhead, wha scarcely kent his nose was his ain ?”

I began on the second morning after my adventure to visit the poor who had been intrusted to my charge. By questioning Nanny I soon ascertained the hours which Mr Crawford usually spent in-doors, and this enabled me to discharge these duties without the risk of meeting him. From the nearness of the manse to the mansion-house I would have been afraid to ven-

ture out if I had not discovered this. I confined myself, however, very much to our own bounds during the subsequent days. From what Nanny said I believed he would not remain long where he was ; so the restraint was not likely to be severe.

His residence at the Craiglands created a kind of sensation through the parish during the rest of the week, as the people were curious to see and to hear of the young laird, whom they had not seen since he was a boy. Those tenants who had favours to ask, and who were anxious to obtain his influence with his father, waited upon him at the Craiglands ; and there were many more people coming and going in our quiet corner than I ever remembered on ordinary days. It kept us lively at least ; and as we were always hearing something new of his movements and visitors from Nanny, I did not weary so much in my father's absence as I had expected to do. I did not avail myself of Mr Crawford's polite permission to send for books to the library. I determined to keep the Inferno till he had gone, and then restore it to its shelf, for fear he should think the returning of it at present was a hint for the use of other books. Of course I saw nothing of Mrs Johnstone, for I did not choose to be seen about the house while her master's son was resident there. But Nanny carried messages to and from each.

The young man who was to supply my father's place in the pulpit was a relation of the Misses Weir, at whose house my father had formerly met him.

They expected him to pay them a visit at this time, and had offered to procure his services during his stay. My father had previously been favourably impressed by him, and was very glad to accept the offer. Mr Campbell (that was the young man's name) had been only six months licensed, and the Misses Weir were anxious to hear their young cousin, whom they had often extolled in my hearing for his talents and gentlemanly manners. I had not met him the previous year at Burnside, as during the week he stayed there I was almost constantly confined to my room by a severe cold. He walked over with the ladies on Sabbath, some time before the hour for assembling in church, and they brought him into the manse.

I found him a very pleasing-looking young man, but rather quiet and reserved. That, however, might arise from the prospect of the duty before him. He was evidently much harassed by the attentions of his relations, who, by the bye, were only his second cousins. They were in a state of much excitement, and very anxious that he should make a great impression upon the congregation. The two younger ladies were especially tormenting.

“Are ye sure ye hae your notes in your pocket, Mr William?” inquired Miss Jess after they were seated; “it wad be an awfu’ thing if ye were to stick.”

“But for a’ that ye mauna read,” said Jean earnestly, “the folk couldna thole that at a’,—and yet, as ye say, Jess, if he were to stick.”

"I think the best thing William can do," said Miss Menie quietly, "would be to look over his discourse a while by himsel'—Miss Rose, I'm sure, will allow him a room."

The young man looked gratefully at his eldest cousin, who had come to his relief, and I rose to show him the way. I took him to my father's study, when he thanked me politely, and said he should be ready when he was summoned. I saw that, though annoyed by the well-meant assiduities of the two spinsters, he was perfectly self-possessed and cool. When I returned to the parlour I was in time to hear the conclusion of a lecture which Miss Menie was giving to the others.

"Havena ye been harassing that poor lad a' morn-ing," she said, "almost out of his senses? Ye scarcely allowed him to eat his breakfast, and a' the road here ye were clavering at ilka side o' him. If he stick it will be your fault, no his, I tell ye. But I'm mista'en if ony sic thing happens—he's no made o' the stuff o' your sticket preachers. William Campbell is as clever a lad as ever mounted a pulpit, and though he's but new aff the airns, as a body may say, it's no just the first time he has preached. Never mind them, Miss Rose, my dear, they're only frightened because he's of our kin."

I assured her I had no such fear,—Mr Campbell looked a superior person I thought.

"You are very right, my dear," she answered, pleased with my remark; "if Jess and Jean had con-

versed wi' him as often as I hae done, they would neither hae troubled you nor him wi' such nonsense. He 'll make a first-rate preacher yet, and what 's better, Miss Rose, there 's the root o' the matter in him. I 'm much mista'en if we havena a good sermon this day. But how lang is it now till the bell rings?"

I said William the bellman had not yet come for the pulpit bible, so Mr Campbell would still have some minutes.

" Weel, I 'm glad o' that ; for though I have nae fear o' his sticking, it will give him time to collect himself.—And you 'll no ken, Miss Rose, my dear, that our William is an auld acquaintance of Mr Crawford's, that 's just come amang us—they 're auld college companions."

Of course I did not ; and the good spinster went on, well pleased to talk of her young friend, who was evidently a great favourite of hers.

" It 's quite true,—William and the young laird went through several of the classes at the same time, and they were very chief then—it was in Glasgow, where Mr Crawford was boarded by his father,—but they have never forgathered since : so it will be a surprise to Mr Crawford when he sees his auld friend in the pulpit."

At this moment the servant entered the room to say that the bellman was in the kitchen, and wanted the books. I therefore went to the study, and informed Mr Campbell that the time was up. He was quite ready, and William and the precentor, who had

also arrived, were sent to him for their instructions. When old William had carried away the books, he commenced the ringing of the bell ; and I accompanied the Misses Weir to the church. I parted from them there, as we entered by different doors : they ascended the staircase to the gallery, and I went to our own seat below, close by the pulpit, where John and Nanny were already sitting.

There was a larger congregation than usual ; for several had come for no other purpose than to see Mr Crawford, and others were curious to hear the new preacher who was living at Burnside. I scarcely ventured to raise my eyes, when Mr Crawford entered the front seat of the gallery, which was opposite to the minister's. William, the bellman, had been very busy the previous day in putting it in order on his account. Some of the tenants had shared it with Mrs Johnstone and the servants during the long absence of the family, and from habit had learned to think they had a claim to it ; but William showed no sympathy, even for Mrs Ballantyne, one of the most liberal of his entertainers, turning every individual to the right about as they approached the sacred door. I suspect William had an eye to a gratuity ; for, in general, he had little reverence for rank and station.

Mr Campbell did not *stick* as his relations feared ; but delivered an excellent discourse in a feeling and appropriate manner ; and when the service was over, many were the congratulations offered to his flattered

and excited relatives. They accompanied me to the manse, as usual, during the interval between the forenoon and afternoon services. Looking back on our way, I could see that the young preacher was joined at the church door by his college friend, and that a very warm greeting took place between them. They parted, however, in a few minutes, and Mr Campbell followed us into the house. His relations were very eager to hear of the interview, and I was amused with the quietness with which he evaded their queries. All they could obtain for their trouble only amounted to this, that Mr Crawford had been very glad to meet his old friend in this unexpected manner, and that, as the latter declined dining with him at the Craiglands this afternoon, he had been asked to fix the next day for that purpose.

The Dundas family came into the manse also, and were very complimentary to the Misses Weir on their cousin's discourse. They, however, did not see Mr Campbell, as he had retired, almost immediately after coming in, to the study. In the afternoon we had again an excellent discourse from the young man, whose simple earnestness reminded me very much of my own father. Immediately after the congregation had been dismissed, he returned to Burnside with the ladies, who, however, did not part from me, without kindly inviting me to spend next Tuesday evening with them, when I could see more of William, they said, and be better able to judge of him.

On Tuesday afternoon, therefore, I went over to

Burnside. When I arrived, I found only the ladies and their young relation, but heard that both Mr. Crawford and the Dundases were expected. This intelligence somewhat disconcerted me, especially the prospect of meeting the former. As the ladies had relinquished their tambour frames in expectation of company, we were all seated in form, waiting for the arrivals. I, however, contrived to withdraw, as much as possible, from observation, by expressing a wish to examine Miss Jean's green paroquet, whose cage was placed on a stand in one of the windows. Mr Campbell joined me after I had made this movement, and I conversed with him as well as I was able in the flutter of my spirits.

I am sure he must have thought me absent, for I was distressed at the prospect of meeting Mr Crawford, and of perhaps finding the incident of the library made a subject of raillery.

Mr Crawford arrived simultaneously with the Dundases, and I was formally introduced to him by Miss Menie Weir. I did not raise my eyes when this took place, so I could not see the expression of his countenance. He turned away from me to greet his old acquaintance. I then ventured to steal a glance at him, for as yet I had got no distinct idea of his countenance. I concurred with Nanny in her opinion : he was certainly a fine-looking young man, with an open frank expression, and very pleasing manners. I thought, however (so far as I could judge from my very brief survey), that the intellectual stamp was

a-wanting. Upon the whole (though less striking), I preferred Mr Campbell's countenance to his. I was afraid to catch his eye, and soon withdrew my observation.

The young ladies from Hillside were arrayed this night in more than their usual charms. They had neglected no art of dress to set themselves off to advantage before Mr Crawford. They were likewise most frank and affable to all, with the exception of myself. But I had no objections to remain in the background,—nothing frightened me more than to be brought into close contact with them. They had often met with Mr Crawford in Edinburgh. Their brother had already called at the Craiglands, but they had not seen him till now, and they were very gracious in their welcome. Mr Crawford received their congratulations on his arrival with a certain degree of nonchalance, which, to so ignorant a person as I was, seemed something akin to indifference. But I was very inexperienced on all points of etiquette. I was very thankful that my introduction to Mr Crawford was over, and that he had made no allusion to our former interview, even by look. It was an evidence, I thought, of generous feeling on his part. I sat down in my usual seat, nearly behind Miss Jess, and hoped I should now remain unnoticed.

The gentlemen, who at first stood talking together, soon separated, and mixed among the ladies. Conversation became general. Mr Crawford's manners were lively and pleasing to every one. George Dun-

das, as usual, sought me out, and tried to get me to talk ; but, as I did not like him, I let Miss Jess principally answer his remarks. I was better pleased when Mr Campbell, who had continued silent since the strangers entered, again drew near me, and began to converse. I felt already at my ease with him ; for I understood him. His mind was evidently of that order to which I had been accustomed in my father. Though we were almost strangers still, I had an intuitive perception of this. I liked him. Our conversation at present was principally about the beauties of the surrounding country ; and I found he was an admirer, like myself, of bare heathy hills and lonely moors. He had made himself familiar with all my favourite spots already, and we talked about them pleasantly till we were interrupted by a summons to the tea-table.

In my young days it was not the custom to sit on couches as at the present time, when servants formally hand round the cups filled with the refreshing beverage. Then, we all surrounded the tea-table, and partook of it sociably. The latter method, in my humble opinion, is to be preferred.

I remember an old lady who was much of my way of thinking in this respect. She lived in the good town of Glasgow, and she was sorely grieved at the innovations upon old customs that were creeping into use. She made a decided stand against them herself. A neighbour sent her an invitation to tea, an attention she particularly relished ; but she was not to be be-

trayed into sanctioning the new fashion by her presence.

"Can ye tell me, my woman," she inquired at the girl who brought the invitation, "if it's to be a wa' tea or a table tea?" The servant could not inform her.

"Then, just gae wa' back to your mistress and see," said the old lady, "for if it's to be a wa' tea I'm no coming."

The "wa' tea" had not yet come into use at Burnside. The Misses Weir still exhibited their old-fashioned but handsome silver tea equipage and tiny cups of blue Indian china on the large round table of ebony-like mahogany. Nothing pleased the good spinsters more than to see a party of happy faces surrounding it, especially if the faces were young; for they preferred the society of young people. It was but right too, the two older ladies said, "for Jean, poor thing, wasna sae auld yet, and occasionally liked younger companions than them."

The conversation during tea was almost entirely engrossed by the Dundases and Mr Crawford. They talked of their mutual friends in Edinburgh, and of the last season's gaieties. As the rest of us could not join in the conversation, we were obliged to remain listeners, though the youngest Miss Weir occasionally interrupted it to put a question concerning dress, and the amusements in which they had mingled. I did not think it quite civil to leave the other individuals of the company so completely out for a length of time, neither, I suppose, did Mr Crawford;

for, after a while, he endeavoured to make the conversation somewhat more general, though the young ladies and their late governess, who was one of the party, would still have it carried on. He however put a determined stop to it by addressing himself to Campbell, who, I thought, had sometimes listened to the ladies' remarks with a momentary expression in his eye which looked like quiet humour.

"You did not tell me yesterday how long you were to stay here, Campbell," said he.

"Only till next week," he answered.

"Well, I shall be gone then myself. Where do you go afterwards? What say you to accompany me to Ross-shire? I must join the rest of the family there."

Campbell shook his head. "Thank you," he said, "but I must not allow myself such a treat at present. I shall have been idle long enough here."

"And why no, William?" said all the three spinsters in one breath, for they were flattered by the invitation; "what's to prevent ye accepting o' Mr Crawford's kindness?—ye haena gotten a parish to attend to yet."

"No," answered he smiling, "but I have got a mother, my dear friends, who is in indifferent health, as you know, and requires attention. Besides," added he, turning to Crawford, "I am engaged on Sabbath week to preach in Glasgow in the College Church, so even if it were otherwise possible, that would prevent it."

"Is Glasgow your native place, Mr Campbell?" asked Miss Margaret Dundas. Mr Campbell bowed.

"Indeed!" said Annabella, the youngest sister, with some surprise; "but you do not reside there surely?"

"I certainly do," he said quietly, without apparently noticing her manner; "my mother and sisters live there."

The ladies slightly raised their eyebrows, and glanced at one another.

"Glasgow's no such a bad place," said Miss Menie Weir, who I saw noticed this little by-play as well as myself, "though I believe it's the custom of the Edinburgh gentry to cast it down. There's baith genteel and excellent folk in it;—ye dinna ken the town I suppose, my dears."

"Oh! not at all,"—(with emphasis).

"Weel, dinna misca' a place till ye ken it. Mony a happy day I hae spent in Glasgow; and sae could you too, I doubt na. I grant that mony o' the folk there are very dressy, and no remarkable for their manners; but there's differences in a' places, even in Edinburgh itself, I daresay, though it's sae grand a city. William's father, who was our full cousin, was a merchant there. I ken the town weel."

"I wish, Campbell, I could give you a living," said Mr Crawford, fortunately breaking in at this moment, and immediately drawing Miss Menie's attention to himself by his remark; for to any thing connected with her young relation she seemed in-

stantly alive. “The old incumbent in Ross-shire, I believe, is very infirm; but yet he is likely to live long after you are settled;—these people always do.”

“I should not like his days shortened on my account,” said Campbell, smiling; “besides, I would rather wait a while; a man ought to have some experience of his future labours before he engages in the duties of a parish.”

“And how are you to acquire this,” said Crawford, “if you do not enter upon them?”

“I shall probably assist some minister before I get a presentation, if I ever get one,” answered Campbell; “if not, there is an ample field for obtaining such experience among the population of a large town.”

“You do not mean,” said Crawford with some astonishment, “that you, with your talents and means of getting on, would ever degrade yourself to the work of a mere city missionary?”

Mr Campbell did not reply for a moment; his head was bent down. As he looked up, his eyes encountered mine. I was listening earnestly to the conversation; and I suppose he read approval in them, for he smiled. I felt it established a kind of confidence between us afterwards. He, however, became grave immediately. “Why not?” he answered, “I could not be engaged in a nobler work.” He spoke quietly though firmly, as if he had no wish ostentatiously to obtrude his peculiar opinions on such matters upon others who could not understand them. I now

did not wonder that I had traced in him a mental likeness to my father, for such were his sentiments.

Mr Crawford had also noticed the expression of my countenance, for he looked at me and smiled; drawing thus the attention of the rest of the party to me, which threw me into confusion. "I see Miss Douglas at least agrees with you," he said; "but I cannot understand it,—you would be throwing yourself away, in my apprehension." As Mr Campbell made no answer, the subject was allowed to drop.

"How do you manage at the Craiglands, Crawford?" now inquired George Dundas, who was evidently glad to get rid of the subject which had been started, and which was not at all in his way. "I fancied the house was nearly uninhabitable by this time,—I am sure that room I found you in was cheerless enough."

"The library,—it is rather dull to be sure, but I somehow like it. Besides it is haunted, and I have had the gratification of meeting the ghost."

"How can you talk such nonsense!" exclaimed the young ladies; while I was struck dumb, and felt the blood rapidly tinging my cheeks. I dreaded the turn the conversation was taking, and began to fear that I had too quickly given Mr Crawford credit for his forbearance; I took care to stoop my head very low over my cup, so as to conceal my countenance from the company.

"Fact, upon my honour," he said with affected

gravity, “neither was I long in the house before it happened.”

“And pray what appearance had it, Mr Crawford?” inquired Miss Beatson, the governess.

“It was in the most interesting of all forms, madam, a young lady’s,—but you must have heard the story.”

They assured him laughingly they never had, and begged he would inform them. I was too insignificant a person to attract their attention, or they might have remarked my uneasiness. I was seated close to Miss Menie, and her eyes were directed like the rest to Mr Crawford. There was nothing to dread from her sisters’ observation: I was not so sure of Mr Campbell’s. In my perturbation I drank my tea scalding hot, which somewhat quieted me, for physical pain is a wonderful composer to an agitated mind—the one deadens the other.

“You do not mean to say that you have never heard the story connected with the library,” said Mr Crawford; “is it possible? Why, you are resident in the place, while I am but a stranger. You ought to make a pilgrimage to visit the old housekeeper, that she might enlighten your ignorance.—Well, I will have compassion upon you, and Miss Douglas (glancing archly at me, for he noted my confusion), who must know the story, will, I hope, set me right when I am wrong. You must know then, ladies and gentlemen,” he continued, “that once upon a time there was a young lady of our family who chose to fall in love, as it is called, with an individual not ex-

actly considered by her relations as entitled by birth to such a connexion. As this was discovered, the young lady (very properly, as you must allow,) was confined to the library and a bedroom adjoining, where of course she was well watched. One night, unfortunately, as it proved, the guard slumbered, and when she awoke her charge was flown. The alarm was instantly given, and as one of the library windows was found open, there was no doubt entertained but that her lover had managed to convey her through it, and that she had escaped with him; and a pursuit was instantly commenced after the supposed fugitives. But when the morning came," continued the young man, whose tones involuntarily grew graver as he went on, for the story was a true one, "there was a melancholy discovery made. The young lady had, it seems (though her own friends were strangely ignorant of it), been in the practice at times of walking in her sleep. The window and her lover had, I suppose, been connected in her imagination, (she often used to gaze from it, I believe, during her imprisonment),—perhaps she had thought of the practicability of escaping by it,—at all events, her crushed and mangled body was in the morning found lying on the grass just under the window, from which the poor girl must of course have fallen. But it is certain that her spirit has haunted the library ever since, and many are reported to have seen it there.—I am one of them."

"Poor girl—how very dreadful!" ejaculated most of the listeners, with (of course) the exception of

myself.—“ But is the story really true, Mr Crawford ?”

“ True !—ask Miss Douglas : Is it not true ? ” he said, addressing me. “ I believed it was,” I said, as composedly as I could, but determined not to meet his eye, nor encourage him in mystifying the rest. I was beginning to have more confidence in him, so I added, “ at least the first part is.”

“ Oh, fie ! Miss Douglas,—you of all people to insinuate doubt, when you must be quite aware how true it is ! ”

“ But how should Miss Rose here ken so weel about it ? ” asked Miss Menie, whose vigilant eye had at last detected my uneasiness and varying complexion, and who could not comprehend what connexion the story had with me. She was the only quick-sighted individual of the party however. All the others had been fully occupied attending to the narrator. “ Why she and the old housekeeper are cronies, I believe,—at least, Mrs Johnstone quotes Miss Douglas upon all occasions, and would never let her be ignorant of an important family tradition like this.—But I see none of you will believe me,” continued he, gaily rising from the tea-table, which was a signal for all to move ; “ and therefore I scorn to tell you what my own experience was.”

“ Oh ! do tell us, Mr Crawford,” and “ we should so much like to hear it,” exclaimed the young ladies in different tones of entreaty. But Mr Crawford declared that their disbelief had been so apparent as to

make any farther confession impossible, and in spite of the many eager questions that were showered upon him, continued inexorable. He found an opportunity however, while an arrangement for a round game, which often closed the evenings at Burnside, was in the process of being completed, to whisper (so as only to be audible to myself) as he passed me to take his place at the table, “ Do I not deserve credit for my forbearance ?”

He looked back archly after he said this, and I was not so annoyed but that I was compelled to smile. He then joined the others, and they were all soon occupied with the game, and, to judge from the bursts of laughter that constantly reached our ears, enjoying themselves.

I had declined playing, as had Mr Campbell and Miss Menie Weir. We were not required to make up the game; and I have no doubt that the Misses Dundas were very glad to engross for the time all Mr Crawford’s attentions. They had looked haughtily surprised, I thought, when he addressed me, though they did not dare to show their contempt too openly in the presence of the Misses Weir, with whom they knew I was a favourite. I have no doubt they thought I was encroaching on their prerogatives.

I was very glad to sit quietly by the fireside, (for we had not yet put off fires at Auchtermuir,) with kind Miss Menie and Mr Campbell; and though our conversation was much less vivacious than that of those who surrounded the table, I believe it was more

interesting to those engaged in it. I was much pleased with Mr Campbell, and I somehow thought that he had already penetrated the characters of the young ladies of the party, and saw my position with them. I felt at ease with him, and could converse without first considering what I was about to say, which I generally did when speaking with some of the present company. Miss Menie encouraged him to talk, and evidently took pleasure in listening to him,—just what a mother might show towards a favourite son ; and Mr Campbell looked and spoke to her with much affection. I saw he respected her, and that he made a difference between her and his other relations. His mind was highly cultivated I felt certain, but his superior information was not obtruded upon one—it showed itself unconsciously. He led me to talk, and seemed much interested in all that I could tell him of the parish, and the nature of my father's labours among its population. In this I felt he paid him a high compliment, as he led me to believe he was anxious to profit by his example. We both got animated on this topic : and save that I occasionally turned my head and smiled to Miss Menie, I made no other apology for continuing a subject which I well knew was interesting to her as well as to myself. We were not conscious, I believe, how long we had been conversing thus, till the sound of the Dundases' carriage on the gravel beneath the windows, and the breaking up of the party around the table, warned us that it was time to cease.

The young ladies were evidently unwilling to leave Mr Crawford behind them, and I could overhear one of them give a hint to her brother to offer him a seat in the carriage : but as Mr Crawford preferred walking, they were obliged to wish us good night and drive off.

Nanny and I were not allowed to proceed alone to-night, Mr Crawford and Mr Campbell both accompanying me home, the latter to enjoy his friend's company. They left me after seeing us safe within the manse-gate. Mr Crawford had made no further allusion to the scene in the library ; and now, I hoped, I should hear no more of it.

CHAPTER XII.

A CLOUD RISES THE SIZE OF A MAN'S HAND.

Ah! storms and wintry weather
Are never absent long.

MR CAMPBELL and Mr Crawford both left the neighbourhood the following week, and a kind of stagnation seemed to succeed their departure. Before leaving, Mr Campbell, accompanied by his cousins, called at the manse to say good-bye, which I was very sorry to do. He was a great favourite with the good spinsters, and they were much depressed at the prospect of losing his society. They had been highly gratified by the impression he had made on the people, on both of the occasions when he had officiated for my father. His popularity they regarded as a compliment to themselves. He required to leave them, for the reasons he had already given,—so his cousins were obliged to acquiesce; but he promised that he would certainly re-visit them whenever he had an opportunity. I was sorry he was going so soon; for it was seldom, in our retired place, that I met with so pleasant an acquaintance.

Mr Crawford did not take his departure for two days later. I only heard of it through Nanny, who returned home the same afternoon, very dejected-looking, in spite of a handsome gratuity which the young laird had desired Mrs Johnstone to present to her as a reward for her services.

"And there's nae prospect o' his coming back neither," Nanny said sorrowfully enough; "for Tam Cossar, the groom, telt me that there's a talk o' his getting married to some rich leddy at the ither place whaur his folk bide; and if that comes aboot, they'll no trouble our auld dungeon, as Tam ca's it, muckle. I wouldna wonder though," continued Nanny, bridling at some recollection, "but Tam has telt me a lee; for, after a' his talk, I see he's no muckle to be trusted to. He seemed better pleased to get awa than his maister did—that did he."

I saw that something was wrong. Poor Nanny had doubtless been flattered by the attentions of the smart groom, whose dashing exterior and manners had driven, for the time, all her country sweethearts out of her head; and now she was low spirited and indignant at the ease with which he had parted from her. I tried to comfort her; but a short period I knew would restore to her her old feelings; and, indeed, the very next night I overheard her talking and laughing with an old flame, a servant of the miller's, just as if Tam Cossar, the groom, had never made an impression on her heart. When I upbraided her with her inconstancy, she at first tossed her head saucily

and played with the string of her apron, as if uncertain how she could defend herself; but at length, plucking up courage, she raised her eyes, and said, that she "had made up her mind that auld freends were aye mair to be trusted than new anes, and that though Archie was maybe no sae sprush as Tam, she believed he was far truer hearted after a', and she didna care now though the ha' house stood empty till dooms-day—not she."

I heard the same news from Mrs Johnstone as Nanny had learned from the groom. It came from a surer quarter. There was no doubt that a marriage was in negotiation between Sir Robert Crawford's heir and the only child and heiress of a considerable proprietor in Ross-shire. It was not yet quite settled, Mrs Johnstone believed; but from the instructions Mr Grainger had received, she conjectured it was as good.

Mr Crawford had taken the opportunity, while preliminaries were being settled, of paying a visit to the other family property; but there was not much chance of our seeing him again, Mrs Johnstone said, if things turned out as they all expected.

My father came home on Friday evening. I had received a letter from him on the previous Tuesday, fixing the day of his return, and desiring that John should be sent to meet him with the caravan at Drumsheugh, as he was again to travel with Dr Dryscreed. I was on the watch for his arrival all the evening. This had been a duller week than the last,

owing to the departure of the gentlemen, and I rejoiced that I was again to have his company. An hour before the traveller could possibly make his appearance, I was on the outlook for him at the gate.

It was a lovely evening, very calm and sweet. There had been a slight shower late in the afternoon, so that every leaf and flower looked refreshed, and exhaled new fragrance. Everything was happy-like, birds and blossoms; and I was pre-eminently so.

I was delighted to see the place looking so well, and I flattered myself that my father would observe a great many improvements when he arrived, for I had not been idle in his absence. There were new flowers in blow, and I had got some rare slips sent me a few days before, which I had to introduce him to. I was as light-hearted as one of those birds that were singing so sweetly, as they flew from wall to branch above me. Now, I hurried into the house for a minute to make myself sure, for the twentieth time, that everything was in proper order and readiness,—the tea-things upon the table, the bread and butter and raspberry jam arranged as neatly as possible, and my father's easy chair set beside the table, just in his old place. Then away back again to my post at the gate, sometimes varying it by running a little way along the road, for the purpose of climbing upon a large stone, which permitted a more extended view, that I might have the earliest intimation possible of the approach of the returning traveller. The very length of

time (thanks to my own impatience) that I had to watch did not weary out my spirits, though it might sober them a little. The happiness before me could not be diminished, though it did not arrive quite so soon as I wished.

At last I heard the dull rumbling of the cart at some distance. There was no mistaking the peculiar jingle, and I hurried back (for I had been ascending the stone for the fiftieth time), that I might receive him at the gate. I might have run on, and greeted him a minute or two sooner; but it was pleasanter to meet him just at our own home, and welcome him back again there. There they come, shaking, staggering, jingling along the road,—John sitting like a statue in front: now they turn the corner just at the churchyard wall, and here they are at our own little gate!

I tore the curtain quickly aside,—“Papa, papa, dear papa, how glad I am to see you again!”

“And I to return to you, Rose.”

Nanny came hurrying down with a chair; Peggy followed her. We all helped him out, every one eager to lend assistance, and at last he stood on the ground. I had not seen his face till then, and now I burst into tears.

“What is the matter, my love?” he asked anxiously.

“Why did you not tell me you were ill, papa?”

He had not mentioned his health in either of his letters, except in the most general manner. He

looked ill—very ill. All my gay spirits fled in a moment.

He said he was fatigued with travelling, and that he had been much confined when in Edinburgh ; and seeing me still looking distressed, he smiled kindly as if to dissipate my fears, and putting his arm through mine, he walked towards the house, pausing however on the way to look at the flowers and shrubs, and comment on their beauty and fragrance. But I had no heart now to direct his attention to any thing new. When he was seated in his own chair in the parlour, he looked around with an air of much satisfaction.

“Thank God that I am home again !” he said. “How sweet and calm every thing here looks after the dinginess and noise of the city ! I have been like a bird out of the nest, Rose.” He said this so cheerfully, that I began to think that the worn exhausted look which had struck me so forcibly when he stepped from the cart, might be merely the effect of fatigue. I brought him some flowers that I had gathered for him, and he inhaled their fragrance with the pleasure of one who has been long debarred from such a treat.

“What a treasure these would have been,” he said, “in my dull close bedroom in Edinburgh ! We were unfortunate in lodgings you must know. How sweet those double polyanthus are ! I see you have not forgotten the garden in my absence, Rose.” He looked up smilingly to me as I stood pensively beside his chair.

"Why are you so silent, my love? Come, let me see you smile and talk as you used to do. You surely did not expect me to look as blooming as yourself after a fortnight's confinement, and after such a journey. Let me have my tea, and look cheerfully, I beseech you, my dear little Rose."

It was true. I had not thought enough perhaps of the constant confinement—bad lodgings too—and he so accustomed to exercise and to pure fresh air. I made an effort, and forced down the tears which were rising again to my eyes, and threatening to overflow their bounds. I had been too soon alarmed, I now tried to convince myself; and with the easy persuadability of youth, I believed myself mistaken. I therefore endeavoured to shake off my fears, and with a considerably lighter heart and step, I hastened to get tea ready for the traveller.

It was soon prepared; the table was drawn close to my father's chair that he might not have the trouble of moving, and we again enjoyed a meal together. We were quietly happy. My spirits could not regain their former elasticity just yet, for there was my father's pale face opposite to prevent that; but still he was back again, and I now persuaded myself he would look better to-morrow.

We talked of all that had happened in his absence,—of Mr Crawford's unexpected visit to the Craiglands, but particularly of Mr Campbell. But he would break off every now and then to admire the neatness and freshness of the room, and the beauty of

the bursting blossoms without, which showed how much his heart was revelling in the sensations of home. When I asked him concerning the business which had engaged the attention of the Assembly, his cheerfulness lessened. He did not like the appearance of the Church. A spirit evidently preponderated in it inimical to vital godliness in the land, and this apparently weighed heavy at his heart. The evangelical body seemed but a handful compared with the rest ; but “ God would keep his own,” he said.

We lingered long over the tea-table. It was a sweet meal to both ; and we almost agreed that it was a good thing to be separated for a time, that we might experience the pleasure of re-union. When I did at last send the tea-things away, I sat down on a low stool by his chair, and taking up the stocking I was knitting for him, we conversed together till it was time to summon the servants to prayers. I was reluctant to close the shutters and order lights, for a soft melancholy feeling had stolen upon me in place of the wild gaiety which had animated me earlier in the evening, and the calm fading twilight harmonized with the tone of my mind. My father’s despondent state of mind in regard to the Church affected me, and I was still anxious and uneasy concerning his health.

How solemn was our evening worship that night ! How lowly and contrite were my father’s confessions ! and how earnest and fervent were his thanksgivings that we were all once more permitted to mingle our prayers together. And in his petitions for more light

and more spiritual zeal to be diffused through the Church of our fathers, there was throughout such a strain of sadness and despondency, and yet wrestling with God for the blessing, that my spirit felt hushed and awe-struck.

The servants' faces were solemnized and full of meaning as they rose from their knees and withdrew from the room ; and when I visited the kitchen, according to my usual custom before going to bed, I found the impression had not yet passed away. They were both seated gazing thoughtfully at the fire, and both inquired immediately, if I thought the "maister quite weel."

"It's no that he's sae ill-like either," quickly added Nanny, who was by far the most intelligent of the two girls ; "I wouldna like to frichten ye, for I'm sure there's nae reason ; but I think he's altered somehow."

"How do you mean, Nanny ? Do you think him much thinner ?"

"It's no that a'thegither," she answered musingly, as if she scarcely understood her own meaning, or at least had a difficulty in resolving it into words. He's thinner and whiter nae doubt, and he has a bad hoast. But it's—I canna tell what it is—I saw it in his prayer."

"Sae did I," said Peggy, immediately.

The simple girls could not explain what had struck them, but I knew what they meant. The lamp was burning brighter. It was the inner Life which was

progressing ; and though perhaps my father was unconscious of it himself, it was apparent to us. The Christian was advancing rapidly on his journey ;—another step had been gained in the pilgrimage.

That night, though I retired to my room soon after my father, I was in no mood to sleep. I sat musing long in the little window of my bedroom, and my meditations were of a kind that unconsciously brought tears into my eyes, from which I as unconsciously would wipe them away to clear my sight. My thoughts involuntarily wandered back to childhood,—from thence to womanhood : my life seemed pictured before me as reflected in a mirror, and still he was the prominent object in all. I could not shake off the strange melancholy which had somehow settled down upon my spirits since the evening. It was a state of mind I could not analyze, and hardly wished to do so, for the servants' remarks had touched a chord in my own bosom which had responded to them.

I gazed out upon the little church and churchyard lying so silently beneath me in the dim light ; and deeper impressions of the uncertainty of life, and the emptiness and unsatisfactory nature of all earthly things, took possession of my mind. I felt I had never weighed these truths as their importance deserved ; and the question, “ What am I living for ? ” suggested itself to my mind. Had I been living for eternity ?—I feared not.

Not a sound was to be heard without. The church-

yard trees drooped heavily over the graves, as if there was no breeze to stir them. The moonlight shone upon the little belfry, making the very bell-rope visible; and many of the tombstones and one of the side walls of the church glimmered white in its rays. I was scarcely sensible to-night of the picturesque effect. My eyes were fixed upon my mother's grave lying close beside that wall, and my mind was filled with busy imaginations, when a dull sound in the house reached my ear and went to my heart. It was my father's cough. It broke like a knell on the stillness of the night, and I could muse no longer.

I knelt down, and, with greater earnestness than I had ever before felt, I commended myself and all my interests to that Father whose ear is ever open to the cry of his people, and then lay down to rest; but it was long before I slept.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ah ! storms and wintry weather
Reign merciless and strong :
The yellow autumn came at last
And strewed the leaves along :
The ivy rustled mournfully
Upon the time-worn tower :
The sunshine on the grey dial-stone
More faintly marked the hour.

DAYS and weeks and months wore on. We were the same family, inhabiting the same sweet dwelling,—but what a change there was in all our feelings !

It was a glorious summer that of 17—. Never had the old trees and the grass been greener and more luxuriant ; the fruit-trees bent beneath their fast ripening burden ; successions of flowers decked the once cherished borders ; and the air seemed almost vibrating with the music of the birds. Lovely as it had always looked, our little sequestered home had put on a still fairer face. Perhaps the little attention that was now paid to the rapidly encroaching “greenery” that clothed our walls, and mantled over every thing which permitted its embrace, gave it a more nest-like look. The little antique church and the gravestones were almost embosomed from sight by the redundant

foliage of the surrounding sycamores and birches,—a glimpse of a grey wall or a tombstone peeping only occasionally out from underneath the spreading branches. Every breeze was laden with perfume; the heath was alive with bees, and the green banks of the Clyde were gleaming with daisies. But I had now no eye for the beauty around me.

A cloud had fallen upon our little cheerful household. We were no longer as we had been. Ours was now the home of suffering and disease, and I now knew of approaching death. The sufferer alone was calm and happy. He had committed all earthly as well as eternal interests to that God who has said, “Cast thy burden upon me, and I will sustain it.” He was my soother and strengthener, instead of my being his. None but the Searcher of hearts knew the struggle within me, the endeavour after resignation to the Divine will, and yet the rebelling of the spirit against it. How could I part with him? how bear to wander on through this world alone, without his kind fatherly voice to guide and support me? When I now look back to those times, I can acknowledge with humility and love that the discipline, though severe, was from a Father’s hand.

After his return from the Assembly my father’s health seemed gradually to break up. I clung for weeks to the belief that fatigue, united to a bad cold, had but for a time undermined his health, and that before the end of summer he would be as he had formerly been, never robust, but in the enjoyment of

moderate health. With an anxiety which I endeavoured to conceal even from myself, I watched every symptom. If he looked ill and languid, as he too often did, I was unhappy and alarmed,—if he appeared to revive, I was more than proportionally hopeful. So weeks wore on.

At first he attempted to perform his usual duties of visiting the sick and poor; but he returned from these labours so worn-out and depressed, and such sleepless nights were the consequence, that, to sooth my apprehensions, I obtained a promise that he would not resume them till his health was somewhat restored. But nothing could persuade him to relinquish the duties of the pulpit. “I must preach while I am able,” I overheard him say to one of his elders, who endeavoured to prevail upon him to take some rest.

He was (as I think I formerly mentioned) of a consumptive constitution. A neglected cold (neglected owing to the duty which took him to Edinburgh, where the winds which prevail during spring had been most unfavourable to him) had settled upon his lungs. His cough was at times most distressing, and he had become subject to severe perspirations. But still, like all young persons who have not known illness, I clung to hope. I was the last, I believe, to see the danger, and even then it was the increase of tenderness upon his part that first made me feel the truth.

I remember well the last time that he ever addressed his people. He had struggled on in the dis-

charge of his duties,—far too heavy as they were become for him. We had had the communion some weeks before, which had borne hard upon his exhausted frame. There are some yet living at Auchtermuir who have not forgot, and never will forget that solemn communion season. God set a seal upon his servant's labours that day.

It was on a Sabbath in the latter end of July that he preached his last sermon. He had chosen for his text those memorable words of Paul,—“ And now, behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am free from the blood of all men.” I think the choice of the text could scarcely be accidental. A sense of his declining strength must have warned him of the probability of his being soon removed from those whom he had so watched and laboured for, and he had collected all his energies for this final address.

I can never forget that day ;—my father's pale earnest countenance, animated by a power which afterwards left him weak and exhausted,—the eagerness with which he endeavoured to press upon them their guilty ruined condition before God,—and the living faith which shone in his look when he held up Jesus as a fitting Saviour for such sinners. Truth spoke in his accents.

“ I have been long spared to be your minister,” he said in conclusion, “ but it may be that I may never more have the opportunity of addressing you ; and if

so, remember my last words,—seek Christ while in health, seek him not only as the Saviour, but as the sanctifier, and that, my friends, will disarm death of all its terrors.”

There was not a dry eye in the little congregation. Some of the women sobbed aloud, and large tears trickled unconsciously down the rugged face of the old miller, who sat in the aisle, till yielding more and more to his emotion, his grey head gradually sank till it rested with his folded arms upon the little table before him. All seemed to receive the words as a last message. And how did the daughter feel? Stupified—terror-struck—unable to commit him to God—I could not yet give him up.

At the conclusion of his discourse he sat down completely exhausted, and I observed, for my eyes were anxiously fixed upon him, that he pressed his handkerchief repeatedly to his lips. When the congregation retired, I lingered behind in the porch that I might assist him home. Two old women passed without observing me; they were conversing in low earnest tones, and they wiped their eyes as they walked. “Honest man,” said the one to the other, “did ye see how sair failed he was, Annie, when he gie’d oot the psalm? I’m fear’t he’ll no be lang amang us.” I looked wistfully after them as they moved along to the gate: they did not know what a sad heart they had left behind.

My father soon appeared, leaning feebly on the arm of one of the elders,—some of the others were behind.

All were looking serious and dejected. I stole to my father's vacant side, and was going to offer him my additional support, when my eye fell upon the white handkerchief which he still kept in his hand. It was spotted with blood. A low shuddering gasp escaped from my lips, instead of the cry which rose to them, and which I had still strength of mind enough to check. I knew what consequence the doctor attached to this symptom, and remembered how earnestly he had lately questioned me as to its existence. I was glad that my father did not notice my distress. He refused my aid, as he had sufficient support, and we walked on to the gate. When we reached it, he suddenly paused, and turned round, as if moved by some involuntary impulse. He gazed wistfully for a few moments upon the little church. What feelings passed through his mind I know not ; but he sighed deeply, and then moved on. It was a parting look : he never entered it again.

He was assisted into the house, but he had not sat down more than a few minutes, when he felt he must go to bed,—he was completely worn out. By this time he had recollectcd to put his handkerchief out of sight, afraid, I have no doubt, that it might suddenly attract my eye. The elder, who had accompanied him, still lingered, and seemed anxious to be of further use ; so he supported him up stairs, and helped him to undress. I was waiting in the passage outside the room, and, when the elder came out, I followed him down stairs.

"How do you think my father is, Mr Lang?" I asked him anxiously, when out of hearing.

"Weel, I canna just say," he answered hesitatingly.
"What do ye think o' him yoursel'?"

I could only shake my head, and then turn it aside, to hide the tears which I could not restrain.

"Ay—ay—ye are taking it unco sair to heart," said the good man, evidently moved himself; "but I trust he's no sae ill as ye fear—and oh! Miss Rosy, dear, mind he's in gude hands,—gude hands!"

"Puir thing," I heard him murmur to himself, as he left the house. Yes—I was become a poor sad thing.

I went to my own room before I again entered my father's, and bathed my eyes with cold water, that he might not observe I had been weeping. I then took him some refreshment. He was lying quietly when I entered, with his eyes closed; but he opened them on hearing my step, and cheerfully agreed to take what I had brought to him. He then said he thought he would compose himself to rest, and that, he was sure, would do him good. He begged me to go down to dinner. To please him, as he several times looked anxiously at me, I promised to obey him. I went down stairs, but dinner was out of the question. I could not eat. I went to watch for the doctor, for whom I had sent.

It was not long before I recognised the clatter of his horse's feet on the quiet road. He dismounted at the gate, and gave his horse to John, who had been on

the outlook for his arrival ; and after talking a short time with him, he came towards the house. I met him at the door, and took him into the parlour. There was considerable kindness of heart hidden under the doctor's homely exterior, and he looked uneasy and disturbed, as, softly shutting the door, I hastened to disburden myself of all my heavy fears. He heard me to an end, without interrupting me. He shook his head, however, when I mentioned the blood. He could say nothing though till he had seen him. I explained that I had not informed my father of my having sent for him, and that, as he had shown an inclination to sleep some time ago, I would first go up to his room, and ascertain if he were awake.

I accordingly stole quietly up stairs to the bedroom. He was asleep. I gently put back the curtains, and bent over him. I had now the best opportunity of examining the ravages illness had made on his appearance, when every feature was at rest, and the play of the countenance, so expressive when awake, was gone. The eyes were hollow, and the cheek-bones stood out prominently. There were two bright red spots, one on each cheek, while the rest of the face was unnaturally pale. I dropped the curtain with a heavy foreboding sigh.

I lingered for a short time in the room in case he might awake. There was a small cupboard fitting in to the lower recess of the window, and upon this I leaned my arms, and for some minutes looked vacantly out. My eye scarcely noted any object, for my mind

was busy. But at length my thoughts were arrested. It had never struck me till now, when I stood there this Sabbath afternoon, why my father some years before had caused one of the trees skirting the little shrubbery to be cut down. I had wondered at the time why he had sacrificed the tree, for it did not interfere with the vigorous growth of the rest. In some moods of the mind we are alive to all things which bear sympathy with them, which at other times never strike us. Now I saw that, if left to spread, it must have obscured the view of my mother's grave. He had never forgotten her. I felt how touching was this daily clinging to her remembrance. How sacred a spot this window must have been to him for many years—to him, the gentle, uncomplaining, patient man—My poor father !

As he continued to sleep, I thought it best to go below, and inform the doctor. I found him quite willing to wait, as he had only one other patient to visit that evening who lived at no great distance ; and having satisfied his request for a book, and seen him seated comfortably in my father's chair, I took up one myself, as a pretence to appear employed, and that I might, without observation, indulge my own thoughts. The doctor soon fell asleep over his book, and, with his blue cotton handkerchief spread over his face, looked quite content to remain where he was.

I left him after some time to his repose, and, after giving orders in the kitchen for tea to be got ready, I

again went up stairs. I found my father just awaking as I entered his room. I informed him that the doctor was below, that I had thought it advisable to send for him as he had seemed so poorly. He did not appear surprised, and said he should be glad to see him. I went down, and rousing the doctor, brought him up to my father's room, and then left them together.

I had a very severe headache; so telling Nanny to be on the watch for the doctor's reappearance, and then inform me, that I might give him tea, I stole out to the garden that I might try the effect of fresh air. I walked up and down there for a considerable time, but at last was surprised that I was not summoned. So I returned to the house, anxious to learn the doctor's opinion of my father's state. I met Nanny in the lobby, who informed me he was gone.

I was much disappointed. "Why did you not tell me, Nanny," I said reproachfully? "I wished particularly to see the doctor after he left my father. This was not like you."

"Oh! Miss Rose, I didna forget—I telt him tea was ready, and you were expecting him; but he wadna bide for me, and made straight for the stable. There's his horse's feet enoo—he's just riding aff—I'll stop him yet, if ye like." But the doctor set off that moment at a canter, and it was impossible. As Nanny was vexed, I said it was of no consequence, and went up stairs to my father's room. He held out his hand as I entered, and smiled.

"I am afraid you have been like Martha, my dear Rose," he said, "anxious and troubled about many things."—But the doctor and you seem to be of one mind : I must give up all labour at present ; this poor weak frame cannot bear it, it seems.—Well, love, all is in *His* hands. I shall indulge, I think, to-night. You can have tea up here, and then, Rose, you shall read to me."

I could not ask him more particularly what the doctor said. But he looked, though serious, so cheerful, that I could not believe that there was any immediate cause for apprehension. I had the tea-things brought to his room as he requested, and then read to him from the inspired volume. And so passed this Sabbath evening.

It was some days before my father was able to rise from bed. The last exertion had been far too severe, and had left the most serious effects. The doctor visited him daily ; but I could not succeed in drawing from him any decided opinion upon his patient's state. At first he endeavoured to evade my inquiries, and, when I pressed them, his answers were so perplexing and unsatisfactory, that I knew not what to make of them. "I would fain hope so," was his only and constant reply to any interrogation regarding my father's improvement ; and with this I tried to satisfy myself. The blood-spitting had not continued, though occasionally it threatened to return, and this kept me in some degree hopeful, though it was but a sad flickering hope at the best.

At the end of a week, he was able to venture down stairs ; but I was painfully made certain of his increasing debility. The slightest exertion had now become fatiguing to him. He was extremely chilly ; and unless sitting either by a large fire, or in the little rose-covered porch, when the sun was at the meridian (which he loved to do), he was uncomfortable. He became at last unable even for the exertion of family worship. He attempted it on several occasions ; but it brought on such fits of coughing, that I begged and implored it might never be resumed. His elders often came to see him, and he conversed cheerfully with them ; and his brother minister, Mr Patterson, rode over every few days to visit him. As to the supply of ordinances for the people, the presbytery agreed, while their own pastor was laid aside, to preach for him in rotation.

How contented he was under it all ! I never heard him murmur. I believe he suffered more than we were aware of ; for often when he did not know I was observing him, he would press his hand to his side, and an expression of much pain would pass over his face. Then those dreadful sleepless nights ! He would not allow me to sleep in his room, which I was anxious to do : he spared me in whatever he could. But I used to steal to his door in the darkness ; and then the weary tossing to and fro, the frequent cough, and the deep-drawn breath, too plainly told me why he would not have me there. Oh ! if my mother had been spared, I used then to

think,—one whom he could not have restrained from watching and soothing him. He thought more of my fatigue than of his own suffering. He did not suspect the painfulness of watching when one is allowed to do nothing.

I do not know how hope fled from me. By little and little I was brought to feel the truth. It was so gradual, that I cannot say when I passed from hope to its reverse, and found myself conversing with my father on the change which must ere long take place. An unseen hand, I believe, was supporting me all this time, and my father's God was fulfilling his own promise : “ Cast thy fatherless children upon me, and I will sustain them.” Often during the still hours of the night, when he fancied no ear but that of his Heavenly Father was open, did I overhear his earnest petitions for myself. He prayed that I might be brought more and more to the knowledge of the truth,—that I might be prepared for the trial which awaited me, and that it might afterwards be sanctified to me. He begged for daily bread for both body and soul.

His worldly concerns had long been settled. He had little to leave,—little beyond the furniture of the house, and that was of too simple a description to be worth much. “ I hope, Rose, I have not brought you up too tenderly,” he once said, as if inwardly reproaching himself. “ You may have your bread to earn, my poor child, and you are little fitted, I fear, for the hard experiences of life. But I am wrong to

despond," he said, checking himself and looking solemnly upwards : " God will temper the wind to the shorn lamb."

I had written to my aunt in Glasgow whenever I had become fully aware of my father's state. He himself had suggested the propriety of doing so. But my aunt was unable at present to come to us on account of the illness of her youngest daughter. She begged that I would write constantly, as neither she nor Mr Dalgleish would grudge the postage, she said. She hoped that Jemima would soon be better ; and if so, she would instantly come to Auchtermuir. There was no other relation whom it was my duty to summon. My father seemed disappointed. He would have liked, he said, to have seen her once more, and to have conversed with her about me. But God's will be done ;—if they were not to meet each other in this world, he trusted they would meet in heaven.

Good old Mrs Johnstone ! Now that I could not come to her, she came to me. She was a great comfort and support to me in my distress ; and it seemed to relieve my father's mind of a great burden that I had one motherly friend to console and help me. She assisted me to nurse him ; and I had no hesitation in leaving him for a short time every day to her care while I went out, as he insisted I should do, to take some exercise. But why do I mention one individual ? for there was universal sympathy displayed throughout the parish.

My father's mind dwelt much upon his flock. " My poor people!" he would often say, " it is painful to part from them ; but I trust the Lord will send them a shepherd who will keep them better than I have done. I have been too negligent about their souls. I have not been so instant as I should have been." He was so humble. He often spoke in this manner ; but I knew that he had little cause for self-reproach upon this point. Good Mrs Johnstone could not endure to hear him arraign himself thus, and would often have expostulated with him. But it always ended in her retreating from the room, that she might give vent to her feelings in a crying-fit. " To hear him," she said, " who had laboured wet and dry—night and day—among them for thirty years ; to hear him upbraiding himself in that way, it went to her heart."

The summer had now drawn to a close, and autumn, with its melancholy emblems and pensive beauty, was come. The fruit-harvest was gathered in ; and the trees, no longer bending beneath their golden load, looked bare and disconsolate. The leaves were falling thickly, and already covered the paths ; and although at intervals the sun still shone brightly through the early part of the day, with some of the ancient heat of the summer in his beams, the mornings and evenings were becoming cold and gusty. The changing season had a bad effect upon the feeble frame of the invalid. His cough increased both in violence and frequency, and the pain in his side was more distressing. He still, however, persisted in

coming down stairs, greatly, I fear, on my account, for he thought that constant sitting in his room was prejudicial to me. He had still enough of strength to ascend and descend the stairs with my assistance or that of one of the servants. Well wrapt up, with his limbs supported on a stool and protected by blankets, he remained for a certain portion of each day in his easy-chair in the parlour beside the fire, while I read to him or conversed with him.

But the scene was drawing fast to a close. I knew he could not be long spared ; but I had no idea death was so near. As he was still able to leave his room, I cherished the hope that he might linger on for some months at least, and Dr M'Whirter said nothing which showed he differed from me. He did not now rise till far on in the forenoon (how different from his old habit!) after which he remained about two hours in his own room, where he took dinner, that he might fully recruit from the fatigue of dressing before he ventured down to the parlour.

One day he seemed rather stronger than usual. He conversed more, and his cheerfulness almost infected me. While we assisted him down stairs, he required less of our help, and Nanny and I exchanged congratulatory looks. When he was settled comfortably in his chair beside the blazing fire, and I had so placed the little old-fashioned standing screen, which was my mother's work, as to protect his face from the heat, he requested to see John, a thing which on most days he was unable for. When John appeared,

bonnet in hand, and his rough weather-beaten face flushed with the haste he had made to answer the unusual summons, he received a number of directions concerning the glebe and garden, which my father formerly had to send through me. Their conference lasted a considerable time, and just at its close, old Lowrie Walker, the weaver and Sabbath-school teacher, came to the door, as he often did, to inquire after my father's health. I admitted him, as I was desired to do, and he sat for some time. I was beginning to be afraid that all this exertion was too much ; but he looked so well, that I could scarcely suggest the propriety of quietness. When Lowrie had gone away I got tea ready ; but when it was over, instead of desiring me to read to him, which was his usual custom at that time of day, he complained of drowsiness. I proposed that he should go to bed, but he was unwilling to do so, as his cough was sure to annoy him whenever he lay down. I therefore had the fire mended, and having covered him up carefully with a large plaid in addition to his blankets, I dropped the curtain over the nearest window, and then retreated to the other with my work, that he might sleep in quiet.

This threw the upper part of the room where he lay into deep shadow, only relieved by the firelight. It was about six o'clock on an October evening, and the sky was already grey ; but it was still light enough to enable me to work, and I sewed away silently for a considerable time. I sometimes paused

in drawing through my needle to listen to my father's deep-drawn breathing, which was audible in the quiet room; but he soon seemed to fall into deeper slumber, and I rejoiced at the refreshing rest he was obtaining.

The evening continued gradually to settle down. It soon became too dark to allow me to work, and laying my seam aside, I sat thoughtfully gazing out upon the prospect. By and bye I saw Peggy with a lighted lantern in her hand, going down to the stables to milk the cow. This was always done at seven o'clock, so that I now knew an hour had passed since my father had first fallen asleep. But the fire was blazing brightly, and he was so warmly wrapt up, that he slept as securely there as in bed. I had no apprehensions for him.

To amuse myself, and pass away the time till he awoke, I watched the effect of the firelight upon the room, and thought what a striking picture it would make. The broken light and shade, never at rest, as the flame on the hearth rose and fell, reminded me of an old painting in the dining-room at the Craiglands. I had often marvelled that it had been left there, for my father, who understood these things, had told me that it was a production of one of the great old masters. It was considerably faded, but that might be owing to neglect. The light darting up illuminated my father's figure for one instant, and then left it doubtful and indistinct. Now it shed a warm glow upon the carpet and furniture, and then it suddenly

left every object in gloom which the eye strove in vain to penetrate. When I was weary of watching these effects of light and shade, I again looked without. How dark and defined the trees appeared against the sky! They were rapidly becoming bare under the influence of the season. The wind was rising, and just as I looked out a sudden gust swept down a great shower of leaves, which fluttered across the gravel towards the window, against which they struck, many of them lodging upon the sill. John would have to sweep the turf to-morrow,—it had been somewhat neglected of late. There was no redundancy of foliage now to hide our neighbour the church from our view; it stood distinct and brown among its own trees. But the rusty old monuments on the walls could not be discerned in the gloom. Again a figure emerges from the darkness,—it is John coming in to supper. He has given the horse his, and shaken down the straw for his bed, and he is now ready to enjoy his evening meal in the chimney corner. After him comes Peggy. I heard the key turn in the byre-door a few minutes ago, and now she appears bearing her lantern in one hand, which throws a sudden gleam of light on the bushes as she passes them, and in the other is her milk-pail. I almost envy Peggy's light heart, for she carols a song in a low tone as she comes up the path. Nanny has told her that her master is easier to-day. She disappears, and then all is vacancy and quietness without, though occasionally the wind rushes past in sudden fitful gusts, bending the tree-

tops before them, and whistling drearily through the branches.

My father still continued to sleep, and it was so quietly that I could not bear to disturb him. "Ah! if he could but sleep in this way at all times, perhaps he might be restored even yet!" was my thought. I heard a light step in the passage. I was afraid Nanny might come in and disturb him. It was long past my usual hour of ringing for candles, and she was probably bringing them of her own accord. I stole on tiptoe to the door, fearful of awaking the sleeper, and having informed her that he slept, desired her to leave one of them on the table in the lobby, and I would lift it in when he awoke, which I was in momentary expectation of. I then drew the door softly to, and again went back to my station in the window.

It is a solemnizing thing to sit alone and look out upon the night. The world seems for the time to re-cede far away, and the soul feels more deeply its immortal destiny. As I fixed my eyes upon the sky above, into which myriads of stars seemed to burst into sight as I gazed, I felt how weak and ignorant I was of myself, and how Almighty was that agency which had called these wonderful orbs into existence, and which still upheld them in their constant course. But it was not that sense of weakness which prostrates and enervates the mind, making it flee as it were from the presence of God,—no, I felt that it soothed and elevated it. He was my Father—my Saviour; and though the contemplation of these His glorious works

filled my soul with wonder and solemnity, I experienced, in the very power displayed in their formation and upholding, a confidence that He was as able as willing to keep that which, I trusted, I had committed to him. The Creator was also the Redeemer. How that thought cheered my overburdened heart ! He was dealing tenderly with me.

There they shone gloriously beautiful as in the first hour of their creation, when all the assembled sons of God shouted for joy ! No wonder, I thought, as I continued to gaze upon the sky, that in the earlier ages of the world, when the human mind was restlessly groping for light and certainty amidst the darkness which surrounded it, man associated those wonderful works with his own destiny ! From the lonely watchers on the Chaldean plains, from the sages of ancient Egypt, renowned for their wisdom, had this superstition emanated, till it even reached our own remote island of the sea. It had passed away ; but still to the Christian's eye those mystic lights conveyed a peculiar meaning,—he saw God in them, a covenant God full of mercy and love towards his fallen and erring creatures. How much more consolatory is the later than the earlier creed !

I could have sat thus engaged for hours ; for though my natural disposition was gay, I had still always possessed a dreaming, brooding spirit, which delighted to ruminate on such subjects. But now that circumstances had repressed this native exuberance of mind, I was doubly susceptible to all influences of a solemn

and meditative nature. But it was getting late, and I began to wonder and to feel uneasy that my father did not waken. I grew restless. The fire was getting low, and I even felt chilly. I marvelled, so sensitive as he was to cold, that he could continue to sleep. I resolved again and again to rouse him, and rose for the purpose, but still I hesitated. Was it not better to let him sleep while he could?—he who enjoyed so little rest. I decided at all events to go up stairs and ascertain how his bedroom fire burned before I awoke him. It was blazing brightly, and I found Nanny warming his bed. I told her my uneasiness, and she advised me to waken him.

Irresolute and uncomfortable, I went down stairs. I listened for some moments at the door, that I might hear if he yet moved, before I entered; but all was still quiet. I stole through the room till near his chair, and in the darkness I nearly threw myself down, by stumbling over a stool which was in my way. Even the noise I thus accidentally made did not rouse him. I got half frightened,—the room was so dark, and the silence so deep and oppressive. I could hear my father's watch ticking distinctly. I felt what we Scotch call *eerie*; and to relieve the feeling, I went back to the lobby, where one candle remained burning by my desire. I paced up and down there for a few minutes, occasionally pausing to listen at the half-open parlour-door,—sometimes resolving to summon Nanny for company. It was very dismal remaining in the lobby; for the frequent gusts of

wind which hurried past shook the bolt of the door as if a hand was trying to remove it, and the thick-falling leaves rattled wildly against it, as they were swept on and on. I could not remain there any longer, and at length I strove to throw off the strange undefinable dread which was creeping upon me, and resolved I would waken my father. I lifted the candle, which was flaring in the draught of the passage, and moved to the door. I paused there a moment to trim it, and to listen : then summoning all my resolution, I pushed it open and entered, shading the light with my hand as I anxiously advanced, for fear it might startle him up suddenly. I set down the candlestick upon the table, and went up close to his chair. He lay in the same attitude as when he had composed himself at first to rest, and as if enjoying the deepest repose. I was astonished at the calmness of his sleep. But I must waken him—I must, I again and again repeated to myself. His face was concealed from me by the folds of the plaid which I had gathered around him, and was also half turned to the wall. But one of his hands was extended from beneath the covering, and I gently took hold of it. Something in its touch alarmed me. I hastily snatched up the candle, and let the light fall full upon his face. A wild scream of uncontrollable agony burst from me—my father was dead !

CHAPTER XIV.

The spring may come again,
The summer spread her store ;
A fairer land hath gained them both ;
They will return no more.
Alas ! alas ! the old grey hall,
The home of mirth and song !
Ah ! storms and wintry weather
Are never absent long.

I IN vain lift my pen to describe the sufferings of the few following days. As I attempt to write, memory brings my sorrows so freshly to my mind, that I, an old woman, feel as if they had again commenced. I look back over a long course of years, and I am once more the young sorrow-stricken girl, carrying her grief into the solitude of her own chamber, and feeling that consolation could only come from her God. It seems a dreary, dismal dream to me now, looking back through the long vista of years with all the calmness which experience brings. But even then I was conscious the Lord was dealing mercifully with me, and by outward affliction was leading me insensibly to himself.

I remember being conscious of a vision of sorrowing,

weeping faces bending over me, but indistinct and flitting like the phantasma of a dream. Some recollections I have, too, of a confusion and bustle taking place in the house, in which, however, I had no share; and then I remember becoming fully awake, and finding myself undressed, and in my own bed, with good old Mrs Johnstone sitting crying by my pillow. I had been long insensible I was afterwards told ; and when I recovered, I had fallen into a sleepy dreaming state, which continued for days.

My strength had been severely tried during the few past months, and anxiety of mind had also weakened my body. I had struggled hard against fatigue and lassitude in attending my father ; and now that all anxiety on his account was over, I sank like a child worn out when night comes. I was helpless, body and mind alike, in the hands of those around me. But they had kind hearts who tended me. Dr M'Whirter could not understand my symptoms—they puzzled him. Such excessive prostration of strength, without any apparent disease, had never before occurred in his practice ; and he could only shake his head, and advise them to give me plenty of nourishment. Mrs Johnstone understood the case better. The heart, she saw, was stricken, and time and gentleness could alone relieve it. When the third day of my feebleness (I cannot call it illness) had passed, she, however, felt that I must be roused from this state of inertness. “ If we could only get her to shed tears,” she said, “ all would be well.”

She accordingly set herself to the task. As I occasionally answered her questions, and passively took what was pressed upon me, she knew that I was not unconscious ; and if she could but succeed in striking the right chord, she felt she might be able to rouse my dormant faculties. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon. She sat by my bedside, and, as she afterwards said, was mentally engaged in considering the best manner in which she was likely to accomplish her object.

I had been in a dosing state all day, but the stupor must have been gradually yielding, for I opened my eyes at the heavy noise of men's feet in the lobby ; and when I opened them, I became conscious, as I said before, of the good old woman sitting crying beside me. "What is the matter, dear Mrs Johnstone, and what noise is that?" I asked.

Mrs Johnstone felt as if it were an immediate answer to her prayers ; and thinking it better to run some risk rather than allow me to sink back perhaps into the same lethargic state, with a kind of desperation which made her heart throb, as she could only guess the effect of her words upon me, she answered immediately—"It 's the men, dear, with your good father's coffin." She then paused breathlessly to observe the consequences of her communication to me.

The sequel proved she was right, though the shock was severe at first. I was for some minutes powerfully agitated ; but the mist which had obscured my

mental faculties cleared slowly away,—and as my motherly friend bent soothingly over me, I hid my face on her kind bosom, and, to her great joy, was able at last to weep. Such tears! they fell in torrents, and even Mrs Johnstone, who had prayed for them, was frightened at their violence and long continuance; but they relieved my poor oppressed heart. I lay down afterwards like a weaned child.

Mrs Johnstone would not leave me, but slept that night in my room, as she had done the two preceding ones. I wept often, but my tears did me good; and Mrs Johnstone did not hesitate, when she saw me composed and calm, to tell me of the arrangements which had been made. In consequence of my inability, she had taken it upon herself to intimate to my friends in Glasgow the event which had occurred, and she supposed that Mr and Mrs Dalgleish would probably arrive next day. Mr Patterson, my father's old friend, had been over, and in the meantime had undertaken the charge of all the arrangements.

Mrs Johnstone would not allow me to speak much that night, but the following morning she made no objections that I should rise when I wished to do so, and she assisted me to dress. I was calm this morning. I had been early awake; and while all the household were still asleep, I passed the hours in meditating on the past, and in seeking support from God. Sorrow would at times force its way and overwhelm my mind; but I endeavoured to stay myself by the remembrance of God's promises: I felt their

power in the hour of affliction, and that my father's God was also mine. Now that I was left alone in the world, I saw how much I had put the creature in the place of the Creator ; and, humbled to the dust under a sense of my shortcomings and rebellion, I besought Him henceforward to subdue my will entirely to His, and to enable me to walk on my now solitary path through this world, depending solely upon Him. It was the peace springing from the self-renunciation I was thus enabled to make, that produced the calm with which I looked forward to the duties before me. My earthly father (alas ! how beloved he was) was taken from me, but I now indeed truly felt that I had a Father in heaven.

I was anxious to be up and doing, but I was still weak and nervous. Mrs Johnstone brought me my breakfast before she allowed me to leave my room ; but when that was over, I begged her to let me see my father's body. She did not speak, but the tears stole down her face, as she silently offered, after a moment's hesitation, to support me from the room. My father's room was at one end of the passage, and mine at the other. A small closet in which he kept many of his books was close by his bedroom, and both rooms were shut in by an additional door from the passage. I walked feebly along the passage supported on Mrs Johnstone's arm. It was a boisterous October day, and the rain pattered heavily against the narrow windows of the spiral staircase. Nothing could be more cheerless and desolate, and calculated to weigh

down the spirits. The wind came in long sullen blasts, sweeping the dead leaves, which fluttered wildly from the trees, before it, and the glimpse I caught in passing of the scene without was now as melancholy and dismal as in summer it was pleasing. I shivered half with cold and half with the additional depression resulting from my view of the dreary landscape: sorrow, however, chills the blood like old age. The old house creaked and resounded with the storm, which, till I left my room, which was small and sheltered, I was scarcely conscious of.

The house was otherwise silent. There is a solemnity in the presence of death in a dwelling which awes the most careless household. Ours was not that however. We stole quietly through the passage. Mrs Johnstone unlocked the outer door of my father's chamber, and then went in alone to open the shutters. She returned almost immediately, and I followed her into the old familiar room with a sense of anguish which was speedily relieved by a burst of tears. On entering the room, the first object which met my eye was a startling one, and made me shudder. It was the coffin for my father, which had been brought to the house the previous night. The body was not yet placed in it, as it was the old custom to wait for the arrival of relations before that duty was performed, and my aunt had not yet come. I shrunk from the sight of the gloomy unsightly object, whose narrow bounds were soon to hold all I loved most in the world, and threw a timid glance around the room, for

I had never before been brought into such close contact with death.

How changed was that room ! It seemed but yesterday since I had looked in upon his sleeping face between the curtains, and now these were tucked back ; and instead of the living slumbering countenance, there was a large white sheet which covered the dead. How the very cleanliness and propriety with which every thing around was arranged chilled and oppressed the mind ! The garments laid aside, the chair pushed carelessly away in the act of rising, the lately opened book,—there were none of those to speak of life and occupation. How different it once had been ! How cheerful had been this little chamber !

Mrs Johnstone stepped solemnly to the bed, and uncovered my father's face. I started at the change upon it ; but it was only the passing impulse of the moment,—the hue and the deep calm of death struck me with surprise, though I expected them. The expression of the face was calm, unutterably calm : its calmness sank into my heart. It seemed to speak to me of that rest into which he had entered,—the rest which remaineth for the people of God. I felt, after the first moment, that it was consoling thus to look upon it. I was so certain of his present blessedness, that I could not mourn for him, though I myself was desolate. With him it was “absent from the body, present with the Lord ;” and as I gazed upon the clay-cold features, I felt how inexpressibly sweet

was the tie which unites the believer to Christ. How willingly would I at that moment, if the Lord had pleased, have laid myself down beside my dead father, and left this cold sorrowful world for ever! But ah! my pilgrimage was but begun, and his was ended.

I turned away, at length, to wipe the tears which blinded my eyes, and then good Mrs Johnstone reverently replaced the sheet over the face. I leaned on the same spot in the window; and when I raised my eyes, they fell upon the same objects that had struck me, now many weeks ago,—the last time my father had preached. How soon he would be laid under that very stone which then had awakened such a train of thought in my mind! But ere long I would be far away, and strangers' eyes alone would then look upon it. The thought was bitter. It was indeed a sad truth. I had now no claim to the manse: I had no longer a home. Ministers' families are exposed to peculiar trials. The heart clings to the spot in which it was born. The house in which we spend our early years becomes identified with ourselves. But *we* have no alternative: the loss of a father in our case is soon followed by a trial only next to that in bitterness. We left the room.

My aunt and her husband did not make their appearance this day yet. No one called at the manse; for the day was so stormy as to keep every one at home who might have wished to condole with me. As the rain and wind moderated towards the evening, one of the Jennies ventured over from Burnside,

charged with her mistresses' kind regards and sympathies, and earnest inquiries regarding my health. Ah ! it was for my father's they had formerly inquired. Miss Menie, the servant said, would have come over herself, and, indeed, had put on her things for the purpose ; but the other ladies had persuaded her not to venture out on so stormy a day, as she had a touch of the rheumatism.

Jenny was the only stranger who came near us that night ; and the whole household, dull and dispirited, retired early to bed,— all except John, who had scarcely spoken since his master's death. He had once complained of inability to sleep, but the servants had discovered that, instead of going to bed when he retired to his cot, he had, for the last two nights, sat musing very late over his peat fire. But he did not know that he had been observed.

When I awoke the following morning, I felt stronger, and was able to rise and go down stairs to breakfast. Mrs Johnstone was then obliged to return to the Craiglands, and I embraced the opportunity of paying a solitary visit to my father's room.

I again bent over the bed and gazed on my father's pale, calm face. I have read, since that time, of a good man who overcame the fear of death by gazing steadfastly on the countenance of his dead child. It was so with me at that moment. A calm morning had succeeded to a stormy night. A feeble ray of sunshine stole in when I opened the shutters, and fell upon the cold white sheet which covered the body,

and now it flickered for a moment on the pallid face. It was an emblem, I thought, of faith shedding light upon the tomb.

The presence of the dead, too, impressed so forcibly the briefness and uncertainty of life. All earthly things seemed so to fade away, and lose their importance before it, that I felt our parting (bitter though it was) was only for a short time. I knelt down and prayed by the bedside, earnestly requesting light and resignation, and then rose calmed and invigorated in spirit.

Miss Menie Weir called during the course of the forenoon, and she sat with me for a considerable time. She was grieved with my sickly looks, and kindly offered to stay and nurse me till all was over. But I knew what a sacrifice this would be to her ; and though I deeply felt her genuine kindness, I was glad to be able to tell her that my aunt and her husband were immediately expected. She was then anxious for me to promise, before she left me, that I would come to Burnside whenever my relations took their departure. The tears streamed down my cheeks ; but I could only shake my head in answer. I could not leave my old home till compelled by necessity. She had the delicacy to comprehend my feelings, and did not press the subject ; and at last, though reluctantly, she went away. I felt I loved Miss Menie.

Late in the afternoon, a chaise stopping at the gate at last intimated the arrival of my aunt and her husband. John was absent on some errand, and they

had to pause there till one of the women servants hastened down and threw open the gate. I had succeeded this day in overcoming my reluctance to enter the parlour where my father died, and was waiting there for them. My heart began to beat rapidly when I heard of their approach, for my nerves were very unhinged.

The chaise came slowly up to the door, darkening the windows of the parlour as it passed, and grating along the gravel with its wheels. I felt much trepidation at the approaching interview with these strange relations. It was long since I had seen my aunt; for she had been so occupied by her family for many years as to be unable to visit us at Auchtermuir, and I had not been in Glasgow since I was a child. I had not even a distinct idea of her appearance, but I fancied that she would resemble my father. My heart yearned towards her, as my only surviving relation; and I was anxious to love her and to be loved by her. I had pictured her taking me to her bosom, and bidding me regard myself as her child. *He* had been tender-hearted, and so must she be. But I was by nature, and owing to my retired education, shy and reserved, except with intimate friends; and instead of hastening to receive and welcome my aunt, I remained standing in the middle of the room flurried and nervous at the prospect of meeting her.

When the chaise stopped at the door, it was immediately opened by Nanny, who had hurried back for the purpose. Then there were for a few minutes

a considerable bustle, and a great whispering, as if some one was either asking questions or giving directions in a female voice, mixed however occasionally with the louder but still suppressed tones of a man. It all issued from the interior of the chaise, from which the travellers seemed in no hurry to descend ; and was occasioned, I afterwards heard from Nanny, who was somewhat scandalized by it, by my aunt's anxiety about her different packages, and her unwillingness to move till she had sent them all before her into the house.

" Mind the valise that 's under the seat too, Meg," I heard in the masculine voice, which sounded good-natured ;—" if you let the man drive aff wi' it, I 'll be at a loss for a coat, for there 's mair blackbirds than tailors here I would think."

This speech was followed by a heavy descent from the chaise and a few steps along the lobby, where however Mr Dalgleish (for I presumed it was he) paused for his wife to join him. It seemed that the valise could not be extracted till my aunt herself got out ; for after a few moments' bustle she followed him. But then there was the man to pay, and that again took some time ; and there were a great jingling of coin, mixed with a little grumbling, and the bumping of heavy packages which Nanny was conveying into the house (how strange and unpleasant the noise seemed to me at such a time), before I heard my aunt's voice inquiring for me. I now felt it necessary to make my appearance, and endeavouring to regain

composure, I moved to the door for the purpose of receiving them. But it was suddenly thrown open by Mr Dalglish, who being ignorant that the floor, an old one, had sunk somewhat lower than the stone passage, came stumbling into the room in such a manner as nearly to destroy his equilibrium, making me start back as I was advancing.

"Take care, Mr Dalglish, take care," said his wife sharply, as she followed him into the room.

"It's the floor's fault and no mine, Maggie," replied her husband as he recovered his balance. "But here's your niece, I suppose. How are ye, my dear?" and he shook my hand in a very kindly manner, intended, I suppose, to express his sympathy for my loss.

Mr Dalglish was a little stout man,—indeed, very stout. His face was also extremely rubicund, coarse-grained like the hue of a winter apple, but there was a merry twinkle in his eye. His whole aspect spoke the most genial good temper; and you were instantly conscious that you looked at an honest, well-meaning man, though he might be a vulgar one. My aunt, though also short in size, was thin and spare in her figure, which gave her a much more youthful look than her age warranted. She was only three years younger than my father, and he was fifty-six at his last birthday. I glanced timidly but anxiously towards her as she approached. I was disappointed that I could trace no likeness in her face to my father, as I had fondly expected to find. Her features were sharp, and she

had a pair of keen black eyes—his were grey. His pale, thoughtful, reflective face, and large brow, were quite the opposite of hers. I heaved a deep sigh as the vision I had pictured vanished.

My aunt greeted me, I suppose, just in the manner that might have been expected. She came up to me and took my hand, and asked how I did. But I had expected so much that I felt her greeting was cold and formal. I ought to have remembered that I was a stranger to her. The emotions which I thought to have given vent to on her bosom were forced back into my own, and the tears which were ready to overflow remained frozen in my eyes. But I endeavoured to conceal my disappointed feelings, and to receive them in a proper manner. My aunt, after she had spoken to me, glanced hastily round the room, and was somewhat agitated. It soothed me to see she was. She then sat down, and soon recovering herself, began to excuse the delay which had taken place in their leaving home. She had had to wait, she said, till her mourning was got ready, and it had only arrived the previous night. This morning was the earliest period they could get away.

I inquired after my cousin's health, and learned that she was much better, though still weak.

"Ay—poor Jemima has had a sair tout of it," said Mr Dalgleish, already planting himself on the rug, and leaning his back against the chimney-piece to have the full benefit of the fire. "I think, my dear, Miss Rose here is no unlike her."

" Well, there may be some likeness," replied my aunt shortly ; " but Jemima is dark and Rose is fair."

" So she is ; but there 's a something, however. Your cousins will show ye what Glasgow air is, and what Glasgow fare is too, my dear, ha, ha !—Your cousin Jemima wad mak' twa o' you when she 's weel,—wouldn't she, Mrs D. ?" with a complacent nod addressed to his wife.

I saw my aunt frown to him. " Yes, I think Rose is very thin, but of course she has had a good deal to do lately, Mr Dalgleish," she answered demurely.

Mr Dalgleish assumed a grave look immediately, as if conscious he had forgot himself ; but it was evidently a restraint, as he was inclined to be cheerful and communicative after his journey. I saw already that my aunt kept the reins of government in her hands.

I now asked them if they had dined, and was glad to hear (fearing that Mr Dalgleish might be particular) that they had done so when they changed horses in Hamilton. " And they gave us a good dinner, too," said Mr Dalgleish. " Currie's folk are very attentive, I must say. We thought it best to take a chack there, as markets arena very plentiful in the country, and we didna ken how ye might be provided. Hem ! "

Mr Dalgleish had a way peculiar to himself of clearing his throat at the end of his sentences, which gave them a somewhat pompous effect. But it was a good-natured pomposity, resulting merely from his satisfac-

tion with his own position, and with all that belonged to him. He was a wealthy man, and, moreover, had the pleasure of feeling that he owed his wealth to his own exertions. Setting a little ostentation aside, the natural consequence of a position to which he was not born, he was a worthy generous man in his own way. As yet I was not aware of this, but time developed his character.

I said I should get tea ready for them immediately, and left the room to order it. When I returned I offered to show my aunt to her bedroom, which she accepted. I took her up stairs. Our only spare room was next to mine. It was small, and of course only plainly furnished, having never been renewed since my father's marriage thirty years before. No doubt there were many deficiencies. I was rather surprised and dismayed, when we entered the room, at the quantity of luggage my aunt had thought fit to bring with her. A valise and trunk were on the floor, and the bed, chairs, and chest of drawers, were littered with bandboxes and small parcels. They certainly left little room for moving about. My aunt looked about her with a dissatisfied air on entering, and uttered some disparaging remarks on the accommodations, which somewhat surprised me and hurt my feelings. Of course she missed things which had perhaps become essential to her comfort, and the room *was* a small one: still I thought the present melancholy circumstances in which we both stood might have induced her to overlook these deficiencies, or at least closed her lips

in regard to them. I began to be afraid I might not be able to like her, and that sent a pang to my heart, for she was my only relation now. I did the best I could to move the things out of her way; and whether she felt ashamed of her hastiness at such a time, or was softened by observing my evident anxiety to please her, she cleared her countenance, and thanking me, desired me to go down stairs and get tea ready.

I was going away when she called me back to ask some particulars about my father's death. It was a painful subject for me to speak about, and I was soon weeping, and indeed so was my aunt, who sat down among her half-opened bundles to listen to me. She had evidently at one time been attached to my father, though they had seen little of each other for many years, for my father seldom went from home, and our chief intercourse with our Glasgow friends had been through the carrier, by whom we occasionally exchanged tokens of good-will. When I had given her a tolerably full description of his illness from its commencement to his death, which occupied some time, she rose wiping her eyes, and began anew to arrange her things; so I left her.

I found Mr Dalgleish seated before the fire, with his sturdy legs (cased in drab gaiters which buttoned closely up to his knees) extended one on each side of the grate. He altered his position to a standing one, however, when I entered, and asked me in a jocose tone, which evidently was natural to him, and as if

he had perfectly forgot the melancholy circumstances of the family, “when the gudewife might be expected to come, for he was yawpish?”

I answered that my aunt would be down immediately, and that he would not have long to wait for tea; and just at that moment Nanny brought in the tray. He appeared interested in watching her preparations, and lifted a cup from the table to examine, which he decidedly pronounced to be fine china, and very like a set he remembered his mother had had. All this was done with such simplicity and good-nature, that I could not find fault with his want of sympathy, even though it jarred a little on my feelings. I saw he had no intention of wilfully paining me, and that his remarks (though rather unseasonable) resulted merely from a happy insensibility of mind which could not realize sorrow, unless personally brought home to himself. Of course there was a certain selfishness in this; but then there was no hypocrisy. He soon laid down the cup and began to turn his eyes about the room.

“Comfortable old house this,” he said, with the tone of a man whose superior accommodations could allow him to be complimentary to others. “A very snug little parlour. But those bushes I noticed at the windows when we came in must bring in an awful vermin in summer. You should cut them down.—Hem, I forgot.—Ye’ll be better aff in the toun, my dear.” There was a short pause: he resumed—“We have had some of our rooms furnished spick and span

new this last year. Bailie Craig was quite taken with the dining-room chairs the other day—but we spared no expense. That, noo," he added, pointing to an antique cabinet which stood in the room, the gift of an old lady to my father twenty years before, and which had been a particular favourite of his—"that noo is a bit bonny thing o' the kind, I dare-say—but auld-fashioned—very auld-fashioned. What name do ye gie it?"

I said it was a Dutch cabinet, I believed.

"A Dutch cabinet! Ay, ay;—it's no unlike some things I hae seen in Geordie Grey's house,—but Geordie's a great man for nick-nacks. But it wadna dae in our rooms,—a' our things are new."

My aunt here made her appearance, having got rid of all her wrappings. She was handsomely dressed, and I was surprised how young she looked. She entered with a grave solemn step, and with a countenance evidently composed to rebuke the levity of her husband, on whom it had an immediate effect, for he became silent. She took a place by the tea-table, and he followed her example. I made tea for them, and endeavoured to be as attentive as possible; but I was growing more and more depressed in spirits, for I felt there was little congeniality of feeling between my strange friends and me. Mrs Dalgleish had for so many years been separated from her brother, while her own family were growing up about her and engrossing her affections, that he had long ceased to be a first object to her. I was disappointed. I missed

the motherly, homely kindness of good Mrs Johnstone, which had never tired watching over me during the two past days. Perhaps I had expected too much from my aunt, judging of her by my own quick feelings, and now did not make due allowances for what was missing in her. I felt intuitively that though depressed and solemnized by her arrival in the house of mourning, her sorrow was of a different nature from mine, and that I must shut up my grief in my own bosom. I had looked forward to my aunt's coming with eagerness; but there was a something (even though courtesy was not wanting) in her manner, and in the calm propriety with which she expressed herself, that warned me I must not expect to repose my wearied heart upon her. All that was really proper to do and say, I was sure she would fulfil upon the occasion; but she would neither feel nor sympathize with violent emotion, nor any thing out of the common beaten track of feeling.

We sunk gradually into silence. Mr Dalgleish seemed inclined enough to converse; but as my aunt only answered in monosyllables, and I was little disposed for conversation, he at length applied himself to the bread and butter and cold meat in quietness. Even he could not altogether forget that there was death in the house, for my aunt's manner must have impressed it upon him each time he met her look. The stillness and seclusion of the country too, in comparison with the bustle of the town, had gradually an influence upon him: he more than once alluded to

this during the evening, as if it struck him strangely, and asked me if I never felt dull in such a quiet place.

I said I was accustomed to it ; at which answer he shook his head, and said he was sure he never could become so, and that he would rather hear the bells at the Cross any day than all the birds in the country. I daresay he spoke the truth.

There was a melancholy duty to discharge this night. One or two of the elders, and some other friends, came to see their minister's head laid in his coffin. My aunt seemed much affected at the sight of my father's body. But, oh ! What anguish I felt when my trembling hands, assisted by one of the elders, helped to lay his head in its narrow bed ! I felt for the time so utterly desolate, so helplessly forlorn, that my heart seemed breaking.

How thankful was I that night when my relations retiring to rest left me once more alone ! It was a luxury I had panted for during the last few hours. I could weep and mourn as I liked in my own little room. I was sick at heart. I felt now more and more what I had lost, and how impossible it was that it could ever be made up to me. I saw my aunt could never fill my father's place, and that I must learn that difficult lesson, for one trained as I had been, to be self-sustaining. Perhaps my judgment of my aunt was too hasty ; but I had a nature made up of quick impulses, and I was young and sensitive.

I might not have judged so hardly at a more advanced age. But I had been the child of a doting father, and anything short of warmth of sympathy appeared to me like indifference. I felt that, but for a few humble devoted friends, I was alone in the world ; and from these friends I was conscious (though as yet I could not suffer my mind to dwell upon it) I must soon be separated. After this happened, to whom could I look for kindness, for sympathy ?

CHAPTER XV.

Alas, alas ! what mourning train
Is winding down the glen ?
What mean these weeds of deepest wo ?
What brings these sorrowing men ?

NEXT day was Sabbath, and my father's pulpit was vacant. The stillness of the sacred day was doubled. Our seclusion was unbroken. I missed the bell at the hour when it was usually rung. No "old familiar faces" were visible winding down the declivity and glancing through the hedge on their way to the church. No little knots were gathered round the porch, or solitary individuals poring over the tombstones till the hour of worship arrived. This day-week my father had been alive, and I was sitting by him during the ringing of the bell. What a change had taken place since then !

Both Mr Dalgleish and my aunt seemed to find that time hung heavy on their hands this day. They did not know how to employ themselves so as to relieve their weariness. My aunt disguised her ennui best, but Mr Dalgleish could not conceal his. He yawned repeatedly, even at our meals, which were

his briskest moments, and was constantly looking at his watch, and wondering at the slowness with which the hours passed over. "It was so different in the town," he said "for there the days seemed sometimes too short." As he did not care for reading (neither did my aunt) and it would not have been decorous at present to be seen far beyond the gate, he had no other way of amusing himself than by wandering about the garden and stables, where he minutely inspected all the live stock, from the pigs to the cow and horse. He also contrived to peep into the kitchen and dairy.

After dinner, my aunt accompanied him to the garden ; and as I passed up the staircase, I saw them walking up and down there, she speaking earnestly and he listening to her. I suppose it was concerning me and future arrangements ; for after tea that night, they both drew in their chairs near the fire, as if by previous agreement ; and my aunt, who had been absent and irritable at times during the day, said that she and Mr Dalgleish wished to have some talk about what was to be done with me in future.

I was taken by surprise. I was not prepared for this sudden introduction of a subject which I knew must however be discussed before long ; but I never thought otherwise than that it would be postponed till the funeral was over. I felt agitated, more especially as I did not like the way in which my aunt brought it forward. It seemed as if the responsibility thrown upon her by my having no other

relation, was no welcome one. It was painful to suspect this, for I had no one else to turn to. Besides, it was Sabbath ; and I had been trained in a careful reverence for that holy day. I hesitated. I was at a loss for words to express my present feelings ; but I must have looked them, for my aunt replied, as it were, to them by saying, that as the funeral was to take place next day, and Mr Dalgleish and she must positively return home on Tuesday, since she could not be longer away from her family, it was absolutely necessary, and a duty upon her part (she laid an emphasis upon the latter words) that some arrangement should be made, as it would be absolutely impossible that either of them could return to Auchtermuir, and of course I must soon leave it myself. My aunt uttered these words in a cool and business-like manner, free from emotion of any kind. She had evidently made up her mind to come to an early understanding with me. Her turn was practical, and she meant no unkindness, though she showed little sympathy.

“ Could you not put it off till to-morrow evening ? ” I said timidly at length, with tears in my eyes. “ I am anxious, indeed, aunt, to have your and Mr Dalgleish’s advice as to what course I should adopt. But I am not prepared, and would much rather postpone it, if your please, till to-morrow night.”

My aunt did not look pleased, and seemed to feel that my wish to postpone the subject was a reflection upon her.

"I'm not in the practice," she said after an ominous pause, "of speaking about business on the Sabbath-day. But in this case I felt it to be a work of necessity and mercy. I have no objections, however, and I suppose you have none, Mr Dalgleish," turning to her husband.

"No, no,—no objections, my dear—arrange it as you like—hem!" he said.

"Then we can put it off till then, as you are so anxious about it," said my aunt, rather more graciously, though still a little ruffled; and I felt relieved at my present escape. I sat down beside them, wishing to be as conciliatory as possible; but Mr Dalgleish fell almost immediately into a sound sleep, accompanied by snoring, which lasted till bed-time, while my aunt, as if to atone for her late proposal, took a large Bible commentary from the bookcase, and became apparently so immersed in its contents that she took no further notice of either of us.

The following morning ushered in my father's funeral-day. It was a grey misty one, and threatened to end in rain. It was the saddest day yet of all that I had experienced. I for the first time assumed my mourning which Mrs Johnstone had ordered for me. My aunt made her appearance at breakfast handsomely dressed in hers. She looked quiet and subdued as the occasion demanded, but not so Mr Dalgleish. The bustle seemed more congenial to his mind than the stillness of the preceding day. He was chief mourner.

The funeral was to take place at one, and before the company assembled, I stole into my father's room to take a last look. My aunt followed me, and she then accompanied me into my own room. I would rather have been alone, but she chose to remain with me. It was a large funeral ; for many of the presbytery attended it, and a large body of the parishioners. How the noise and bustle went to my heart as I sat leaning my throbbing head upon the bed ! There was quietness for a considerable time when the company were fully assembled ; but when the fastening down of the coffin, and the heavy sounds of the feet bearing it from the chamber, at last reached my ears, I tried to deaden them by burying my head among the bedclothes. I felt as if I had lost him over again, and I gave an hysterical cry that brought my aunt to my side. She tried to comfort me in her own way. But it could not be yet. Nature would force her way ; and I wept and sobbed bitterly.

The procession soon left the house. I was sensible of it from the stillness and the echoes of the retreating footsteps, and rising from the bed I hastened to the window. The mourners were just issuing from the gate. The coffin was borne shoulder-high by six of the parishioners, who had requested to be so employed. Oh ! what a sight it was to the poor orphan ! I watched them moving slowly along the churchyard-path till they reached the spot where my mother was buried. I saw the coffin gradually lowered till it was hidden for ever from my sight,

and then, overpowered by my feelings, I fell fainting on the floor.

I was revived by the application of strong essences to my nostrils and by bathing my face with water. My aunt had called for assistance ; and Mrs Johnstone, who had come over to see me, but had not liked to enter my room while my aunt was with me, hurried to me followed by both servants. The latter were crying at the foot of the bed when I opened my eyes. Mrs Johnstone was bathing my forehead. My aunt brought me a glass of wine, and after I drank it, I felt revived. But she would not allow me to rise, and, indeed, I was not yet fit for it. Mrs Johnstone said she would remain with me ; and seeing me fully restored, my aunt went down stairs, followed by the servants.

The door was no sooner shut upon them, than I turned and threw my arms round my kind old friend's neck. To her, I knew I could pour out my whole heart unreservedly ; and, oh ! it was a relief to speak to her of my sufferings, and to give vent to them before her.

"My bairn, my bairn !" sobbed the good woman ; "God help you ! But it's a sair trial this for your young heart. Oh ! Rose, dear, say the Lord's will be done."

"His will be done ! yes, His will be done !" I said, clasping my hands fervently,—"I can say it, Mrs Johnstone. But this is the most trying day. My father ! my dear father !"

"He is gane to his rest, Rose ; ye wadna wish

him back. Would you wish him again in this sad sorrowful world, now that he kens the blessedness of the next? Oh! seek you to meet him there, Rose, and then there will be nae mair partings, and a' tears will be wiped from your eyes. For the sake of him that's away, try to be comforted."

"I will, I will. I did think I would have been more composed. But I am better now. Is it all over, Mrs Johnstone?

"The funeral, dear?—Yes, it's over; and there's mony a sad heart amang them that were there, forby yours, hinny. But lie down again, and rest yoursel';" and she laid me gently back again upon my bed, and with my hand in hers, my second mother sat down to soothe and watch me. I did as she bade me, and lay still, that I might attain some tranquillity before entering into conversation with my aunt and her husband that night on my future prospects. It could not, from what she had said, be put off, and I now longed to have it over, for the subject had much occupied my mind since it had been mentioned; and I had even a kind of plan in contemplation, which I meant to propose to them.

I lay still for about two hours, all which time Mrs Johnstone remained with me, and during which my aunt appeared to inquire for me. I then rose and went down stairs, and joined her and Mr Dalgleish. I found the house put to rights, and all the company gone, even the few who had returned for refreshments. Mr Patterson had been grieved to hear of my illness,

but was compelled to go home. He however left me a kind message, and promised to ride over next day : he knew I had relations with me. My aunt and Mr Dalgleish were very kind, and seemed to feel for me to-night. They made me sit beside the fire ; and my aunt made the tea herself.

After tea, I myself commenced the conversation on my affairs, and requested their advice on a plan which I had in view for my future support.

My aunt seemed somewhat surprised to hear that I had a plan ; but said that she and Mr Dalgleish were very willing to do all in their power for me. " Of course, my dear," she continued, " we are aware there can be very little provision for you ; for there 's little can be saved off a country stipend, and your poor father was always a liberal man, considering his means. But we will hear your plan, as you call it, though what a girl of your age can do to maintain herself, I don't know."

I said, as humbly as I could, that I thought I might do something for myself by teaching. I was anxious to earn my bread ; and would never, I trusted, be a burden upon my relations (there was a little pride in this). If they could assist me in obtaining pupils, I should feel deeply indebted to them.

My aunt and her husband looked at each other, and the latter whistled. My aunt paused.

" We certainly have never thought of that," she said at length, with an incredulous expression in her face. " I never guessed that you would be able for

teaching, and it was Mr Dalgleish's opinion, as well as mine, that there was nothing for it but to take you home, and keep you as one of our own family."

I felt the rebellious blood rising to my face while my aunt said this in her usual cool manner ; but as I believed she *meant* kindly, I determined not to allow myself to become offended at any want of delicacy.

"Mr Dalgleish and you are very kind," I answered falteringly, "but I think I could succeed as I have proposed, and I would like to be independent."

"Well—that's a good spirit, at any rate," said Mr Dalgleish, hitching his chair cheerfully nearer to the fire. "What say ye to that, Mrs D. ?"

"It's all very well, Mr Dalgleish," said my aunt, drawing herself up, "if Rose is fit for it. But I know more about these things than you; and how she could get any genteel accomplishments here, I cannot tell. There's no piano, I know, in the house."

I hastily answered, "that I did not mean to pretend to what are called accomplishments ; but I could give, I was certain, a plain English education, besides that I knew something of foreign languages."

"French, I suppose ?" said my aunt inquiringly. "Well, I believe that's coming a good deal into fashion."

"I know also a little Latin and Italian," I said timidly.

Mr Dalgleish, who listened most attentively, opened his eyes wide at this, and whistled again, but did not speak. He seemed as a matter of course to leave

his wife to carry on the conversation. But my aunt did not confine her surprise to looks.

"Latin and Italian!" she exclaimed in a tone of wonder. "Did my brother really teach you Latin and Italian? No wonder then that you're so different from other girls of your age, and that you can act so well for yourself. I don't mean to offend you, my dear; but certainly that has struck both Mr Dalgleish and myself. My girls, I am thankful to say, are just like other young people, and need wiser heads to guide them. But, my dear, what good can Latin and Italian do for you?"

I said, "my father considered an acquaintance with them of consequence. The study of the classics he thought almost essential to the formation of a correct style."

"Style of what?" said my aunt, somewhat impatiently. I saw that she did not understand me, and perhaps thought me too assuming and dogmatical. I therefore hastened to explain myself as clearly as I could. But my aunt evidently thought I was talking nonsense.

"Well, it may be so, but I know nothing about it," she said in answer; "and of course my brother, poor man, might be a better judge—but I don't think Latin and Italian will stand you in any stead in Glasgow. If you knew how to play the piano now, or to work satin-stitch, or to embroider the globes in silk, something might be got for you."

"I can sew well and knit," I said anxiously, be-

ginning to feel despondent ; for my aunt's words made an impression, inexperienced as I was.

" So can any seamstress," said my aunt, disparagingly. " This will never do, Rose, unless you mean to earn your bread by whiteseam, and to take boys for scholars ; for what girl learns Latin ? It will never do, I tell you. But a thought has come into my head, and if you would just go up stairs into your own room, or maybe into the kitchen, for a minute, I will speak to Mr Dalgleish about it."

I rose immediately. " Come back in ten minutes," said my aunt, as I left the room ; " that will be long enough."

I went slowly and sadly up stairs, for my heart was growing heavy. My plans for independence seemed on the point of being annihilated ; and no other prospect appeared before me but that of entering my aunt's family as a poor relation, sustained by the bounty of others. I sat down to think, during the interval allowed me, and turned the subject in every possible light in my mind. Of course my aunt was a woman who had lived more in the world than I had done, and consequently had more experience. She could judge better as to the kind of education preferred in families. But then I was quite aware that she herself had not enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education, and was therefore apt to undervalue its importance. Satin-stitch and embroidered globes were very well in their way, but there must be, I was certain, some enlightened parents in Glasgow (my

native place was out of the question), who would overlook my deficiencies in these points, in consideration of the more important branches of education which I felt I could conscientiously undertake to teach. I became still more convinced of this as I reflected upon it; and when I rose to go down stairs at the end of the time appointed, my hopes had not deserted me of being able to convince both of my relations of the practicability of my plan. It was true, as my aunt had hinted, that I had a good deal of self-reliance and decision of character for one so young. But circumstances had for the first time brought them into action. I felt my energies awaking to encounter my emergencies; and it was well I did so, for they were needed. I am certain that my aunt wished to act kindly towards her brother's child, but she felt annoyed at the burden imposed on her. Mr Dalgleish and she had a family of their own to provide for; so that to have a strange niece thus thrust helplessly upon their hands, in addition, was a trying thing. I could make allowance for such feelings, even at that time, though I did wish that my aunt could have concealed them better in my presence, for they pained me exceedingly. I could so far make allowances, I say, for my aunt's hastiness and want of sympathy. The subject of my future destination engrossed, of course, her mind, producing a certain irritation of manner, which at first surprised, but afterwards wounded me. She evidently considered that I was unable to do any thing to support myself. If she had known

me better, she might have been assured that I would never eat her bread in idleness. I hoped, however, to convince her that she was mistaken, and that the education which my dear father had bestowed upon me was not in vain, but would be blest by God to provide for me. A burden upon my friends I was resolved not to be, if I should even have to earn my bread by whiteseam. It was a painful thing to have my mind distracted by such cares on the very day on which my father was laid in his grave.

"Come away, Rose," said my aunt, with a somewhat more gracious manner than before, as if her mind was relieved, when I again entered the room ; "I think we have arranged what seems best in the meantime ; at least that is our opinion (there was an emphasis on the *our*), but you shall hear it." I sat down and looked anxiously for information.

" You see, my dear, it would never do that plan of yours to seek for a situation with so few accomplishments as you have ; no lady would look at you. But there 's little Matthew, the boy is ten years old, and we were just thinking of sending him to the Latin. Now, if you think you are really fit for such a thing (its just trying if you arn't, and a few months is not of much consequence any way), you might teach him, and that would be some expense at least saved ; and that will give us leisure to look about us, and to let you improve yourself a bit. With the little that my brother may have left, you might be able to pay for lessons, and get on so as to be afterwards fit for a

situation. I am sure you would be welcome to practise on our piano. And there are many ways, too, in which you could be useful to your cousins and me, which would so far pay for your board. Well, what do you say to it?"

I drew a deep breath, and endeavoured to gulp down my rising pride. I could not tell what to answer—I felt bewildered. I saw my aunt expected an immediate answer, and what was more, a grateful one. The proposal was not what I expected—it was worse, and yet better, though that appears a contradiction. It was relieving me (if I did not succeed in obtaining a situation), from entire dependence; yet I felt at a great cost. My pride, too, was hurt by my aunt's derogatory manner. I could not make her understand my feelings, nor did I attempt it. My poor head seemed to turn round under the pressure of my difficulties, and I put my hand to my forehead.

"Are you ill?" said my aunt.

I smiled faintly, and took away my hand. "Oh no," I answered; "but I have been so little accustomed to decide for myself—I have so little experience."

"Then you should trust to those who have," said my aunt, with just as much asperity as she could bear to show to one circumstanced as I was.

I sighed. "I suppose I had better leave it in your hands, aunt Dalgleish," I said, sending back with a strong effort the tears which rose to my eyes. I shall do all I can to fit myself soon for a situation. I can-

not stay here, I know ; and, as you say (pride would show itself), my services to you will help to defray my board in the interval."

" Well, it is all fixed then," said my aunt compositely, " and we must just arrange now how you are to come to us when you leave this, which, I suppose, you had better do in a few weeks. But, to be sure, we can write about that. I am glad we are come to some kind of arrangement at last. And as to business matters, leave all that to Mr Dalgleish, my dear,—he knows about such things. I wonder what your cousins will say when they hear of it, and what room I shall have to put you in to sleep?" She rubbed her nose, as if that was a point she would find some difficulty in settling, but at last gave it up for the present, and turning to her spouse, who had been listening all the time, without attempting to speak,— " What are you thinking about, Mr Dalgleish?" she exclaimed : " as you are doing nothing else, I think, you might at least stir the fire." Which duty he instantly and most submissively performed.

CHAPTER XVI.

There is no one of all thy race within these chambers dim :
Thy father slumbers in his tomb—and it is well for him ;
Go bend thy knee to God in prayer ; for nought remains to thee
But the grey walls, the ancient halls, which thou of old didst see.

WE were all up and stirring at an early hour next morning ; for the chaise which was to convey my relations back to their home was expected soon after breakfast. Mr Dalgleish intended to stop for a short time at Lanark, while he made arrangements with Mr Grainger, the writer, about the sale which must necessarily take place at the manse. The furniture, as well as the implements for farming the glebe, and the stock, were all to be sold. Mr Dalgleish was of opinion that this should take place as soon as possible. I listened to those details with a sinking heart, but tried to re-animate my spirits, that I might not appear either ungrateful or foolishly sensitive.

They both seemed inspirited by the prospect of departure from what must have been, at least to Mr

Dalgleish, a very dull sojourn. He was a new man this morning, and, utterly unable to conceal his gratification at being soon able to exchange the melancholy dreariness of the country at this time of year, for the warmth, and cheerfulness, and bustle of town. He could not rest quiet all morning, but went constantly in and out, jingling the coin in his breeches pockets, and occasionally whistling, in outrage of all decorum, so as to be heard even in the kitchen, where it consequently excited great indignation, scarcely mollified afterwards by the present of half-a-crown to each servant.

I must do Mr Dalgleish the justice, however, to say, that he felt kindly disposed towards me, in spite of the thoughtlessness of his manners. My aunt had gone up to her room, after breakfast, to get her things in readiness, declining my assistance, which I profered. Mr Dalgleish was planted in his favourite place before the fire; but instead of his hands being as usual employed in tucking his broad-skirted coat around him, they were buried deep in his pockets, and the expression of his face showed he was in search of something. I so little imagined what he was about, that I was greatly surprised when he suddenly crossed the room to where I sat, with what turned out to be a bank-note extended in his hand.

"Here, my dear," he said; "you must have been at a good deal of expense just now with one thing and another. Put that into your pocket, and say nae-thing aboot it to ony body. But take care you dinna

lose it—mind it 's a ten-pound note.—What!" he said, as I involuntarily drew back, as he was forcing it into my hand, " ye winna take it!—Weel, ye 're the first that I ever ken't refuse siller. Take another thought o' t yet—ye may fin' the want o' t."

I recovered from my surprise by the time he was done speaking; and as he still continued to hold out the note for my acceptance, I thanked him warmly, which he well deserved for his consideration, but persisted in declining his gift. "I am very much obliged to you, Mr Dalgleish," I said,—" very much obliged indeed; but there is no occasion for your kindness. Since my father's illness (here my voice would tremble, but somehow I did not mind exposing my feelings so much before him as before my aunt), I have taken care of all his money, and, with good management, I am certain I shall have enough to pay the servants' wages, and all other expenses, till I leave Auchtermuir,—besides paying," I hastily added, "my travelling expenses to Glasgow."

" Weel, if that 's the case," said Mr Dalgleish, coolly putting back the note into his pocket, " no more need be said. I am glad you have so much money; and of course there will be the arrears of the stipend coming in, and the proceeds of the sale. Why, there may be mair than what we think, and it will be a nest-egg for you. We 'll lay it by, though your aunt talks o' spending it in learning accomplishments. There 's naething like the money itsel',—far better than drumming and skirling at a piano—it deafens

my head sometimes, though ye maunna tell that to your aunty. Sae cheer up, my dear," and he took my hand and shook it cordially. I returned the shake as he had given it. I felt cheered by his kindness, homely as it was. He then put his hands in his pockets again, and walked away to look, for the tenth time, if the chaise was not yet coming down the road.

My aunt's satisfaction at the prospect of departure, though not so openly exhibited as her husband's, was still very apparent. Her countenance was indeed composed into a becoming and decent gravity befitting a house of mourning, but she was more active and cheerful than she had been since her arrival.

Mr Dalgleish came hurrying into the house at last, to say that he saw the chaise turning the corner, and that we might expect it immediately. He called to his wife to get ready, and Nanny and Peggy were summoned to carry down the luggage. The chaise drew up to the door. There was again a great bustle; and Mr Dalgleish would help the driver to pack in all the things, and ran backwards and forwards, looking for missing umbrellas and imaginary parcels, in a great fidget, till my aunt appeared attired for her journey, and her presence reduced all things to order. She directed him to where he himself had placed the umbrella the previous day—and there it was to be sure in the nook behind the door—and corrected all his errors about the packages by counting them over to him, and convincing him (which was not difficult to do) that he was in a mistake.

Then came the leave-taking, and my aunt accomplished it with good grace. She apologized for leaving me solitary in my distress, but had no alternative, she said. Observing that I looked pale and worn-out, she advised me to lie down for a little after they were gone.

"I shall write to you soon," she said, as she moved to the chaise, "or I will make one of your cousins do it, and will then arrange all the way of your coming to us. A few weeks will soon pass over, and you must just try to be as cheerful as possible till then. I suppose you have enough of money (she did not offer it like her husband). Very well; we will write and fix everything else. Good bye, my dear." She kissed me, nodded to the servants, and stepped into the chaise.

"Good bye, good bye!" said Mr Dalgleish, shaking hands with me, after he had concluded the arrangement of a voluminous frieze cloak which completely enveloped his jolly person, and pulled his hat low down over his ears. "Cold place this. Glad to see you in Glasgow, my dear;" and the machine groaned and creaked under his weight as he followed his wife hastily into it.

The driver closed the door, and Mr Dalgleish drew up the nearest window, but immediately lowered it again to utter another "good bye," accompanied by a series of beaming nods. I saw my aunt bend forward, and a shade passed over her face as she cast a last look into the house. She again bade me farewell

and smiled : the chaise moved off, and I was left standing alone on the threshold of my desolate home.

When the chaise was lost to sight, for till then I stood and looked after it, I withdrew sadly into the house. It was now quiet enough, and I would even have preferred the loud tones and busy fussiness of Mr Dalgleish to the dreary emptiness and silence of the rooms. A chilling sensation crept over me,—a sense of friendlessness and of being alone in the world. I had nothing to occupy my mind, and keep it from brooding over past happiness, as had been the case during the last week, when the arrangements for the funeral, and the residence of my relations under the roof, necessarily engrossed some of my attention. All such cares were over, and I was commencing a new life companionless. I could not yet return to my old employments, for they had been long broken up by my attendance upon my father, and I had not the heart to resume them now. How could I, when every one of them was associated with him ! I could not sit down in my old place with my work or my book while his chair was empty, and I knew he could never return again to fill it. I went up stairs and into his room, which was all formally arranged, and leaning my arms and aching head on the little cupboard, I looked out upon his grave. I felt that it was a link between us still, and that as long as I could have it in view, we were not entirely separated.

Now that I was left solitary, and all necessity for exertion gone, I grew desponding and distrustful. My

heart began to question,—Why am I thus singled out to be miserable when all others seem prosperous and happy? I had but one ewe-lamb, and it is taken from me,—it were better for me to die than to live! I grew doubtful of the wisdom of Providence. I lost my sight of the hand which had supported me during my late trials, and I felt as if God had forgotten me, and that I was forsaken by both God and man.

I had been too tenderly nurtured, indeed, as my dear father had said. I wanted hardening to face the ills of life, which already began to overwhelm me. I could see no termination to the difficulties before me, and I wanted courage to grapple with them. If I had applied for help to Him who alone can bestow it, it would have been afforded me, but I was struggling now with unbelief, and could not take hold on His promises.

But *He* was caring for me though I knew it not. He sent me comfort and counsel this forenoon while I most wanted it, in the person of dear Miss Menie Weir. As she did not find me in the parlour when she entered, and Nanny hinted that she thought I had shut myself up in my father's room, she ventured to seek me there. I heard the door gently open, and when I looked round and saw Miss Menie, with her kind eyes filled with tears, I felt I was not forsaken. She came in and sat down by me, and drew me like a child (I was only eighteen) to her bosom. With her usual penetration she easily discovered the state

of my mind ; and applying herself to the task of bringing me to a calmer and more trustful view of the nature of my trials, she did not leave me till she saw that the bitterness of my feelings had given way, and that I had attained a healthier state of mind.

When Miss Menie left me, which was not for two hours, I accompanied her a short way on her return home, and when we parted, the influence of her counsels still remained with me. She would again have persuaded me to leave the manse, and come for the few weeks I could remain here to Burnside ; but she saw so plainly that I clung to my old home, and would not be prevailed upon, that she finally dropped the subject.

We parted a little beyond the Craiglands gate, and I lingered on the road looking after her as long as I could see her tall slim figure, wrapt in the never varying dark blue cloak she wore in her walks. I then returned slowly home, strengthened and invigorated by the sound and pious advice she had given me. She had impressed upon me the balance of good and evil in man's life, and her language was, "What, shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?" While urging upon me the overruling hand of God in all that is allowed to happen to us, she taught me that, if a believer, all things, however dark and unpromising in the hour of trial, would work together for my ultimate good, and that trusting him in affliction was not only my duty but my privilege.

"A word in season, how good it is!" I felt it so;

and as I returned homewards along the quiet road, I was very different from the murmuring despondent being I had been two hours before.

I was very near home when I heard the sound of a horse's feet behind me, advancing at a leisurely trot, and looking back I saw it was Mr Patterson, who was come to visit me according to his promise. He walked his horse by my side to the gate, and after leading it to the stable, as John was not in the way, he joined me in the parlour. He was a very old friend of ours—pious, cheerful, and sincere. My father and he had been like brothers, and as their parishes were contiguous, Mr Patterson was often with us. He was unmarried, and our warm genial fireside possessed attractions which his own had not. From seeing me constantly, and sharing in my plays when I was a child, he almost regarded me as his own, and would have made any sacrifice, I believe, for my father and myself. My father's death was a severe blow to him, more especially as it was unexpected, he having been from home when it occurred. Owing to my own illness I had not seen him when he called at the house previous to the funeral, nor yesterday, so that our present meeting was at first a very agitating one, for both our minds were full of all that had happened since we last met. When the first burst of emotion was over, and we had sat down, he in my father's chair, and I beside him, I entered into a description of all that was likely to interest him connected with my father's last moments, and then

ended by detailing my own plans for the future. He was not a person to consult, having little worldly wisdom, and great simplicity and guilelessness of character, but his interest in me, I felt, merited my confidence. He listened earnestly to all I told him, but when I mentioned that it had been decided that I must shortly leave Auchtermuir, and take up my future residence in Glasgow, an expression of sorrow and anxiety came over his furrowed face.

"That's a great distance, my dear," he said, mournfully shaking his head,—"a very great distance; Glasgow's too far away. Why not come to your father's old friend? I have not long to live, but my home would be yours till then."

I did not answer him for a few moments, for I was taken by surprise, such a project, of course, having never occurred to me. I at first felt as if it might be indulged, and a throb of joy shot through my heart; but a moment's reflection convinced me of its impossibility. There was no one, however, to whom I would have more willingly incurred obligation than to my old friend Mr Patterson. The obligation would have been mutual. I would have made his fireside cheerful, and in his declining years have nursed and cared for him. I had often felt sorry when I thought of his loneliness. It would have been almost like being restored to my own father again. But it could not be, though I sighed as I put the vision from me. Mr Patterson had a set of needy unprincipled relations, and I knew that he stinted himself to assist

them. My maintenance must not be made an additional burden to him.

"No, no, dear Mr Patterson," I said, "that will not do. It is not," I continued hastily, seeing him look disappointed, "because I should not like such a plan, or that I would be unwilling to incur obligation to you. On the contrary, it would make me too happy; but there are too many obstacles in the way."

He was silent for a few moments, and still looked grieved. "Do you think," he said at last, "that your aunt would be displeased? I am sure that though no relation, I am an older friend than she is."

"I do not know whether she would," I said, "but it is not likely that she would be satisfied, as the plan is her own. My aunt, you know, made the arrangement (a certain delicacy kept me from alluding to the true motive which made me decline his proposal). Let us not think any more of it, dear uncle Patty (the pet name which I called him in childhood, and still continued from habit), it will only make me sad to think of what cannot be."

"Well, my dear, if you think so," he said acquiescingly, yet with reluctance, "my only wish is for your good. But what will the poor old man do without you, Rose?"

"You must come and see me," I said, endeavouring to speak more cheerfully than I felt. "You must come in summer and tell me all the news about dear Auchtermuir." But I had to turn away my head

hastily from him to hide a burst of tears. He looked very desponding. But I tried to rouse him from this state of mind, and talked to him till his spirits somewhat revived.

He sat with me for about an hour, and then left me rather hurriedly, afraid, I think, as the dinner-hour was approaching, that I might ask him to remain. Every morsel he swallowed at the orphan's expense, I knew, would have pained his sensitive conscience for days. I entreated him to take some refreshment after his ride, and almost smiled at the excuses he made to avoid it—no appetite, and a late breakfast—while I, who knew all his habits, which were as unvarying as clockwork, was quite aware that his morning meal was an early one. But though sorry that he should leave me thus, I could not allow him to see that I suspected the true meaning of his declining what he never formerly refused. His horse was brought to the door, as he requested, and he went away, promising to see me soon again.

For the few following days I was little left to myself, for all the families around made a point of calling for me. Even the honest farmers' wives, whom we used to visit, dropped in to express their sympathy. When they heard that I meant so soon to leave the parish, they were all grieved. "Eh wow!" they said, "couldna ye just bide still at Auchtermuir?"

Two days after Mr and Mrs Dalgleish left me, I had a call from Mr Grainger, the writer in Lanark. This was to arrange for the sale; and he was ac-

companied by a clerk who took an inventory of every thing. I showed them through the rooms, and though this was the first step towards my own banishment, and I felt it deeply as the herald of what was to come, still Miss Menie Weir's advice was not forgotten, and I got through it wonderfully. But I began to feel that time was flying, and that every hour was bringing me nearer to the day when I must go for ever.

Mr Grainger was very civil and polite. I knew him only by sight ; but he showed sympathy for my late bereavement, and seemed anxious to make what arrangements would best suit me. “ Mr Dalgleish wished the sale to take place as early as three weeks,” he said,—“ would that suit my plans ? It would be unadvisable to put off a country sale later in the year, but still, if I did not find it convenient to leave Auchtermuir so soon, it could be postponed.”

I said with a sigh, that I thought it proper to agree to the arrangement that Mr Dalgleish and he thought best, and that therefore I would be ready to leave immediately after the term, especially as I could not retain a servant beyond that period ; they were of course all dismissed. I took the liberty of recommending John to Mr Grainger’s notice as a servant who had long been with us and was eminently trust-worthy, and ventured to suggest, that perhaps a word from him as Sir Robert Crawford’s agent might have the effect of inducing my father’s successor to retain his services. He promised to keep him in remembrance ; and I felt relieved of a care which had been weighing heavily

upon my spirits. The two girls, I had no doubt, would procure situations through Mrs Johnstone's influence.

In going through the rooms, I pointed out several articles to Mr Grainger which I did not wish inserted in the inventory. Among them were my father's large chair, the old - fashioned cabinet, which had drawn the attention of Mr Dalgleish, the screen which was worked by my mother, and some of my father's books. The pieces of furniture I meant to present to my old friend Mrs Johnstone, and the books were for Mr Patterson, who, I knew, would value them exceedingly.

The servants did not see the proceedings of the writer and his clerk without being overwhelmed with distress. They bewailed the necessity of parting from me; nor would they be persuaded to seek for situations, till I had remonstrated with them, and they were persuaded that it was impossible for me to remain at Auchtermuir. John was most to be pitied. He had grown old in the service of his master; and though still hale and active, it was not easy for him to obtain another situation, or to commence a new servitude. He had saved a little money, but not enough to support him long. Besides, it was no light thing to change the habits of years. The glebe and garden were as much a part of himself as the garments he wore, or the food he ate. His own cot too, where he had lived for thirty years, how was he to leave it? I thought the old man's heart would have broken.

But it was not a mere selfish feeling with him. I knew that he truly mourned for his kind master, and that my approaching departure weighed hard upon his spirits. But he had become very taciturn, and it was difficult to discover what were his feelings, though I could read them in his sunken cheek and trembling hand—poor old man !

Day after day passed quickly on, and often my heart would begin to fail me as I thought how fast the moments were flying. Already preparations were being made for my departure and for the sale, and the house began to assume a stripped and dismantled look. I was little within, for I had a painful duty to undergo, which took me much from home—the bidding farewell to all my old friends. It was almost like going from house to house, and the fatigue of it was only equalled by the anguish. I knew it was expected from me, or I would not have undertaken it. In some houses where I was best known, the people would not at first believe that I came to bid them farewell, and I had the heart-breaking necessity of convincing them of it, and of listening to their lamentations on the sad change my father's death had brought upon us.

It was a weary task ; and my heart was constantly wrung by scenes which took place. Those who had received spiritual benefit from my father's ministry were especially distressed. Indeed the parish, during one week, might truly have been called “ Bochim,” a place of weeping, for there were more tears shed then than I had ever seen before, or have since. There

were some old women, helpless creatures, who had received a small weekly pension from me. When I took it to them for the last time, and informed them that I was going away, and they would not see me again, they could not at first comprehend it, and then refused to be comforted. They rocked themselves backwards and forwards in their wicker chairs, as they indulged their grief, and I sat and cried in company. “What wull we do? what wull we do?” they exclaimed, “the minister’s awa, and ye’re gaun awa, —wha wull look to us noo? Oh hone! oh hone!”

I told them that Miss Menie Weir had promised to do so; but all they would say was, “Ay, ay—she’s a gude leddy—but eh wow! if ye would but stay yoursel’.” Poor things, necessity had made them selfish, and they feared they might be neglected now.

I tore myself away from them in the end, their lamentations still ringing in my ears, and utterly unable to convince them that there was a necessity for my going. I had nothing for it but to leave them, after bestowing double my usual allowance upon them. But one scene I must describe.

There was a poor old woman, a widow, and childless, who lived in a little cottage by herself. She was very poor; but she had been decently brought up, and she laboured hard to avoid the disgrace of seeking aid from the parish funds. My dear father, who had much penetration, had long had his eye upon her, and esteemed her character. She did not refuse to accept a little assistance from us; and many a time

when I took it to her, I have sat for an hour delighted with her conversation. She was a woman of a meek and lowly spirit, one who had experienced many trials, and been exercised by them. She had seen better days ; and her little dark dwelling was arranged with much more attention to cleanliness and order than the most we were familiar with ; and yet she was often almost crippled with rheumatism.

When I called to bid Widow Wilson farewell, she told me that she had heard I was going, and was glad to see me once more before I went away. The tears began to trickle over her cheeks, as she spoke of the kindness of him we had lost ; and she hoped, she said, that the Lord would repay to me what we both had done for her. “ I have never been without friends,” she continued, “ in my darkest hour : the Lord has always raised up some one to help me ; and dinna let it weigh upon your heart, as I ken it will, that the auld widow will be unprovided for. When I first heard you were going, my faith nearly failed me ; but, blessed be the Lord ! he has enabled me to cast mysel’ upon him, and he will provide my daily bread—though I dinna ken where it’s to come frae, for my sight’s failing, and I canna spin as I used to do.” She was spinning as she spoke.

I presented her with a small sum I had brought for her, but her unselfish spirit was most unwilling to take it. “ It would be robbing the orphan,” she said, “ and she was in no immediate need.” I however succeeded in forcing it upon her.

When I rose to take my leave, she asked me to wait for a moment. She had a fine canary bird. How she had procured it I know not, but she had had it for two years, and its lively notes were the only earthly solace the poor widow had. She was very proud and fond of her bird ; and though often scrimped herself, would never suffer it to want, though she spent her last halfpenny in purchasing seed for it. Its wicker cage was hung in her little window, just over the seat where the widow sat at her wheel, so that she could observe it by merely raising her eyes. It was always decked with fresh greens, which she got the neighbours' children to gather for her, for all the children about loved her, and liked to visit her cottage. Her affection for her bird had become almost a proverb in the place.

Knowing this, what were my feelings when the poor old woman, lifting down the cage, presented the bird to me as the only thing of value in her possession ? She did it with an evident anxiety that I should think it worth my acceptance, not as if she regretted what she offered : the feeling of gratitude in her mind was stronger than her love for her bird. Of course I refused to accept of it, but she evidently supposed that it was from unwillingness to deprive her of what I knew she valued, and she continued to press it upon me with simple earnestness. "One of her neighbour's bairns," she said, wee "Willy Howieson, would carry it over for me to the manse."

I was moved to tears by this instance of affection.

I told her, however, that I was going to my aunt's house, and could not venture to take such a thing with me, in case she might not like it, thanking her warmly at the same time for her proffered gift. When she heard this, she put down the cage on the table, and was silent for a moment or two.

"I hope you are gaun to kind freends," she said at length; "but that someway disna look like it.—Excuse the liberty. But if ye 'll no take my bird, ye maun take my blessing." And she gave me it.

I was more sorry to part with Widow Wilson than with almost anybody. I remember her looking after me wistfully, as she stood in her doorway, till I turned the corner of the road; and I thought sadly that I would probably never see her again,—nor did I.

I was in constant expectation of hearing from my aunt, and could make no final arrangements for my removal till then. As day after day passed over without a letter, each one found me momentarily relieved by its non-arrival. We had no other way of getting our letters but by sending for them to Lanark, a distance of some miles, unless an opportunity occurred, such as a neighbour going there on business, who of course always called at the post-office, and brought what parish letters were there with him; but sometimes such an opportunity might not occur for days. I was too anxious now, however, to wait for such chances, and too fearful of giving offence, by allowing any unnecessary delay to take place in acknowledging the receipt of the expected letter. There was a poor

silly lad in the place, who was occasionally employed by the neighbours to go messages, which he had quite wit enough to execute. He delighted especially in going to Lanark, and would often journey there to please himself in looking at the shop windows. Nothing gratified him more than to be intrusted with an errand, and he never would part with an article till he had delivered it into the hands of the real owner. His fidelity had often been experimented upon, but had always stood the test. The postmaster and every shopkeeper in Lanark were well acquainted with "daft Tam," as he was called, and never hesitated to trust him. So I chose him for my messenger; and Tam, for his meals and a few pence to buy "sneeshin," of which he was exceedingly fond, trudged every morning into Lanark to inquire for a letter.

At last it came. It was written by my aunt herself, and had evidently been composed by snatches, for it was dated several days back. After giving me a short account of their journey, and of a bad cold which she had caught in consequence, she went on to say, that neither Mr Dalgleish nor she could agree in what manner I was to travel to them. A chaise was a very expensive thing (as they well knew), and they had waited so short a time in Hamilton on their way home, that they had not had leisure to make inquiries about any other means of conveyance. She had learned, however, from a Hamilton lady, who was on a visit to some friends in Glasgow, that there was a

decent caravan which left Hamilton every morning, and which most respectable people travelled in. She wished I would make inquiries about it, as it might save so much expense. The hour was an inconvenient one, but there might be some way found of my getting down there from Lanark the previous afternoon. The caravan belonged to a John Eglinton, she was told, who was a married man, and kept an inn, which she heard was a very respectable place. I might perhaps stay there all night; at all events, I could inquire about it, and then write to her.

She ended by assuring me they would be all glad to see me, and that she hoped I would bring as little luggage as possible. There was a postscript to the letter, in which she informed me that Mr Dalgleish had heard from Mr Grainger, who said all things were in progress for the sale. Mr Grainger had also mentioned that he had had a letter from Sir Robert Crawford about a presentation to the parish. And this closed the letter.

CHAPTER XVII.

I HAD not yet bade the doctor and his wife good-bye. It occurred to me, after reading my aunt's letter, that from her connexion with Glasgow, Mrs M'Whirter was a likely person to be able to furnish me with the information I needed. As I received the letter in the forenoon, I had time to call for her that very day. The doctor was not at home—gone on one of his long rounds—so that I had no chance of seeing him. Mrs M'Whirter's manners never possessed much warmth; so, when informed it was a parting visit, she just showed enough of feeling to be decent, and no more. She, however, manifested some curiosity when I told her that I intended going to Glasgow, and said she knew well about all the Dalgleishes, though she had never met with my aunt. I was in no mood for gossipping, and testified no curiosity as to the extent and sources of her knowledge, but allowed the subject to drop. I then introduced the matter of my aunt's letter, and here I found, as I expected, that she could help me.

"Ken John Eglinton?" she said in answer to my question, "Yes, yes. I ken John. He and his wife

are decent folk enough, though she wears white gowns summer and winter, as if she were a play-actor. She maun be at a bonny charge for soap. Their caravan —ay—it leaves Hamilton every morning. I have often travelled by it—it's a great convenience to the town's folk."

I next anxiously inquired about the inn, and her answer was quite as satisfactory. "It was a very decent house," she said: "no sae grand as Currie's inn, to be sure, and no muckle better than a public; but I would find it clean and comfortable." Everything or place that Mrs M'Whirter allowed to be clean must be so, I knew, in a superlative degree. I thought I had obtained all that I wanted to know, and might safely write to my aunt confirming what she had heard. I soon rose to go, for I knew that Mrs M'Whirter disliked visitors who sat long, as they interfered with her looking after her household concerns. But I was agreeably surprised when she offered—offered frankly—if I meant to stop a night in Hamilton on my way (and it was the cheapest plan, she said), to drop a line to Mrs Eglinton, whom she had often seen, to request her to keep a bed and a seat for me in the caravan the following morning, if I could but fix on what day I should travel.

I thanked her most gratefully, and, after pausing to reflect for a moment, I said I would certainly leave home on the day before the term.

"In that case," rejoined Mrs M'Whirter, "it will be perfectly necessary to write, for there will be sae

mony servant queans gaun hame to their places in the toun on the term-morning, that otherwise ye wad run a risk o' losing a seat. But how d' ye travel to Hamilton?"

I said I had not thought about that yet.

"But ye should think aboot it," replied Mrs M'Whirter; "ye should never pit aff onything—aye be forward wi' your wark, and ye 'll never be overta'en—that's a gude rule for a lassie like you. Mind it's but aught days to the term. But what's to hinder ye to tak' John and the cart? There's time enough," she continued, observing that I hesitated, "for him to tak' you to Hamilton, if you set aff early, and to be back again by night. It's but forty miles there and back, and the horse would have a lang rest."

"So he could," I said; "and I think it will be a good plan. I only feel to take an old man, like John, so long a journey."

"Hout fy'e!" she exclaimed, "the body's stieve enough: besides, he's no sae auld (Mrs M'Whirter, as she grew in years herself, never liked people to be called old). He hasna seen abune saxty, and he 'll last to fourscore, if he disna destroy himsel' wi' refusing to tak' physic. Folk need medicine to clear the system, as the doctor says. I hear John's to stay still, and take care o' the manse till the new minister comes. I wonder wha we will get. I hear the folk are talking aboot it already; but they dinna ken whether Sir Robert will just present, or allow candidates to staund. Dear me, ye're in a hurry surely. And

sae ye 're gaun awa. Weel, fare ye weel,—if ever ye 're in this pairt o' the country again, I houp we 'll see ye. The doctor 's gaun to ride in to Lanrick the morn, and I 'll gie him the line for the post. Ye haena money aboot ye, hae ye, to pay for it?"

I had fortunately, and gave Mrs M'Whirter the requisite sum to pay the postage, so that Mrs Eglinton would receive the letter free. I then bade her farewell, and the green door shut upon me. The little trim domicile was so familiar to me, that I glanced around, before I walked away, with something of a painful feeling. I could scarcely grieve to lose Mrs M'Whirter's society, for she was neither lovable in herself, nor was I in the habit of seeing her often; but that attraction which binds us to well known objects had some influence even as regarded her. I felt saddened, at least, as the gate closed behind me.

I meant to drink tea with the Burnside family to-night. The ladies had called at the manse the previous day, and invited me so pressingly to come, that I had promised at length. It was late in the afternoon when I called at the doctor's, so I went direct to Burnside when I left Mrs M'Whirter. As I came in sight of the old venerable house, standing so quietly in its green paddock, sprinkled with the large trees which the season had stript bare, I felt how much more painful it would be to bid farewell to its kind mistresses. They saw me from the window as I walked up the avenue, and two of them came to the door to welcome me, and to lead me, after I was denuded of

my bonnet and cloak, into the bright cosy sitting-room. The good ladies could not make enough of me. They placed me by the fire on the couch, and one brought me a footstool, and another a screen. Miss Menie sat opposite, with her kind sensible face lighted up, I knew, with the pleasure of seeing me, and the others, when they could do no more for me, drew their chairs near the fire and made a circle.

It was always so comfortable at Burnside,—you never met with such soft seats, such a bright fireside, or so kindly a welcome, anywhere else. No wonder that the Misses Weir were so popular, and that every one liked to visit them. This evening, as I looked round me, I felt what a contrast the room was to my melancholy home. It had once been cheerful too. But who that saw it then could have known it now?

I had arrived some time before their tea-hour; but tea was hurried on account of my walk. As the evening was closing, the lesser Jenny came in to close the shutters and bring candles. She drew the crimson curtains around the windows, and made the room snug. But the candles and the fire which blazed brightly in the old-fashioned polished grate, though cheering substitutes for the grey evening light, could not raise my drooping spirits, for I felt painfully that this was probably the last time that I should be here. Miss Menie, no doubt, guessed what was passing in my mind, for she could read my countenance; and she adroitly managed that her sisters should not annoy

me with many inquiries about my arrangements, as they seemed inclined to do.

Tea was soon got ready, and I found myself again seated at the large round table, where I had not been a guest for nearly six months. I could not but recollect the party which had gathered around it then; and remembered with a sigh how happy and free from care I had been that night. Miss Menie made the tea, Miss Jess spread the bread and butter, and Miss Jean, being youngest, was privileged like me to sit still, and do nothing. Each of them had her peculiar department, and it was never interfered with, unless illness happened. They had many good old-fashioned rules those worthy spinsters, and one was to give precedence to age. They were great sticklers for the privileges of primogeniture. One thing they all agreed in doing this night, and this was, pressing nice things upon me. They evidently did not think me yet beyond the bread and butter and sugar age, and coaxed me to eat as if I were a child. But it was very pleasant to be so petted; I only wished I could always be so, even though at the cost of my dignity as a woman. Kindness was become a very precious commodity in my estimation of late.

When Jenny had lifted away the tea-things, and had put on the green cloth cover upon the table, and placed every chair scrupulously in its usual position, we again found ourselves in a circle by the fire. There was a pause for a little time, and I saw the three ladies look at one another with somewhat disturbed

countenances. It had not struck me before that they were uneasy about any thing, though I thought Miss Menie looked more absent than was her usual. Good souls! they need not have been troubled, if they could but have read my mind.

At last, as I was pondering what could be the matter that thus disquieted them, Miss Menie raised her head and addressed me.

"There is a thing, my dear," she said, seriously, "which we wish to inform you of before it can come to you from any other quarter,—of course it will soon become public. We waited till tea was over before we would speak of it." She paused, and I sat in silent expectation, not unmixed with apprehension, at this mysterious opening.

"Of course, my dear," she continued, nervously clearing her throat, "you know that a successor must be appointed before long to your worthy father, and we have heard to-day that a presentation has been made by Sir Robert Crawford—a most unexpected thing I am sure."

Here she again paused, and they all looked at me to see how I bore it; but I was quite composed—my aunt's letter had prepared me. I was only anxious to learn the name of the individual. Miss Menie took courage from my composure, and went on.

"We were afraid that the mention of this so early, my dear," she said, "would hurt your feelings: and—and—but have you any idea, my dear, who Sir Robert has given the parish to?"

"To Mr Campbell, I have no doubt," I answered quietly.

They all looked surprised, but relieved, when I had uttered this.

"What makes you think it is William, Miss Rose, dear?" inquired the second spinster.

"You must have heard it," said Jean.

"No, I did not hear of it," I said, "but I have somehow been expecting it. Don't you remember, dear Miss Menie (turning to her), what Mr Crawford said the night we all met here, the last night I spent here?" I added, with an involuntary sigh. "He said he wished that he could give Mr Campbell a presentation."

"So he did," said Jean, "I remember hearing him, though I had forgotten that. But ye arena vex't then that our William has got the parish, Miss Rose?"

"Vexed! oh, no, I am very glad. He is just the person I would have liked to—to succeed my father. I assure you the subject has cost me much anxiety; but I shall have no fear now for my poor old women. Widow Wilson will be very happy, for she thought highly of his preaching."

All the ladies looked pleased.

"I am sure," said Miss Menie, "that William will be anxious to do his duty—he is like your good father for that." But she seemed afraid, with true delicacy, that the exhibition of their happiness might be painful to my feelings to witness already, and knowing

her sisters' tendency to enlarge upon such an event with very little reflection, now that the necessary communication had been made, she attempted, after a few more remarks, to change the subject. But I would not allow this—I inquired how the news had reached them.

"It was in a letter of William's this morning we first learned it," answered Miss Menie, "and I assure you we could scarcely believe our ain eyesight at first. But Mr Grainger was so polite as also to write us a note by "daft Tam," who brought them baith, but we opened William's first of course. William feels very properly. Though very grateful to Mr Crawford, for it 's to him he owes it (by the bye you would hear he is married), he says he must be perfectly sensible that he is acceptable to the people before he will accept the presentation. Perhaps you would like to hear what he says."

Very much, I answered, that is if——

"Oh! there is naething but what you may hear."

Miss Menie put on her spectacles, and dived into her capacious pocket in search of the letter. She had some difficulty in finding it. She at length drew it forth from amidst a chaotic mass of various articles with which her pocket was filled. She opened it, glanced down the page for a moment, and then began to read. The other ladies settled themselves anew in their chairs as she did so, and looked as much interested as if they had never heard the letter before. Miss Menie commenced:—

“ My dear Cousins,

“ I am happy to answer your kind inquiries regarding my mother, by informing you that for the last few days she has found herself easier,—‘ um—um.’ My sisters—‘ um’—both well (William is a very affectionate brother), not able to leave her at present,—‘ um—um’—hope soon to do so. (Ay ! here’s the bit about the presentation.) You will be surprised to hear that I yesterday received a note from my friend Crawford, in which, in very kind terms, he informs me that his father has consented to his request that the presentation to Auchtermuir shall be offered to me. I feel Mr Crawford’s kindness very sensibly, and have already written my acknowledgments. As to the parish,—you know you have often heard me say that a minister should never intrude himself against the wishes of a people. If they acquiesce, I shall accept the presentation thankfully, and all this I have fully explained to Mr Crawford. I need not say how happy it will make me to be settled so near to you—‘ um—um.’ I feel however, from the high character which the late Mr Douglas bore as a parish minister, that a very difficult task may be before me. I trust I may be enabled in some degree to fill his place, if it does happen that the people give me a call. You mention Miss Douglas in your letter. How is she bearing up under this trial?—I should wish to be remembered to her, if it would not be intruding upon her at present. Does she remain at Auchtermuir?”

" That is all, my dear, I need read to you," added Miss Menie, folding the letter and replacing it in her pocket: " the rest is principally about family matters, though he again alludes to the presentation at the end. He says there that he feels it a very solemn thing to have the prospect of a charge of souls devolving upon him, and that instead of being elated, he is humbled by a sense of his deficiencies for the task, and trembles at the responsibility. His mother, though, poor woman, is very happy, he says. It will be doubtless a comfort to her to see him settled before her death."

" I hope William will no have owre great scruples of conscience," said Miss Jess. " I 'm sure the folk couldna get a better. Besides, it would look like an ill return for Mr Crawford's kindness."

" I think there is not much to fear," said Miss Menie quietly; " the people will likely be satisfied with the presentation for mair reasons than one. But I must say that I respect William for his scruples, and I think Mr Crawford will do the same."

A word from Miss Menie generally settled all points with her sisters. They were not however weary yet of speaking about the presentation. But it would have been amusing to any one else than me (for I was too sad to be amused) to observe the mixture of sympathy for my situation, which constantly acted as a check to their garrulity, and the delight they manifestly felt at the good fortune of their cousin. I had not, however, that pitiful selfish spirit which would have taken offence at such demonstrations about my

father's successor. It was a pleasant thing to have a relation they so much esteemed as Mr Campbell settled so near them. I felt I could sympathize with their happiness, though it impressed more vividly the change in my own prospects. I was truly glad to know that my father's place would be filled by such a man as Mr Campbell ; and I thought I could afterwards have a melancholy satisfaction in knowing that my old much-loved home was in his possession, rather than in that of a total stranger. But still I could not listen to them without a certain degree of pain. Cowper's lines, with which I had lately become acquainted, recurred forcibly to me :—

“ Where once we dwelt, our name is heard no more.”

I felt that I and mine were giving place to a new generation.

I thought it a good opportunity, now that it was almost settled who the future minister would be, to speak to his cousins about my anxiety concerning John. Miss Menie undertook the responsibility of promising that he should not be dismissed. This was one drop of comfort in my cup of sorrow. I knew that if but retained, John's qualities would soon recommend themselves.

The conversation at last turned upon my affairs, and after some consideration Miss Menie allowed, that though she did not like the idea of a young girl trusted to her own guidance on a long journey, and staying all night at an obscure inn, she yet did not see, after what my aunt had signified, how it could be avoided.

She thought Mrs M'Whirter's plan about John a sensible one. I was glad to have her approval, for I could not trust to my own judgment on such a point.

Nanny made her appearance at eight o'clock with the lantern to accompany me home. The good spinsters took leave of me with much affection and some tears, though none of us meant this for the last time we were to see one another.

When I entered the manse, how dismal and desolate it seemed after the bright cheery room at Burnside ! My heart sank within me. I had no one now to meet, or to talk about the past evening to. My solitary footsteps roused a hollow echo through the dismantled carpetless rooms as I went along the lobby and up the staircase. All was neglected now. The servants scarcely thought it necessary to attend to a house which was so soon to be deserted ; not that they were indifferent to my comfort, but they knew I was heedless of such things now. I looked to the clock to know the hour as I passed it at the landing-place of the stairs : I had forgotten to wind it up at the proper time, and it was standing still. Everything was in the same state,—we were all standing still, lifeless, spiritless,—and had been so for the last fortnight. I as well as the clock was unwound, and had lost all motive for exertion.

Next day I wrote to my aunt, and informed her of the satisfactory answers I had obtained to my inquiries. I mentioned that Mrs M'Whirter had promised to secure my bed in the inn and seat in the

caravan, and that I now purposed to leave Auchtermuir on the morning before the term, and would travel to Hamilton in our own cart. I said nothing complimentary about the prospect before me, for I could not with sincerity. I dreaded the unknown future. And indeed if my aunt had seen the scalding tears which dropped upon the paper as I wrote, she would have considered them anything but flattering towards herself.

I had a parting visit from Mr Patterson this day, a most affecting one it was to us both. Mr and Mrs Purdie also drove over from Crossford to bid me farewell before I left the country. I had afterwards a consultation with John, who, without the least opposition (it showed how changed he was), agreed to drive me to Hamilton, and return with the cart and horse in time for the sale. And I then went over to the Craiglands, and told Mrs Johnstone about the arrangements I had made, and of Mr Campbell's presentation, which was not yet publicly known. How weary it all made me !

CHAPTER XVIII.

And many a lesson, passing strange,
That churchyard taught to me,
When wandering 'mong the low tombstones,
Or sitting silently :
All things must fade and pass away,
This frame to ruin fall ;
But there is One will never change,
Who watcheth over all.
That old churchyard, so sad to see,
Oh ! 't was a warning tale to me !

THE few days which yet remained to me here passed rapidly away. There were so many things to do, and so many people to see on each, that every night I laid my aching head on my pillow with thankfulness that the day was over. I almost wished the moment of parting past; it was more painful to be always looking forward to it. I was wonderfully supported, however, in mind, and seldom allowed my feelings to overpower me. When recollections would crowd upon me, my constant resource was employment; and indeed I had little leisure to sit down and think. It was better for me.

All was now finally arranged. The sale was to take place just two days after I left, and I had an-

other visit from Mr Grainger in connexion with it. In answer to my inquiries, he confirmed the fact of the presentation, and added, that from all he could gather, it was most acceptable to the parishioners, and that the settlement would probably take place before long. This however was in answer to my questions. All but the Misses Weir seemed to be scrupulous of mentioning the subject before me.

At length the last day arrived. My little wardrobe was packed. I had carefully attended to my aunt's injunctions, and, except a few books and my father's manuscripts, I took nothing with me but my clothes. All my possessions were contained in two small trunks. My father's clothes I had distributed among the decent poor. His watch and my mother's ring I placed, the former in my bosom suspended round my neck by a ribbon, and the latter carefully rolled up in paper in my pocket. I had no ornaments to care for.

I paid a last visit to Burnside in the forenoon, and was embraced and wept over by all the good spinsters. I tore myself away at last, and ran rather than walked up the avenue crying bitterly. They spoke of a visit in summer; but I was now to cease to be my own mistress, and I could not be beguiled with such hopes. I walked rapidly on when I had passed the lodge, with my veil over my face to hide my tears from any passer by, and only cast back one hurried farewell look at the old place, as I hastened along by the fence which skirted it.

I had to bid farewell to another old familiar spot associated with all my happy childish days, when I ran down the stately mossy avenue every morning to my lesson, as light and gay as a bird in the branches above me. I reached the ancient gate of the Craiglands, and hurried down to the house. I had not resolution to look about me, and might have seemed to a stranger, if I had encountered one, only careful to pick my steps along the damp mossy earth, wet from the dripping of the dreary November woods ; but memory was busy within me, and was recalling many past scenes in those very woods through which I now walked. But they all seemed to have taken place long ago. I had lived years as it were during the last few months. Before then, it now appeared to me that I had been but a frolicsome child. Now I was a thoughtful anxious woman.

It was a melancholy walk at that time of the year, independent of the gloom upon my spirits. The trees stript of their leaves looked less dense ; one saw farther into the recesses of the woods ; but where was the golden sunshine streaming in showers through the green clustering leaves, and awaking all things to life and joy ? Where the joyous twittering of the birds safe in their retired citadels ? or,

“ All the thousand nameless sounds which make
Mysterious Nature’s music ? ”

The bare lofty trees, clothed with grey lichens, rose on either hand like large skeletons from which flesh

and muscle have fallen, and a deep silence reigned through the woods.

I entered by the back-door of the house, and passing through the kitchen, which was empty, and where a small pot was bubbling and simmering over the fire with the three old people's dinners, for Bauldy and Mysie always sat down at the same table with Mrs Johnstone, I went up the few steps and along the little passage which led to her room. I found her seated there, in her old place by the fireside, reading her Bible. Her face was paler than usual, and it had a cast of care in it. She had not heard my step, for she was growing deaf, and I stood and looked at her for a few moments. She raised her head at last, and observed me. She was not surprised, for she expected me ; and she rose immediately and took my hand and led me forward, seating me beside herself.

"I have been reading that chapter of the Bible this morning, Rose," she said solemnly, "where Isaac sent his son Jacob away, and he little thought he wasna to see him again for nigh twenty years. But yet the Lord brought him back at last. Ye are gaun awa to leave this place, but I canna but think it will be His will to bring ye back again, even though it is just to gladden my auld een. Sae take heart o' grace, my dear ; God does not give us kind affections to wither them for ever."

I kissed her venerable cheek, and wept. She wept also ; and for a while we spoke not, but mingled our

tears together. At last she asked me if I had got every thing packed, or if she could help me. I told her I was ready. She said she would come over in the morning ; but I begged her not to do so, as it would unnerve me for the day to have to part with her again ; and she promised not to think of it. We sat silently for some time after this, for both our hearts were too full for ordinary speech, and she knew already all that I could tell her.

It was painful to prolong such an interview, and at last I rose hastily and kissed her in silence. Her hand trembled very much, but she did not speak ; and I turned away my face to hide the tears which rolled down it. “ God bless you, my bairn ! ” she said at last with a broken utterance ; “ the blessings of the covenant be upon you, and may the Lord in his own good time send you peace.” I kissed her again, and hurried from the room.

For one brief moment I could not avoid running up the back stairs to the library, the scene of so many happy hours. I gave but a hurried glance round the antique room, which was as still as it used to be in old days (who would visit it now?) and then I hastened away. I reached home worn out and dispirited. More of this, I thought, and I would die.

That night, the last night I was to spend in the manse, arrived. It found me quite alone. I had bid every friend farewell, and I had now nothing to do but to wander through all the rooms, and then restlessly hurry from each after I had entered it. With my

cloak around me, I visited every nook of the garden, and looked at every tree, as if I would carry away its impression upon my heart. I do not think that I felt my sorrows very acutely at those moments, for my mind was nearly stupified by the fatigues and suffering of the last few days, and seemed almost a vacuum as regarded present emotion. My mood can only be represented by the word *restless*. I had a craving desire after constant change, which would not allow me to sit still, or to think calmly. I was in search of rest,—but could not find it. Every room but my bedroom was now dismantled; and during the evening, when I did sit down, it was in the midst of dusty furniture which was piled together in both sitting-rooms. Most of the things from the upper floor had been carried there. I took my tea off one of my own travelling boxes instead of a table. I could not bear to speak to the servants, and avoided them as much as possible; they likewise kept purposely away from me.

Sleep in such an excited state of the brain as I have described was little to be expected; but when the evening got late, I withdrew, according to custom, to my room. I remember sitting for an hour or more in the window gazing up upon the wintry sky, unconscious of cold, with a kind of listless misery. At last I went to bed. But sleep, when it did at length visit me, which was not till I had given up seeking it in despair, was broken and filled with dreams. Now, I was sitting or walking with my father as I

used to do, and he spoke tenderly and cheerfully to me ; then the scene would suddenly change, and I was watching by his sick-bed, or witnessing his funeral procession, and my own sobs would waken me up. I would then sit up in bed and look about me, for I had left a rushlight burning in the chimney, and would listen if all was still in the house, wearying for the morning to break. I would afterwards lie down again and endeavour to compose myself to rest, and before long I would be dreaming as before, and then starting awake again. Thus it was through the whole course of the night.

I woke up at last, finally, just as the clock outside my room - door struck six. I rose immediately and trimmed my light. I lifted the blind and looked out at the window. It was still quite dark, and the sky was cloudy, but it did not rain. I saw a light twinkling in John's window, which was visible from mine. He was astir. I hastily dressed myself. I felt languid and feverish from my disturbed sleep, but was relieved by bathing my throbbing temples with abundance of cold water. As all my things were quite ready for starting, there was no necessity for all this haste, but there was one visit I wished to make before I left, and I preferred to do it unobserved, and therefore at an early hour.

It was just a little before seven when, with a shawl wrapt round me, I stole noiselessly down the stairs, and drawing back the bolt of the door, issued out into the grey misty morning. I did not hear any move-

ment in the kitchen, in a closet off which the two servants slept, as I passed near it, and supposed they were not yet risen. I drew the door gently to after me for fear of rousing them. It was still almost dark, though the light was slowly breaking. The air felt damp and raw, and I drew my shawl closer round my bosom as I crossed the green into the shrubbery. I knew that the churchyard gate was locked and William had the key ; but it would be easy, I was aware, to climb over the low wall which separated the shrubbery from the burial-ground. I made my way through the moist clinging bushes, and reached the little ivied wall where the trees had not yet allowed the dim morning light to penetrate. I knew the localities so well, that even in the gloom I was able to choose a part of the wall where a large horizontal stone close by it enabled me to step easily down on the churchyard side. This I accomplished. But from that I had to descend into long rank grass, wet and heavy with the morning mist. But I thought little at present of what at another time would have made me shudder. I stepped quickly over the graves : most spectral - like I must have looked to any one who might have chanced to see me in the uncertain light wandering through the churchyard. My father and mother's grave lay at the other side of the church, and I had to make a circuit round the building to reach it. A few minutes brought me there. A large stone, supported at either end by rude pillars, covered it. It had been removed before the funeral, but

was now restored to its old position, and I sat down upon it.

It was a solemn moment. My parents slumbered quietly there, and I, their only child, had come to their lonely resting-place to bid it farewell before I went forth to the world homeless and a stranger. Here was the sole spot on earth to which I now had a claim—here were my treasures buried ; but I was to be separated from it henceforward.

How inscrutable are the workings of Providence ! Here was I, a young, inexperienced, tenderly nurtured girl deprived of her only support, and about to enter by herself upon the great and tempestuous struggle of life ! Here was I sitting weeping and solitary in the dim light by the grave which contained both my parents ! Who could then see that good was to come out of this evil ? Who could guess that light was to spring from this darkness ? The Lord has his own ways of leading his people and teaching them to depend upon himself. He evidently desired that I should lean upon his arm instead of an earthly father's.

The sky became gradually clearer, and the trees and other objects around began to assume a less shapeless appearance, as I lingered there. I bent down, as the light enabled me, and with falling tears perused the words engraved on the stone. My mother's epitaph I had long known by heart, but my father's had been just executed. It was by the direction of his session. It ran thus :—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY

OF THE

REVEREND JAMES DOUGLAS,

Who departed this life on the 15th of October 17—, in the
56th year of his age, and the 30th of his ministry.

“ For I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God will see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to witness this day that I am pure from the blood of all men.”

They had made his farewell text to serve for his epitaph. There could not have been a juster one, and it was a warning to all those who had enjoyed his ministry. Perhaps, I thought, when many years have passed away, some idle wanderer who has heard that sermon may be arrested by those words, and they may produce fruit. God grant it. I loved the people both for his sake and theirs.

Time was wearing fast away, however. The morning was becoming every moment lighter, and the household would now be stirring. I might be missed. I turned to go away more than once; but again and again I retraced my steps. I felt it probable that I might never be here again. It was doubly painful to depart with this conviction, feeling that even my dust would never mingle with theirs. But I checked the bitterness that was overshadowing my spirit by this time. That Scripture—“ Those that sleep in Jesus the Lord will bring with him,” suddenly came to my mind. I had been mourning as one without hope. What mattered the poor perishing body, if we were

all children of God through Christ Jesus? Heavenly Father! I ejaculated earnestly, do with me what thou wilt: make me all that thou wouldest have me to be: and, oh! cure this fretful spirit, murmuring at thy dispensations. Farewell, I concluded, looking at the lonely grave,—farewell, dear father and mother; but, thank God, not for *ever!*

I turned sorrowfully, but calmly, away, and retraced my steps through the churchyard. I returned by the way I came, and re-entered the house. As I passed the parlour-door, I saw Nanny spreading my little breakfast on a table she had cleared. She was crying bitterly while doing it. She saw me as I hastened through the passage, and perhaps suspected what had taken me so early out of doors; but she did not speak. I hurried up to my own room, and shut myself in for a time, nerving myself for the parting moment. I was cold and shivering from the long time I had lingered in the churchyard, and at last I went down stairs and hastily swallowed a cup of tea.

The hour of departure was drawing near. With a forced calmness I put on my travelling things, as if I were but going on a short journey, and not for ever. I tied my bonnet at the little mirror, and thought vividly how strange it was that I would never do so again. My room looked just as usual, as if I meant to return to it again at the customary hour. The chest of drawers stood in its old place,—no one could tell that it was empty,—and the tossed down bed-clothes seemed as if they would be again smoothed for

occupation. But in that chamber, in which I had slept eighteen years, I would never more rest myself. My last act there was prayer.

I left it, and went into every room in succession. They all looked altered from the confusion which reigned in them. My father's room was the last I visited, and I lingered in it: it and all the places he had most frequented were sacred spots to me. I did all this as if I were in a kind of dream; but occasionally a sharp pang, a consciousness that it was real, would dart into my heart, and dispel the stupor.

At last the sound of wheels grating on the gravel below, and immediately afterwards, as I was sitting waiting in my father's room, a burst of loud crying from the two servants, announced to me that my conveyance was at the door. I was eager to get away, that I might be at rest. I drew my veil over my face, and, with feet that trembled in spite of my endeavours, I descended the stairs. The servants were in the lobby. They were to leave in a few hours after me. I walked steadily on. I paused to take the hand of each. "Good-bye, Nanny—good-bye, Peggy," I managed to say, though almost inarticulately. In another moment I was in the cart,—the curtain was drawn, and, sinking back in the darkest corner, I broke into a fit of sorrow. The cart moved away: I heard the gate close behind us—and I was a wanderer.

THE END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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