

# THE DANDY DRAINER.

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## CHAPTER ' I.

OUR little village is not without its examples that weakness or want of principle involves its own punishment. Vanity and love of display conduce to vexation of spirit as much as their more notorious ally, dissipation. A case, at once pitiable and ludicrous, is that of the villager, still named the "Dandy Drainer," although the designation now sounds only of mockery. He is a broken-spirited, tattered, cheerless labourer, prematurely aged, with nothing to indicate the pristine glories that won him his title of Dandy. I assure you the title was not bestowed in derision, but was eminently deserved and proudly worn; and when I recall the brisk young man, vain of his person, still vainer of his dress, excelling all the youths of the village in the village dances, challenging the hearts of many village belles, and a fair object, too, for their hearts' affections, I can hardly realise the total failure of the man; and it does seem wonderful that he should have sunk into the creature you see, slouching, battered, and spirit-crushed.

His father was a tailor, who resided in a bothy in the back street. There, in the kitchen-room, divided into two apartments by a box-bed set across the centre of it, the Dandy Drainer of the future was born and bred, being then known as "Willie Durrand." There, at the window, in "the fire-end" of the house, was the paternal board, on which the tailor sat and stitched the village moleskins. There, too, were the household economy and affairs of the tailor regulated by Mrs. Durrand and her daughter, Margaret, nearly ten years older than Willie, the only son of the family. Three other daughters were "out in service."

The tailor was a thin and stunted figure, with a head completely bald, although he was but forty-two. He was honest, hard-working, and meek of spirit; in this last particular unlike his wife, who was large of person, and bold of temper, ruling her gentle husband and household with a firm and high hand. It was consequently no disagreeable period, when, annually after Hallowe'en, the tailor tied up his scissors and goose, made a small bundle of an extra shirt, some thread, and swatches of tweeds and moleskin cloths, and betook himself to a round of farm and cotter-houses, to make up the winter's clothing of the outlying districts, itinerating to the distant boundaries of Howe and Langrig. It was usually the end of March before he returned to domestic life to prepare his potato-rig for the coming summer, and to take his chance of the spring and summer trade. No doubt he occasionally came to the bosom of his wife and

family on Saturday nights to account for his hard-earned eighteenpence per day, which he must hand over entire to his better half; for so much, together with food and lodging, was the guerdon of his labours. This was the most jolly part of the tailor's year. He became crouse and cracky, told stories, retailed quiet jokes, and was quite a gay and jolly little man, when thus away from the influences of his own hearth. For Mrs. Durrand was a woman of religious pretensions, "quite superior" to her lot in life, very religious and very dirty, which qualities, together with her imperious manner, crushed out the tailor's spirit, stifled his laugh, and smothered his fun, quiet and sober at all times. Despite the identity of the nightcap which covered his poll, it was difficult for the distant parishioners of Langrig, when they visited the tailor on fair-days, to recognise their smirky friend in the grave and silent man, with the long and pinched face, who occupied the sartorial board in the back street bothy.

Such were the circumstances of Willie Durrand's pupilage, and, although the only son of "Deeran the tailor" (the villagers always pronounced the name "Deeran"), the bairn was, without mistake, the most tattered little rascal in the parish. As the father could sew, it was no business of Mrs. Durrand's to patch the child's breeches; while the father, poor man, thought that he stitched enough of necessity to excuse him from amateur work, unless his spouse insisted on his making or mending so as to cover the child's naked-

ness. And the woman did not often urge this; for, although she delighted to go to the parish church each Sunday very sprucely dressed, she concerned herself but little about the tidiness of her home or the clothing of her children. But the boy must be indoors every morning and night "at the books," as Mrs. Durrand prided herself on the regularity of family worship. She conducted it herself, praying powerfully for grace to be bestowed on the tailor and her "olive branches," and for especial blessings on "our basket and on our store." But such is the godless and heartless character of the people generally, that they rather sneered at the tailor's wife; and once when she was admonishing a neighbour of the sin of neglecting private prayer, the woman made answer, "It's a' true; I dinna pray. Folk canna dae a' thing: an' I dinna bang ma man's lug, though I aye clout ma bairns' duds." Mrs. Durrand's sin of omission was notorious. I do not believe the violent sin of commission here charged against her. Her high character was enough to crush her husband.

When Willie was eight years old, and when the tailor in November was packing up his gear, preparatory to his winter's journey, Mrs. Durrand suggested that it would save something in meal if the boy accompanied his parent. The father's customers would not miss the boy's porridge, and they could be told that he was commencing his apprenticeship early, in token whereof he must keep a second needle ready threaded for his parent, and must carry the goose to and from the fire. Thus

the boy journeyed with his father, and the country folks who employed the sire, kindly entertained the son, nor grudged his little portion of food. Perhaps in these winters of itinerancy, the boy, knowing that he was entertained on sufferance, and appreciating the kindness of his hosts, eagerly strove to make himself agreeable to the different people whom he encountered ; and thus the first seeds were sown of that facility of disposition which in his manhood ripened into want of principle. At any rate, he ate and grew ; and at ten years old, he was able with his tiny hands to sew a seam, and to realise somewhat of the real conditions of a tailor's apprenticeship. It was well enough while in the country, where the old women and farm-labourers praised the boy's stitching, declared it "wonderfu'," and conceded sixpence a-day for his work. But it was intolerable at home. Up at daybreak, and away with the barrow and the graips and hoes, to dig and trench in the potato-field ; then, after the hasty breakfast of porridge and treacle, to sit on that weary board till night, stitch, stitch, stitch all the long sunshiny hours, excepting for that brief interval when "the potatoes being done" and the herrings boiled, dinner was eaten in silence, or with religious observations by the pious mother. It was not wonderful that the boy fell ill before harvest was well begun—ill with pains in his chest and ribs, and back and limbs ; so that his mother, who first tried to scold him into good health, at length carried him to old Gordon, the bone-setter, who, after stripping him and kneading him on a table, declared

that he had "the rickets," and ordered him complete immunity from work, and plentiful feeding with meal and milk. Mrs. Durrand wondered at the mysterious decrees of Providence which deprived her of the boy's work and earnings, nearly equivalent to half his father's, and she remembered the matter in the family devotions; but it puzzled the tailor how he should get more meal and any milk for the laddie. It was while they were pressed with this serious tribulation, that a crofter from Langrig called to get his Sunday coat turned and made up again, as his daughter was about to be married. He offered to take Willie, and to give him both meal and milk in plenty, provided he would tend the cattle on the hill-ground, "jist tae kep them frae trespassing on the corn lan'—licht wark that cudna hairm him." The mother now gave praises to the Almighty Provider; but the poor tailor would not accept the offer, generous and timely though it seemed, until after nightfall he had travelled the four miles which lay between the village and the dwelling-place of the bone-setter.

"Will it hairm ma laddie tae gae tae herd nowt in Langrig?" he asked, in the tones of anxiety, for the boy was near to his heart.

"Na, na, Tyler Deeran; it wunna hairm him a grain. He'll be a hantle the better o' it. God's air on the braes is better nor yer boord, man; gin the loon gits his bit and his sup."

The tailor sped him home, with mingled feelings of sorrow and pleasure, and next market-day the boy went

forth to herd. His mother blessed him very solemnly. His father put off his nightcap and clothed himself (he usually sat at work almost naked, saving his nightcap), and went out with the boy and his new protector six long miles of the way, and the poor tailor kissed his boy at parting.

Now it happened that the cows of the adjoining croft were tended by Maggie Scott, a little waif—for whom no man took care—whose mother, her only certain parent, was dead. A feal-dyke and a ditch, half filled up, divided the lands; and as the mouldering dyke and grassy ditch were the best of both pastures, it followed that often the cows in peace grazed side by side along the ditch, while the new herd, Willie Deeran, and Maggie Scott, lay lazily in the sunshine on the fragrant heather. And new life came to the emancipated boy. With Maggie he scoured the dykeside, and daringly harried the bees' byke underneath the furzy thicket; or feasted on the ruddy cranberry; or, in gentle rivalry, beat off the heads of "carldoddies." And when showery October came, Willie biggit a bower under the spreading bramble, lining its walls with heath and mountain moss, so that the thorns might not injure the little girl; and there, sheltered from the shower, and wrapped in the lassie's tattered plaidie, they lay in each other's arms, beguiling the hours in repetitions of the history of "The house that Jack built," and other fictions which the boy had learned while journeying with his father. Maggie was to stay

over winter "in her place." Poor lassie! she had no home. There was "greetin'" in the brambly bower the night these little people parted. Next morning before sunrise, Willie with his master was gone towards the village; and it was as he lay in the cart well covered with straw and a blanket, full of boyish health and spirits, that he came to the resolution, "A'll no be a tyler. A'll rin aff first."

Willie sojourned with his father in Howe and Langrig that winter, and was helpful in the sewing of corduroys and other stuffs, but in spring he went to herd again at Langrig at a wage of one pound five for his services till after corn-reaping. Again Maggie Scott welcomed him to the hill-side; and they persecuted the yellow yorling and peesweep together, and together they gathered the heath-berries while they tended their beasts. They traced out the linnet's and the mavis's nests in the whin and brambly thickets, but forbore to touch them. For Maggie said, "The auld birds wad gae greetin' till hairst, an' I winna dae it tae them." And the year and other years sped on, and Willie went not back to the thimble and shears, but in various forms wrought out the first grades of his apprenticeship to labour, until, being nineteen years old and a full grown lad, he was engaged as a "horseman" on the Mains farm of Howe. All these years till now Willie had been either on the same farm as Maggie Scott, or within such a distance of her that from time to time they met. The grey cairn on the top of Dunarnie Brae had been their trysting-place during



one summer, and the rowan-trees in Glenlangrig had watched them many a night during another. For the orphan girl had "taken" to the laddie as if he had been her brother at the first; but, as her life expanded, she clung to him more closely with the love of a sweetheart, because she had no brother. The Mains of Howe was fifteen long miles from Langrig Brae, where she was to pass the winter; and when they met at Hallowe'en in the bothy at the Brae, she repined greatly at the lad's leaving Langrig. No wonder; for the hazel nuts that she slipped into the fire, saying, "Him an' me," sputtered and flew off in anger and hot haste; and the egg-white in her glass curdled, and "wus a' ane clude." Could it be otherwise than that with swimming eyes she saw him enter the bothy; and must she not leave it, and go out to the stackyard to lighten her heart by her tears? She went, and before many minutes Willie was at her side and his arms about her, and she sobbed against his breast.

"Maggie, lassie, what ails ye?" he asked sympathetically, while he kissed her.

"Ma nits gæd squirt an' fuffing, an' ma egg was a' muddy; an' ye're gain' awa, laddie; an' ye'll forget me ere lang, am shuire."

"Och, nonsense, Maggie! am nae gain' tae leave ye, lass; am nae gain' but till the next parish."

"But I canna win till ye, nor ye till me, Willie. Gin I had kent it a fortnight afore, I nicht hae gat some place nigh han' ye. Am rale doun-hairted on it, Willie."

"But, Maggie, ye see I cudna help masel. It wus faither an' maister made it oot for me; an' sax poon' ten's na tae be quarrelled wi'. It's a big rise by four. Ne'er fear! I'll win tae see ye, lassie; I'll luv ye the mair for the pairtin'."

And thus they sat, with arms entwined, in the shelter of the stacks of barley, and pledged their love and faith each to the other, "As sure as death," and with many kisses, until the waning moon gave them warning of midnight; and Willie Deeran ran his two miles home. What like was this Maggie Scott? Truth to say, she was not a beauty. A little, sharp-featured, pock-pitted girl, with grey eyes, turned-up nose, hair red, crisp, and curly, that might be tied up but could not be straightened. A keen and earnest temperament and a warm heart lay hid in her somewhat mean appearance. Such was the girl that Willie was thus pledged to love, and who certainly loved our Willie. He promised to meet her at the Britchaig public-house, half-way between their distant dwellings, on the following New Year's day, whatever should betide.

It happened that, at the Mains of Howe that winter, the bothy girl was a lass of some twenty years, by name Ellen Ross, a smart, large-boned, clean-skinned girl, with tidy and cleanly ways beyond bothy lasses in general. When Willie came to the bothy at the Mains his clothes were very dirty; in fact they had never been washed, for cleanliness is not usually a characteristic of small farms such as he had been employed on. But he had

not been a fortnight in his new quarters, till his smoothness and gentle ways winning the esteem of the bothy girl, she got hold of his corduroy leggin's and washed them in the burn, and gave them back to him white as snow. Gradually she washed all his things, and made him look smarter than he ever was in his life before. But at the first Willie Deeran was very shy of this girl, for the image of his red-haired one in the distant Braes of Langrig clave very close to him. Go where he would, work never so hard, still the pock-marked face and crispy hair stood near him. But there was no denying it, Nellie Ross was a handsome girl, with a good-looking face and black hair ; a better-looking lass decidedly than the tiny little figure on the Braes. Then, how kind she was and how thoughtful ! Maggie Scott, with all her love, had never washed his gaiters ! But Maggie Scott had taught the lad one trick that now operated to her serious disadvantage, although it came of her love for him, and that was, that she allowed him every time they met, freely to embrace her. Beyond doubt, a bird in the hand is worth two on the braes. So, as Nellie discharged kindly services to the lad, he would fain have caught her round the waist and kissed her while he thanked her. But the image of his red-haired lassie interposed, and he could not put his hand on Nellie—not although the habits of the bothy were very free and easy. For Nelly made no objections to be nursed on the knees of the horsemen, as they smoked pipes at the bothy fire after night, although she boxed their ears

and pulled their whiskers when they tried to kiss her. And the apparent innocence and modesty of the young man impressed Nelly very much by its contrast with the roughness of his fellow-workmen. She favoured him all the more that she believed him to be entirely innocent and untainted. As he was so quiet and harmless a lad, she thought it might be quite fitting to have him for a sweetheart. Her attentions to him steadily increased. His plate was heaped with porridge. His brose was plentifully mealed; and when she got from the cook at the Mains House a bit of "dripping," she baked a fatty cake for the youngster, and regaled him with it when no one looked on. Can it be wondered at, that before Christmas he had folded the girl in his arms, and after much ado, which drew from him praises of her beauty and her goodness, and protestations of his love, had got from her many unreluctant kisses? But even while he kissed her, the red hair and grey eyes of Maggie Scott seemed at his side, reproachfully watching him. The present enjoyment, however, was more than the lad could resist; and day after day, and night after night he continued to pay court to the girl, who believed in the honesty and singleness of his affection. As New Year approached, there came to him more frequent recollections of the absent Maggie Scott.

New-year day was a general holiday, and the other men were going to the village to a dance. Willie had told Nellie Ross that he was bound for the Britchaig public-house, to meet some people from Langrig Braes,

but he had no heart for the journey. His heart, the rascal said, "was noo a'thegither thirled tae the Mains o' Howe." But go he must. Indeed, he had fully considered the matter of keeping his tryst with Maggie Scott. He would fain have stayed from her; for, to do him justice, he shrunk from practising deceit. But what could he do? He felt certain that if he did not go to her, the impetuous lass would not stay at Britchaig, but would seek him and half-an-hour of love at Howe; and that must not happen, however unpleasant the journey to meet her might be. And Nellie had all her lover's fustians washed to the whitest against the morning of the holiday; and when he slipped into the feeding-byre to kiss her, as he set out, she had a large and gorgeous worsted comforter, of white, red, and blue, knit by her own hands, which she drew from the folds of her skirt and tied round his neck, charging him to keep sober and to come home betimes; and thus the lad set out on his journey most fully conscious of his duplicity. But, indeed, his heart was touched by the gift of the comforter, new evidence, as it was, of the superiority of his new over his unpretending first love. Ere he reached the Manse of Howe he had almost made up his mind to turn back and confess all his entanglement to Nellie, and to ask her forgiveness and her counsel; but some lads came up on their way to the village, and he went forward with them dowie and down-hearted. He visited the dwelling of his parents, and stayed for half-an-hour. The tailor

was loud in praises of his son's appearance. His mother preached and prayed to him, and gave him a holiday dram, by all which being greatly enlivened, he stoutly took his way to Britchaig, now only five miles distant. On the way he tried to nerve himself to tell Maggie Scott how things stood with him. He felt the necessity and the rightness of so doing; but while he was yet resolving, half-a-mile from the public-house, Maggie Scott was waiting for him by the roadside, seated on a heap of stones, with her frock-skirt covering her rebellious red hair, and partially concealing her freckled face.

Now Maggie's love for this lad had not grown out of admiration of his personal beauty, nor from any sense of his superiority of mind or working power. It came of her days of herding with him in the Braes, when, children both, they had passed through several summers, together for the live-long day, in happy peace and innocence. It was born of association, nurtured by mutual vowings and pledgings, stimulated by fancies of the future, and by human cravings for sympathy. But Maggie, when now she saw her sweetheart after six weeks' separation, found him more than her fancy pictured him. He was clean. His clothes shone like snow. The gorgeous cravat gave colour and effect to the brilliantly-white fustian, while the polished black leather garter of his leggins and his shiny boots completed a figure which overpowered the poor lassie. She suddenly rushed from the road-

side, and, in a transport of love and admiration, flung herself with stifling embrace round his neck.

"Dear, dear Willie! ye keepit yer tryst! I kent ye wad. Dear lad, ma hairt's blythe tae see ye sae weel an' sae bra'. Hoo's a' wi' ye, dear hairt?" and she kissed him many kisses.

"Losh! Maggie, darlin'! dinna choke me athegether! Ye see I hae cam' back tae ye soun' an' safe. But cam' aff the road tae the burnside, an' I'll tell ye a' thing."

He was completely upset. All his resolutions were gone to the wind. He called her "darlin'," and "dawtie," his "red robin," and all the little names of former love, as she clung to him on the way to the lonely burn, where he made her happy and proud with his presence and embraces for full three hours. He gave her the sweeties that he bought for her on his way through the village, and of which the little girl declared she would eat not one, but would keep them all as tokens of his sweetness till they should meet again.

"Na, Maggie; souk them noo," said her lover.

"Na, na; but maybe, as there's a gey lot o' them, I'll count them an' lay them by han', an ate an equal pairt ilka week, till they'll last till the feein' market, whan I'll neist see ma dear lad again."

And Willie was so much led away by her manifestations of love and delight, that he gave her even the German silver brooch, with glass brilliants, which he had purchased to bestow on another beauty. At length

they parted, and our hero returned to Mains of Howe and continued his courtship of Ellen Ross. Could he help it?

I do not design to moralise, but the facts make it plain that our young rascal was plighted to two girls, of whom, at least, one loved him very dearly. It is no justification of his conduct that he liked them both, and had, by force of circumstances for which he was only partly responsible, been led to make love to them both. Perhaps the truest thing that could be urged in alleviation of his offence was this, that his own love for both or either sat very lightly on him ; and that he did not know the depth and seriousness of a woman's love, when she truly loves. Thus he did not see the grievousness of his conduct, or foresee the sad consequences it might entail. Unhappily, too, he did not note the prejudicial effects on his own mind and character which followed this systematic course of duplicity, in the destruction of his moral sensibility, the weakening of his capacity to resist evil, and the strong tendency growing on him to do that which, averting a temporary unpleasantness, hazarded future and permanent evil. Verily, his sin was its own avenger. Meantime, gratification in the fact that he was thus favoured of two women, stifled all sense of the wrongfulness of his way.

A process of tile-draining the Mains farm was going on that winter. It was done by contract. The nicest and most important part of the work is the laying of the tiles in the drain. If they are not carefully laid



on even beds, the tiles are broken in course of being covered in, and a single broken tile infers the choking of the drain, so that the last state of the land may be worse than the first. Willie Durrand had been employed in carting materials to the fields where the drains were being formed, and had tried his hand at tile-laying. Perhaps it was some little neatness of hand lingering with him from the days when he plied the needle, that now made him a very efficient layer of tiles. The work certainly needs little more than care. But his effort attracted the notice of the contractor; and for one or two afternoons, when it was thought desirable to finish a particular piece of work, Willie was employed as tile-layer, by special request of the contractor and leave of his master, along with the workman specially employed. Thereafter it happened that that old workman fell ill. The colds of February had chilled his old bones and given him rheumatism, and he was laid up. Then the contractor applied for William in his stead; and finally, after a few days' probation, it was settled that another lad should be got for the farm-work, that Durrand should be paid off, and should thereafter receive two shillings per day from the contractor. Besides this, he was to remain at quarters in the bothy, and receive his allowances of food as before. Thus the young man began to earn quite a fortune—twelve shillings per week from early February till late in April, when the process of draining must cease for a season.

In February "Tailor Deeran" was circulating in the farm-houses on the Braes of Langrig, and for five whole days and nights he abode in the same house as Maggie Scott. The habits of the folk were of the simplest. Each throughout the day attended to his or her own portion of labour; at meals, master and maid assembled round the same table, and at night they all sat around the same peat-fire. But in numberless ways did the little girl show attention to the tailor, and minister to his comfort, all which he accepted with the dignity and patronising air, which, as a consummate workman, he felt entitled to assume towards a humble creature like Maggie. No thought had he that the unwashed and untidy lassie had set her affections on his son William, much less that his son had plighted his troth to her. Therefore it was with unmingled paternal pride that he descanted of his son, as he sat on the top of the dinner-table stitching in the light of the small japanned oil-lamp in the long evenings—"Ye see, ma Willie's nae the same-lik' lad he wus at the Braes here awa'. Bless me! he's a tall strapin' lad. Nane o' yer fushionless loons, jist able tae haud a grip o' the horse tail an' pull on. He haes a' a man's strength an' brains tae guide it. That's what haes made ma lad sae muckle prized by ithers. Twa shillin' a-day forbye his pecks! It's no ilka lad o' auchteen, nor yet twice auchteen, that maks the same arles o't, I can tell ye."

The house folk were all seated round the fire,

and from the group spoke Maggie Scott—"Whatna way, tyler, is Willie no' the same-lik' lad, I wunner?"

"Why, he's a hantle bigger an' robuster than he wus, an' he's weel pit on, ye see. He haes gotten a fine soot for the Sawbath. I made it for him masel', when I gaed hame last week. Show me the lad that can mak' twa shillin' a-day lik' Willie. I'se warran' he's a smairt ane."

And the lassie's heart was filled with longings for her lover, and for the coming of the feeing-market; and at times she was faint with yearnings for him, and would sit down and sigh, "Heigh-ho! that I wus near him."

At times, too, her love of him grew almost into ecstasy, as she recalled him on that frosty New-year day, bright in the sunlight and his snowy fustians. Then she would clasp her hands together, and think of his handsomeness and his beauty, and "Wus he no lik' a aingel?" she would ask herself.

Poor silly worker in byres and fulzie! What had she to do with angels?

Thus it was that as the feeing-market approached, a great restlessness came to poor Maggie. She could not eat. She no longer led the fun at the evening hearth; and her songs ceased with her laughter. Night and day the fustian-draped lad was in her mind; and her sole consolation lay in mumbling to herself the chorus of the old song:—

My fond lover!  
Loving, brave, and true;  
My fond lover  
Aye keeps his tryst tae woo!

And when the day drew nigh, she became feverish in her eagerness, and scarcely slept for several nights. It was to be on Friday, and as she lay tossing in her bed from Wednesday night till Thursday morning she made up her mind to pass Thursday evening with her sweetheart, although she should lie all night in the shadows of the corn-yard at Howe. What was it to her to see her lad coldly on the market-stance, where perhaps, he dared not kiss her, and she could not rush to his bosom before the people? What she longed for was to be again in his arms and alone with him, and for this her soul was sick. So on the Thursday morning she asked her mistress to allow her to leave for the village and the fair in the afternoon.

But the mistress said, "Na, lassie; the dun coo's sure tae calf the nicht, an' ye canna gang aff."

"But, mistress, am boon' tae gang. I hae a trystin' an' maun keep it."

"But I say ye maun bide at hame. Am na tae dae yer wark, an' hae that baste on ma han's tae. Sae content yersel."

But at five o'clock Maggie was arrayed in her best frock and ribbons, and ready "to take the road."

Her mistress said, "The lassie's dimentit! See here, fither!" she cried to her husband, "Maggie Scott haes

gaen gyte. She'll be aff tae the market the nicht, though the dun coo haesna an hoor."

Ben came the goodman. "What dae ye mean, lass? sic a thing as twa days at this time o' year wus ne'er heard tell o'. Pit aff yer duds an' gang tae yer wark."

"Am boon to gang," said Maggie dourly.

"Then ye needna come back."

"Gie me what I wroucht for an' am content," said she.

"Na, na, gin ye brak yer term, ne'er a bawbee o' wages will ye finger frae me."

"Weel, weel; I maun face it," she said, and she went out and away.

"Gudeness guide us a'!" said the mistress; "what can hae cam ower her? She's no been the same lass for weeks gane. Bather her! tae leave me in sic a mess." Then going to the door and looking after her, she added, "Puir thing! I pity her. It'll be a rouch nicht; an' she haesna brock her fast the day."

It was ten of that Thursday night. The wind was howling in fitful and bitter gusts, bringing down with it cold sleety showers. At intervals between the showers, a hard, keen-eyed half-moon stared cold and bleakly on the drenched lands, from amid masses of black cloud. Then Maggie Scott, wet to the skin, knocked at the kitchen-door of the farm-house at Howe. A smart housemaid opened the door and asked what she wanted.

"Willie Deeran bides hereawa, am thinkin'?"

"Yes, up by at the bothy. Are ye sib till him?"

"Nae sib," said Maggie; "whatna way to the bothy?"

"Haud oot o' yon yett: gang richt throo the stack-yaird: loup the wast dyke, an' ye're jist until the square. But am thinkin' ye're sair drookit."

"May be," was all the reply, as the excited girl followed the direction indicated. A bitter gust of wind, prelude of the coming shower, pierced and chilled her as she passed between the gate and the stack-yard; and in the shelter of the stacks she paused to recover breath and composure, for in a few minutes more would she not be in Willie's arms?

"We'll think o' oor waddin' neist year. But ye maunna be dowie, Nellie, love! gin ye'll nae see me till the term," said a man's voice near her; and the words were followed by the sound of kisses.

What coldly curdled Maggie's blood, colder than the bitter north wind? The voice was William Durand's.

"Am no in a hurry for mairridge," said a woman, "gif ye're true, lad; I seek nae mair, Willie."

And Maggie Scott crept round the stack with stealthy step, and she saw her Willie Durrand clasping a woman to his heart, as often he had clasped her; and she groaned aloud. The man turned and saw, and quailed before the blanched face, the glistening eye and dishevelled red hair he knew so well. But in an instant the moon was clouded; down poured the pitiless shower, and with a cry of anguish Maggie Scott rushed into the

storm and night. She ran blindly, she neither knew nor cared whither, and she felt not the sleet nor the wind. "I wish I ne'er was born! I wish I ne'er was born!" was the broken cry that sobbed to her lips as she ran on in the pelting tempest.

An hour later, Maggie Scott was found by the Widow Forsyth, when she went to fetch peats, huddled at the gable end of the widow's cottage, benumbed in body and crazed in brain. The widow, with the assistance of her only son, Jo, carried the girl into the cottage, put her into her own bed, and tended her for many days and nights. She learned the young girl's story and published it abroad. Then Ellen Ross would have no more to do with the false William Durrand. His acquaintances also scouted him; and he, disgusted, went off in quest of work to the county town.

## CHAPTER II.

I ASSUME that life in our village resembles, in its main points, the life of the human family at large; that, subjected to similar tests, our humble ones sustain them much in the same way as their brothers and sisters of the great world outside. Then why did not Maggie Scott die of "a broken heart?" My reading would lead me to expect that she should; but I never met a case of this peculiar disease; and Maggie, certainly, did not die. She was ill, very ill, fevered, and occasionally delirious. No wonder. All her anticipated heart-cherished expectations of happiness were destroyed in that rude night of frosty winds and ruthless showers. She was ill, mainly because her life had been almost blasted by the tempest and the sleet. And when the more than Samaritan care of Mrs. Forsyth and Dr. Blake had re-established the conditions of life within her, she left her bed as if she were born anew, with fresh feelings, fresh views, fresh appetites. William Durrand and the past were only a dream to her, though a dream, indeed, which long left a wearying, disturbing influence on her awakened soul. She found work at the Whitsunday term on a farm near the village.

Five years elapsed before Durrand returned to his native place. For a time he had been a constable in the



burgh police force at Inverwick. Thereafter, he had resumed labour in draining. Now he came to us as contractor to execute the tile-drainage of the farm of Dell, two miles from the village. He took up his abode in the paternal bothy. He worked hard and steadily. He delighted in dress, and was, undoubtedly, the best-dressed lad in the village, when, labour being over for the day, he attired himself, as he regularly did after working hours, in his holiday clothing. He was tall and good-looking, and wore his clothes with a grace, and carried himself with a deportment much superior to the mass of louts around him. Probably the grace and bearing came to him from his instincts as the son of a tailor and his drill in the police. Vanity was his besetting sin, egregious self-conceit girt him as a garment. It was said that he was backed in his contract by Thomas Balders, carter, cowfeeder, and farmer, one of the upper men of the village. At any rate, Durrand almost every night was to be found at Balders' fireside, "newsing" with Balders, nursing his children, of whom there were three, or canvassing the merits and demerits of the lasses of the district with Mrs. Balders, a brown-eyed, large-mouthed, stout woman of thirty-five, untidy in her habits, and coarse of mind and manner, who suckled her baby at the hearth, and milked her cow in the byre equally as matters of course. She delighted in gossip and slander; and had many neighbours, whose pleasures lay in the same grooves. And Mrs. Balders seriously thought Durrand "an unco-

han'some chiel," and frankly told him so. No doubt it was quite platonic; although she certainly winked and laughed, and went on with him in a way scarcely in harmony with the fact that she was already provided with a husband, albeit that husband was fifty years and upwards. She it was, who, admiring our well-dressed hero at her fireside, first bestowed on him the title of "Dandy Drainer," by which thenceforth he was best known.

Mr. James Wilson was tenant at Dell, a proud, stiffish, genteelly cold man; a widower, with an only daughter, Mary Wilson, a pert, spoiled girl of twenty, who was slightly deaf, and had a contorted spine. Miss Wilson saw "the Dandy Drainer" when he first called on her father regarding the contract, in all the gentility of his best clothes. Her deafness and her spine had both contributed to isolate her in a great measure from the families around her; and her father's coldness and stinginess had so far tended in the same direction, that she had, in fact, no female friends of her own station in life, and was thrown upon the servant women about her for sympathy. These women were unanimous in their praises of William Durrand. They gave him all sorts of pretty names. Indeed, his fame had preceded his advent, for the kitchen-maid, Betsy Morrison, knew him years before at the Mains of Howe, and could tell how he broke the hearts or spirits of ever so many girls. Thus Miss Wilson was almost in love with him before his appearance took her heart by storm. It was simple

of explanation. She had read a few silly novels, and longed for a handsome lover, and one had not come, and there seemed no likelihood of his coming. She was a strange girl; and at sixteen had carried on a flirtation with the boy who washed her father's gig, and jobbed about the house and farm. More lately, she had pleased herself with surreptitious meetings with one of the ploughmen, until the dairy-woman, who thought her prior claims to the swain were not fairly regarded by him, basely betrayed the pair to her master, and Jack Thomson was summarily turned adrift. For him the damsel was still mournful when the praises of Durrand were sung to her by the chorus of servant lasses.

In such circumstances it is not surprising that within ten days of the commencement of his labours at Dell, Durrand received a note by the hands of the kitchen-maid, of which this was the tenor:—

“Miss Wilson will be glad to receive Mr. Durrand to tea at 8 to-night. She will be disengaged, her papa being from home.”

And the kitchen-maid whispered that it was from her young mistress, and that her master was going to Inverwick after tea that night, and was to be absent all next day at the burgh market. Durrand made answer that he could not meet the lady. Does this surprise you? Well, it need not, for Durrand was immensely flattered by the invitation, and would have done much to avail himself of it; but on the previous evening Thomas Balders had told him that he was going to Inverwick with

carts loaded with potatoes, and was to be absent till the following afternoon; and the drainer in ignorance of the higher call which awaited him, had promised that he would call in to see "the childer'," and he felt bound not to break this appointment. No higher motive prevented the gratification of Miss Molly's wish. The kitchen-maid had brought him the note to the bothy at the close of dinner-hour, and after his men, having consumed their brose, had started for the field, and he was calmly smoking his pipe and alone.

"I canna the nicht," he said; "tell the leddy am oon-coman sorry. I canna the nicht; but, may be, it may soot her soon agen, tell her that, ma bonny lass; but, indeed, I wish it war yersel'."

Then he seized the girl and kissed her; and she, laughing, slapped his face and ran away. She made a most impressive report to Miss Wilson of the lad's engagement and of his vexation, and of his compliments and praises of the young lady's beauty. The vain creature examined herself anew in the glass after the lass had administered this fictitious dose of flattery, and anew she believed in her charms and was consoled.

"It is too bad, Betsy, to be disappointed. I always am disappointed, I believe; but I must keep up my spirits for all that. Betsy, see here's for you;" and she bestowed on the maiden a shilling.

Thus was the young ambassadress rewarded by both

parties. But the maid's deceitful flattery and skilful management of her mistress came not of a cool, clear head, but were rather an index of the girl's own facility of character and bad heart.

And soon thereafter Mr. Durrand did have interviews, first in the wood, and thereafter in the dining-room, with the foolish Miss Wilson. In her father's occasional absences she got the drainer into the house, and treated him to tea, and wine and cake, and such music as she could produce from the piano; and she permitted him to kiss her hand, and received his rough pretences of devotion to her, fancying she was a princess, beautiful and bountiful, of fairy tale, and that this humble devotee was the slave of her beauty. But Betsy, the maid, had caught the lad's fancy; and he usually indulged himself in an interlude with her, preliminary to his introduction to the parlour. He had, too, an uneasy sense of risk that the farmer might unexpectedly return, or that he might be informed of these clandestine visits to his dining-room; so "the dandy," naturally cautious, lost much of the enjoyment afforded by a fine room, and wine and piano-strumming, and a silly girl to boot. Besides all this, it was necessary to speak loudly, in order that the deaf girl might hear him, and he did not half like this, not knowing who might be listening and tittering in the lobby without. It really was a relief when, the interview over, he speedily found himself in the back-kitchen with Betsy on his knee. "Like mistress, like maid," they say,

and Betsy did not belie the aphorism, nor enjoy her lover the less one whit because he humoured the silly fancies of her mistress. For she esteemed "Miss Molly" a fool, whom it was necessary for some one to cajole and flatter, in order to prevent her from "rinning wud." But Betsy, more foolish than her mistress, believed that Durrand was sincere in his addresses to her. "Faugh!" he said, "leddies; wersh thewless cretars! I'd rayther hae a winsome leishin' cummer lik' ye than the bravest leddy i' the lan'."

"Ye're a coaxin' chiel, Deeran. Wus that what ye used tae say till Nelly Ross?"

"I maybe said as muckle tae Nelly. It wasna my faut that am courtin' the noo. Some lasses can cast aff luve as lichtly as their shoon. I wus sair doun whan Nelly bade me pack awa'."

"Puir Bill!" said she.

"I'll no gang back tae that feckless gawky upstairs. I'll no be wastin' time wi' the geik-neckit wench, whan I ken a rosie lass o' ma ain 'gree. Ye maunna bid me agen."

"Aweel," said Betsy, musing as she played with his whiskers, "We maun humour her a bit, or she'll gang stark mad."

"She may gang stark nakit for what I care," said Durrand.

Betsy hid her face in his bosom, laughing at this sally; and Durrand had a tussle to get her head up to kiss the giggling face. So on it went; and what could

come of such folly but grief and vexation of spirit to all concerned ?

Now Jo Forsyth, son of widow Forsyth at Howe's Craig, in whose house Maggie Scott had found shelter and nursing in her illness, was foreman of the squad of labourers employed by Durrand. Jo was a sober, settled lad, twenty-seven years of age, honest, cheerful, and industrious. Poor Maggie's story had touched the lad's feelings at the time—perhaps he had thought too much of it; and although he now wrought Durrand's work, and took his money, and was his foreman, he was a totally different man from Durrand. Honest and manly, of fair stature, stalwart and solid, entirely lacking in the versatility and readiness which chiefly distinguished Durrand's mind; yet, like the men around him, he had his sweetheart, being not exempt from the common weaknesses of our race. He had but one, and he courted her in all honesty and singleness of heart, aiming at some day making her his wife. No doubt his love had but little effervescence in it; but sincerity is more than an equivalent for emotion. The girl he loved was not of remarkable beauty, but she was lively, and had emotion enough for two. And very gently, even tenderly, but firmly, she repulsed, and had repulsed, her lover's advances, saying, "Och, Jo, lad! I'll never get intill the scrape o' luvin' agen. Ye ken what I mean. Brunt bairns dread the fire, and I'll no plicht ma soul tae-man agen, though the man ye ken o' is noucht tae me noo."

“Dear Maggie, why shud ye say it? ‘Cause ye met ac fause hairt, ye’re nae gain’ tae shut oot, a’ mankind frae yer ain warm breist.’”

“Warm breist, lad! nae warm breist hae I! It’s a cauld an’ brunt-oot ingle. There’s noucht noo but dust an’ ashes, whar aince wus heat an’ bleeze ower muckle.”

“Noo, Maggie, ye’re a’ talkin’ o’ cauld hairts, an’ dust, an’ the lik’. Ae kiss, lassie, an’ a grain o’ faith in a true man’s luv, wad quick kendle the flame agen; gin ye wad only lat oot yer womman’s natur’, an’ no keep it boun’ up lik’ a deid corp. Womman, ye ken that I hae courted nae ither lass thae three year gane, an’ ma soul’s honest tae ye; yet ye winna gie me ae kiss.”

“Ah, dear lad, Jo! kisses are no for dry lips and used-up hairts. Tak yers tae some ane whase affection haes no been blasted lik’ mine. Dinna seek me tae loe agen. I winna, daurna.” It was Maggie Scott said this—the Maggie Scott whom we knew five years before; yet not the same. She was softened by the past, and her small, sharp face, and grey eyes, were almost prettily feminine. In better service than in former years, she had improved in her manners and dress. We see that the past still left its mark on her. True, there was no longer the active emotion—that had died in the storm and sickbed; but instead of love there had grown up a distrust of herself and of mankind, blinding her eyes to the offering of a leal heart, and making her reject a hap-



piness for which her nature was yearning. To some extent, too, her persistence in refusing Jo Forsyth's love came from this—that, on first recovering from her mad affection for the drainer, she said she would never love again, and she thought it a fine thing to keep the resolve, which Jo had more than once heard her utter. Perhaps, too, her nature, which was certainly capable of much out of the ordinary course, was now seeking vent, and finding sad pleasure in self-torture. However it was, there is the fact. She resisted and repulsed Jo, until the lad had begun to tire of a pursuit that seemed destined to disappointment, and with weary heart began to meditate its abandonment.

Jo Forsyth soon saw the entanglement in which William Durrand was involving himself and the two girls at Dell. A casual visit to the kitchen put him up to the whole matter, and he was filled with dislike of the Drainer's courses, and a desire to deliver the women from the toils which they were weaving for themselves. So one evening he loitered behind on his way past the house until he saw Betsy Morrison, and he said, "Lassie, am telt that oor Dandy Drainer's courtin' ye."

"Wha med it yer business, lad?"

"Nae business o' mine ava," he said, "mair nor ilka honest man's, no taë see wrang dune to the unwary wi'ooten a cry till them."

"Wha says there's ony wrang in ma courtin'?" she asked fiercely. "Wha are ye, loun, that speaks o' it?"

And Jo was forced to admit to himself that he had made a mistake; and he told the girl that he meant no evil, and in his rough way he apologised for it. "But," said he, "tak' care o' Deeran, lass; he haes vext a girl or twa ere noo;" and so he went his way, wondering at female vagaries and at his own rashness in interfering.

Soon thereafter the Drainer and Jo sat in the bothy after their mid-day meal, smoking silently. The workmen had wandered outside to whiff away, in the open air, the remainder of their meal-hour, and the maid, Betsy, came to the Drainer. Jo rose to go out, but the lass stopped him, saying, "Say yon noo, till Mr. Deeran hear ye himsel."

"What was't agen, lass?" asked Jo in reply.

"Shurely yer memory's nae sae short," said she, "or is it feart ye are o' the man, that ye'll no say forenent him what ye said tae me?"

"No feart," said Jo; "I see what ye mean. I'll e'en say it agen, lass. Am leavin' ye thegither. Have a care o' the Drainer. He haes vext mair nor ane afore ye, an' maybe ye'll nae be the last."

"Harken till him, Deeran! Wull ye let the lad insult me an' yersel that gait?"

"No insult at all, at all," said Jo. "Lassie, I am no meaning no insult, but words o' warnin' that ye can tak' or leave as ye list. Deeran's there, he can tell ye if I speak a lee."

"Whaugh! Betsy," said Durrand, "dinna quarrel

ma mate an' me. He means nae ill, at least tae ye. Ye ken weel eneuch I hae been wildish 'mang the lassies i' ma day. It wus their ain fauts, though; ony rate, no mine a'thegither; an' that day's dune, fairly dune," said he, as, seeing that Jo was gone out, he wound his arm round the girl's waist. "I'm tae be steady noo, an' ever mair. Am pledged tae ye for ae thing, an' a contractor maun keep his character for anither. I'll daff wi' nane but ye for life noo, dearie."

"Dear Bill, dear Bill!" said the girl, running her fingers through his hair. "Am shure ye wull, am certain shure o' it. But yon chiel dinged ma hairt doon wi' his talk o' yer auld ways wi' silly lasses. But that pits me in mind o' ma errant. That daft Miss Molly wants ye tae tea, the nicht. Her faither's gane frae hame, an' she'll be waitin' ye at seven."

"Confune the 'thrawn jaud!" said the Drainer. "Am no gaun tae be makin' a fule o' masel, purtendin' luve till her. I canna dae it, Betsy. A'll no dae it. Sae gaug back an' say I canna tryst her."

"No, but, Deeran, ye maun dae it aince or twice mair. See what she gied me tae speed the errant, a hale half-croun, nae less; so 'dinna tak' no denial,' said she, an' nae mair I will, Dandy dearie."

Then Durrand said he would go to please her, and would please himself by staying half-an-hour with her before Miss Wilson's tea-hour. She then took her way back to her silly mistress. Soon after Jo Forsyth came in and sat down, still smoking.

The men sat smoking in silence for a few minutes when Jo said slowly, as he whiffed, "Ye're an awfu' chiel, Deeran."

"Hoo that, Jo?"

"Ye're aye entreegin' wi' the wimmen folk; gettin' yersel intil trouble, an' garrin' hairts rue their soukin' in o' yer flattery."

"Man, I am no tae blame sae muckle! The jauds come seekin' me. I canna help their fancies. If they're fulish, am na tae ac' the blin' horse, an' stairve while ma neighbour's rack's fu' an' welcome tae me."

"That's not it, Deeran. What I blame ye for is, that ye're a licht-o'-luve; that ye're every lass's lad for a while that is caught wi' yer coat or yer feegur; that ye hae honied phrases tae help ye catch them, an' that ye leave them in the lurch at the hinner end, an' gang aff yersel unscotched tae wile ithers i' the nest toun. It's no fair courtin'; it's no honest ava."

"Hear till him noo! Ye ken naething o' it. If a lass riis aifter me, am no gain tae slap her face. We're commandit, man, no tae return evil for good. Least-wise, it's no i' ma natur' tae kick whan am kissed. What am I tae dae then?"

"No tell lees about it. If ye're no in luve an' dinna tell lees, no lass will trust ye wi' ower muckle first, an' rue it aifter."

"Ye dinna ken them, Jo; ye dinna ken them. They need sma perswashion tae mak' them trust ye. They're ower ready tae gie a' thing on trust; an' at the

warst they're no muckle hurt by it. Indeed, lad, I hae the warst o' it, unco fash and feckle wi' them, a licht character amang the men, an' no a gude ane 'mang the wimmen." And the Drainer handled his cuttie thoughtfully, and looked sentimental, adding, "Deed, Jo, am tae be pitied."

"Then, be honest," said Jo, as the farm bell rung the hour of toil; "an' it's a lee that wimmen trust wi'oot their hairts being wiled awa', an' wi'oot reason for the faith that's in them. 'Deed, Deeran, ye're no tae be envied, for I am feared ye fa' in wi' the warst o' the queans." They went forth to their labour.

Jo Forsyth was sitting at the fireside where his labours kept his mother in humble comfort. He was carding wool, she was busy at the spinning wheel beside the ingle. "Jo, ye haena cleaned yersel for a week by-hand, an' I hae heard nought o' ma Maggie."

"Na, mither, I carena tae gang back. The pitcher ower aft at the well, fill or empty, comes tae crack. Mine's clean brock, mither. I'll no gang back again. Yon well's dry onyrate."

"What mean ye, lad?"

"Maggie Scott haes no luv to gie me. She maun hae looded the Dandy mortal. She haesna gat ower it, an' ne'er will. As himsel' says, gin he crookit his fingar a' the lasses i' the parish wad rin till him, Maggie amang the lave."

"Na, na, Jo. Ye're no jist i' that, lad. Maggie haes

no remant o' luv for Deeran; nane, I tell ye; but she canna forgie hersel' for trustin' sae souple a wuddie, an' she dreeds tae confide e'en whar her heart believes noo. But, mind, Jo, she haed great luv aince, an' a great punishment. Lat me see her, lad."

Jo stopped carding, and resting a hand on each knee, asked—"What d'ye say, mither?"

"I say lat me speak till her. I ken baith yer hairts, yer hairt and hers, Jo; an' I ken what it is that ails her. I'll put it richt atween ye."

Jo put down the carding-combs and lighted his pipe.

"Mither," he said, hoarsely, "ne'er think o' that agen. Maggie Scott kens ma hairt; leastwise, she oucht tae. Gin she'll no tak' me on ma ain suin', I'll no tak' her on the wocin' o' ony auld wife, mither or no mither. I'll no be made the jeer o' the parish! What way cud ye think it o' me?"

And Jo got up and went out, and his mother moodily dropped her spinning, and sat silently for full five minutes. Then she resumed her wheel saying, "Gie ma lad the desire o' his hairt, if it be thy wull, O Lord! Thou knowest he desairves thy choice blessin'." When, half-an-hour afterwards, the old woman heard the lad's footsteps in the trance, she got up and met him, and putting her hands on his shoulders, said, "Ma son, in God's name see her aince agen, for my sake."

The man said, "Weel, weel, mither."

Next day Widow Forsyth, having the happiness of her son very much at her heart, and earnestly desiring to penetrate the future, resorted to one of the many superstitious practices, which then lingered in the district, and which are not now wholly extinct. She had just finished knitting a pair of stockings for Jo. In forming the first row of meshes or loops on the knitting-wires, the end of the worsted thread hangs unused, commonly six inches long or more. She cut off these ends from the pair, and placed them above the door-jamb, and invoked the Holy Trinity. Thereafter, the first female who entered should bear the same Christian name as the future spouse of her son, for whom the stockings had been made. She spun on in patient expectation, but that whole day no female entered her cottage. Next day, however, while she was engaged with her bread and cup of weak tea at breakfast, a ragged gipsy girl raised the latch and stood before her, saying, "Gie me a piece."

"Troth wull I, bairn," said the woman; "but what's yer name, ma queanie?"

And the child pronounced a name such as the woman had never heard before; but, after several repetitions, she made out that it was "Charlotte," a name which sounded strangely to the widow, and seemed both foreign and unfortunate. She gave some oat-cake to the little wanderer with a sigh, and turned away from her breakfast. It seemed that her lad's love must be crossed, and his happiness disappointed; and the

strange name made her dread that he must leave her ; and, for a time, a deep feeling of depression beset her. In prayer she lightened her soul ; and at length resumed her knitting, saying, " Not oor wull, but thine be dune."

Everybody must have noted a time in his experience, when a choice of courses of conduct being presented, the reason perceives the wiser and happier, and the heart approves and sides with the reason, but the will chooses the unwise and worse, in whim and self-despite. I have often watched this mood in children of the best disposition and keenest sensibilities, and have seldom seen the perverse volition overcome save by some genial touch of loving nature. A word of love, a tone of feeling, true to the circumstances, usually suffices. Stern reason or direct opposition are entirely useless. This was the state of mind of Maggie Scott when we last saw her, rejecting the suit of Jo Forsyth ; and Jo's absence on the two following Mondays (Monday night was his usual night of visiting her) only confirmed her in her unreasonable mood. On the third Monday Jo came again. She was at the field-gate, a stone-throw from the farm-house of her master, the spot at which they used to meet, whence she usually led him to the kitchen, when nothing unwonted was going on there. She met him as if there had been no interruption of his visits.

" Ah, Jo, lad, ye're weel ; an' hoo's mither ? "

" Brawly," said he ; " yet no a' richt either."



"What's the maitter, Jo? I'd grieve i' ma hairt gin onything was wrang wi' her."

"I haena seen ye for twa weeks, an' I cam' noo at her biddin'. She haes ye an' me at her hairt; an' it's lik' tae be sair."

"What for, Jo? Ye're no gain tae leave her?" she asked with a sickly smile.

"No, I haena thocht o' that; but I'm tired of ma luckless wootin', an' I meant tae tak' ye at yer last nicht's word, an' no fash ye again. Ma mither kent it, an' bade me come aince mair tae ask ye. Will ye tak' me wi her blessin'? I hae noucht to offer ye by ma labour an' ma luv, but ye ken ma luv is strong tae death, if ye wear it."

This was an unhappy speech. Quite natural, perhaps, in the circumstances, and not unloving. But it did not touch the tender chord in Maggie's nature, which would have brought her to her lover's bosom weeping. It lacked tenderness of tone, and aided the resistance of Maggie's will.

"Nay, Jo," she answered, "I feel yer mither's kindness warm i' ma hairt. She's been, an' ever will be, a mither an' mair tae me. But her luv misguides her. Her son's judgment is clearer an' better. I'll nae gie ye second-hand luv. Ye dinna desairve it. I shudna wrang yer mither's son. In God's name, seek ye a younger an' fresh-haired sweethairt. I'm nae mair for man's luv."

He was standing sidewise to her, his hands in

his pockets, his face clouded and downcast to his chest.

"You have said it, Maggie Scott. Let byganes be byganes betwixt us." And he turned full towards her and held out his hand.

"Yes, lat them be byganes, dear Jo," she said, grasping his hand; "lat them be byganes; an' tell yer mither that it's ma luv for her an' you that stands atween us—that I bear her a dauchter's sense o' duty; an' ye, dear Jo, I tak' for ma brither, gin ye'll hae me."

The tears were in her eyes, and Jo saw them.

"God bless ye, Maggie; I will always bear ye luv."

Then all Maggie's old impetuosity surged upon her; and she threw herself on the lad's neck and wept, saying, "Brither, brither!"

Jo kissed her white face silently, repeated "God bless you!" and in great excitement strode down the lane. He did not know how near he was to obtaining his heart's desire when she had leant upon his shoulder weeping, and that the blame was his that the interview had left him still disappointed. When he entered his mother's room, silent and moody, the old woman did not stop her spinning to ask how he had fared.

"I kent it forehand, Jo," she said. "Dinna be doun-cast ower muckle. The Lord's wull is aye best. His luv passeth the luv of wimmen."

“There’s no disgrace in haein’ loed a true lass like Maggie Scott, mither; even though she winna hae me.”

At that same moment the girl had buried her head in her pillow in the lonely crib off her kitchen, and was sobbing as if her heart would break.

Now Durrand, taking love as lightly as he might, found it prosperous and successful. Thus, from time to time he had junketing with Miss Mary in the parlour, with wine and sweet bread and strumming on the piano; and in the kitchen he had the devotion of Betsy. Then, frowsy Mrs. Balders contributed to his amusement at the village. His drainage business, too, was advancing very favourably. The winter had been open, and, on the whole, dry, and he had done more work than he expected, so that he reckoned on a round sum of profit at the end of March, when he should make his season’s settlement with Mr. Wilson. It is true that he had solemnly promised to marry Betsy, and that she believed and trusted him; but he had done as much a few times before to other girls, and did not find himself the worse for it. But the end of this campaign was distinctly unpleasant.

On the 20th of March Durrand received an interim payment of £50 from Mr. Wilson, and appointed his men to meet him at the village inn at two o’clock that afternoon, to get payment for their last four weeks’ abour. Before he left the farm at one, Betsy asked

him to meet Miss Molly in the gloaming, as her father was to be absent, and this he promised to do. As usual at such settlements, the men clubbed their shillings together to treat their employer. Forsyth having seen the time-bill adjusted, and received his earnings, contributed his shilling to the drinking fund, and went off amid the jeers of the men. Durrand stayed with them, and they, having with rude songs and rough ill-mannered jests, consumed ten shillings' worth of whisky, he gave them "the maister's bottle" to wind up with, so when the party broke up in the dusk, they were all more or less intoxicated. Durrand then set out for Dell. He was not accustomed to drink whisky, although he had had similar bouts with his men on each recurring pay-day, and although Mrs. Balders had accustomed him to drink an occasional dram. Out on the road, he now found himself decidedly unsteady, for a cold north wind aggravated the influence of the drink. But on he went, now with devious, unequal, and staggering steps, now with a rush; and as he went he muttered snatches of the songs which had cheered the drinking party, or spoke aloud his sentiments of things and people in general. About a quarter of a mile from Dell he overtook a man, and staggered up to him in a friendly way, with "Weel, frien', ye'll be stransher here. Whish way gain'?"

"Ah! Mr. Durrand," replied the man thus accosted. "I'm goin' to Dell."

"What you gae Dell for? Am gain' t' Dell." And

Durrand seized the man's arm, and turned him round and gazed vacantly at him in the gloom.

"Come along then," said the stranger.

They walked a few steps in silence, and Durrand hung for an instant in drunken somnolence on the man's arm. Then waking up, he staggered quickly forwards, muttering "Twishit jaud, Mish Mary. Fanshy kish her fingars!" Again he hung heavily on the man's arm, repeating "Fanshy kish her!" By-and-by, he went off at a run again, saying, "True lash, Beshie; fine lash!" Presently they arrived at the house at Dell.

Here the stranger appeared to hesitate as to what he should do, but Durrand broke away from him and entered the kitchen, into which the man followed him in a few minutes, to find Betsy with the Drainer. "What does this mean?" he asked quietly, on which Betsy looking up, tore herself from Durrand with a scream, and fled from the room.

"Whatsh up?" said the drainer, looking about him; and at last getting sight of the intruder, he went up to him, shouting, "Dam, what you dae on lashie?"

The man sternly asked him, "What brought you here drunk?"

"Watsh yer bushness?" and Durrand flung off his coat and neckcloth, making ready for a fight; but the man retreated, followed to the door with most abusive words. This was Mr. Wilson of the Dell farm. In a few minutes the grievie and several ploughmen

entered the kitchen. Their orders were to duck Durrand in the horse-pond, and then to see him clear of the premises and farm. They did remove him ; and some of the ploughmen who disliked him for his assumed gentility of dress, and perhaps for his reputation, smashed his hat and tore his coat, and made him a sad figure with mud. But one humane lad saw him to the village, dreading lest he should perish by the wayside if left to himself, and delivered him at the door of his father's bothy. Next day the drainage work was stopped ; and following on that came threats of legal proceedings for alleged defects in workmanship ; and at length, to avoid litigation, Durrand renounced his contract, and adjusted his claims for the work performed by a compromise.

Durrand's visitings to Mrs. Balders had no better ending. While our little community was agitated by the affair at Dell just recorded, Elder Hewitson deemed it his duty to accost Thomas Balders, and to inform him that it was publicly stated that Mrs. Balders consumed more ardent spirits than was her fair allowance, and that she saw more of Mr. William Deeran than was good for her soul. Honest Thomas waxed wroth, and with difficulty restrained himself from, then and there, committing assault and battery on the person of the elder. But the month was not out before Balders saw the truth of Hewitson's statements. Balders had occasion to go to Inverwick, and started in the afternoon with a young horse. The beast was seized with a colic

at Howe, three miles from home, and after several hours' illness, the farmer abandoned his journey, and led the beast back to the village. It was eleven o'clock at night when he arrived. He secured the horse in the stable before he entered his dwelling. There he found Mrs. Balders and half-a-dozen women, "her cronies," and William Durrand seated round the hearth. The teapot was on the "hob," and each guest had a cup as Balders entered.

"Hech, frien's," said he, "ye're late at tea : I'm jist come in time."

An unmistakable odour of whisky-punch had met the man on entering the room. He was sure of it, for he had tasted neither meat nor drink since three o'clock, when he had left home. Mrs. Balders got up with a red face, saying, "Ye'll be better o' a guid drap, Tam. I'll mask anew for ye."

"Na, na," said he, seizing the teapot and cup from his wife's hands; "I'll e'en taste o' ma friens' broo;" and he poured out some of the contents of the teapot and drank it from the cup. It was almost undiluted whisky. He laid down the cup and took up his cart-whip, which he had thrown on the dresser.

"I tell ye what, friens; this is stronger than I bargained for. Ma wife's housekeeping seems tae be best whan ma back's turned. I maun superinten' it mair masel'; an' as the first step o't, I ask ye, nane o' ye, ever tae darken ma door agen. There, noo, clear oot."

He cracked his whip, and the women were quickly gone. Durrand was slower in his motions.

“Get oot,” roared the stout old man. “Get oot, ye low-lived dirty blackguard! Get oot, I say, or I may hairm ye in richt earnest;” and he plied the shoulders of the retreating dandy unscrupulously with his whip.



## CHAPTER III.

Do we not, all of us, make too much of love? We tint and elevate a sentiment, the germ of which is primarily base and selfish, till it changes and colours our world, and exerts too great an influence on our lives. We make some woman or man our object, regard him or her as superhuman, and straightway fall down and worship. If our homage is accepted, we are elevated to the seventh heaven, until familiarity destroys our illusions. If we are repulsed we are never undeceived; the common object of our regards is for ever an idol. The system would be a benefit to the race that brought us to recognise the just mean between the irreverence of Mr. William Durrand and the heroine-culture of Jo Forsyth. Life generally would be better and happier for it. To help to introduce such a system, I should be disposed, were I a minister of education, to make love-making, in its theory and reasonable practice, an ordinary subject of study. In progress of time the most beneficent results might ensue from the rational culture of this branch of knowledge.

Two years had passed since I last presented my friends to the reader, and how many changes do two years effect? Miss Mary Wilson was in the south in charge of her aunts, breaking their maidenly hearts with her

vagaries. Betsy Morrison was gone, it was said, to Inverwick ; but no one knew what had become of her. Mrs. Balders was a widow, and had set up a huckster-shop. One young woman, for whom I have some regard, had reappeared among us. This was Ellen Ross. Her father, a hard-working man, who had started as head of a family in the humble calling of a dry-stone fence builder, had sent out his children as they grew up to earn their own livelihood, and had, by frugality and unflinching industry, saved a little money. Thereupon, abandoning dyke-building, he had set to buy and sell farm-produce, that so he might convert his plack into a bawbee. He was now settled in our village, and had taken up the trade of Thomas Balders deceased, and rented the fields which Balders had possessed, kept several cows, and forwarded by his carts country produce to the market of the county town. He was reputed "wealthy," paid for all his purchases in cash, and was even able to advance small sums to the crofters on the Braes at rent time, on the faith of grain or other goods to be delivered to him. He was a widower, and his daughter Ellen managed his domestic affairs.

Now Ellen Ross was twenty-seven years old, a buxom lass, tidy in her person and attire, affecting, indeed, a superiority of dress to the generality of the village girls. A more modish ribbon, and a gown of a better texture distinguished her, when she "cleaned herself" at evening. Otherwise, she shrunk not from the labour to which she had been inured in youth, and toiled in the

byre and afield like the other women, removed from them mainly in this, that she was her own mistress. When they were some time settled in the village, and the estimate of the old man's wealth had got well fixed in the village mind, there was one man, who, not for the first time, recognised that he had made a mistake in life; but who now for the first time, began to entertain a serious feeling, not of regret for the past, but of grudge against himself and fate; and that man was William Durrand. Indeed, the last two years had not been prosperous with him. Jobs seemed to have a tendency to go past him; he found it difficult to get work. Jo Forsyth had taken the field on his own account, and, somehow, was generally preferred to the smarter man. On the other hand, Durrand had saved nothing; and although he still persevered in maintaining his specialty of superior clothing, he was often, in periods of idleness, indebted to his father's potato-pot for his food. No wonder that now he saw how unfortunate was the complication that had deprived him of Ellen Ross, or that occasionally he cursed his stupidity and his untoward career.

Maggie Scott was still in the same service near the village, and Jo Forsyth still lived with his mother. No word of love had again passed between the pair, and the widow had evidently lost her interest in the match. Jo's visits to the girl had ceased; but Maggie, every Sunday afternoon, on her way from church, visited the cottage of her friends, and, generally, Jo saw her on these occasions. Maggie was changed very much. Her

eye, which used to sparkle and flash with emotion, was now subdued and soft and shy. Her whole face told of the soul within—subdued and saddened, and very tender. Tenderness, indeed, had become the prevailing feature of her character. As Widow Forsyth said to her son, “Maggie aye distresses me. Whan she telt me o’ Jock Sandisson’s deid bairn, she grat lik’it wus her ain. She canna speak o’ a bealed thoom, but the tears are in her een ; an’ as for the preachin’s, I believe she greets a’ the sermon through. Somethin’ maun be wrang wi’ her. She wusna this lik’ whan we first kent her, ill as she wus.” And something did ail Maggie, but she could not tell it to the widow or her son. If the son had any notion of the secret, he held his peace.

In those days the life of William Durrand was not an enviable one. In his idleness, he often lay abed till seven o’clock, long before which hour his old father, now sadly broken down, had repaired to the potato-rig, and, with spectacles on nose, was toiling at this, to him, arduous occupation, by which his back was twisted out of all sartorial use and wont. Lazily the young man dressed himself, and having breakfasted from the porridge-pan, which he but little contributed to fill, he went out immediately to avoid his mother’s long prayers, and the other harassments of family worship. Indeed, this was not much to be wondered at, for the mother made her prayers bristle with pointed references to the son, and by urgent prayers for the preservation of the old tailor, her “earthly head,” more or less directly implied

that her son was not what he should be. Mortal drainer could not stand that. He went out, but this being the general breakfast hour, he preferred to go off into the fields, for too many labourers and their spouses were claimant for small balances of wages, a shilling or two each, to make his progress through the village comfortable. His only joyous hour was, when at night he slipped into Widow Balders's. With her he was a handsome fellow and a hero still; and she was still in circumstances to give him a dram. Late of the night he found himself again under his father's roof, where poor Margaret had sat gloomily waiting for him by the smouldering peat-fire. "Ah, Willie!" Margaret would say, "ye're aye late. Faither and mither are lang beddit; but they ne'er sleep till ye come in." Then William, without replying, would slink away to his bed, and undress in the dark.

Now it happened that old Ross required to have some drains cleared out, and some new drains made on his land, and he looked about for a person to do his work. Jo Forsyth was fully occupied, and the dandy was the only other villager competent. Indeed, although Ross had been strongly recommended to employ Forsyth, he was struck by the smart appearance of Durrand, and fixed on him to do the job. This brought Durrand to Ross's house, and once again into contact with Nellie. The old man knew nothing of their former love-passages; and Nellie received Durrand in a way which, although quiet and demure, certainly did not indicate any hostile

feeling. In truth, Ellen Ross never had been a sentimental girl. She was what may fairly be described as "a sensible lass," who perceived what it was fair and reasonable to do, and did it. Thus, it had appeared to her a fair and prudent thing to get into a courtship with William Durrand seven years before; but when Maggie Scott was said to be dying for love of that deceiver, and all the country-side cried "shame" to him, she cast Durrand off, and did not suffer much in so doing. Then she was twenty, and time and experience had not modified her disposition, so that she should now unnecessarily show sentimental dislike to the young man. On the contrary she was learning to be cautious in her treatment of young men, who were likely to make a fair fight in the struggle of life, and she had her father's word for it, that "this Deeran is an unco smairt chiel, an' does his wark as if he ne'er wore aucht but moleskin;" and she knew her father was usually reticent of his praise. Therefore Nelly was distinctly civil; and Durrand began to think that he might still hope, not so much for her love, he did not think much of love, but that he might get her to wife, with all the relative advantages of her father's wealth, and credit, and connection. But he knew that he was not the only aspirant to this happy fortune, for James Leask, the joiner, called often at the house, and Jo Forsyth was not altogether unknown at the fireside of the Rosses. Durrand reckoned little of that:—"Thae louts!" said he to himself; "if aince I get ma hand in, I'll sune birstle them oot." He

was a fellow of consummate conceit, this our dandy friend.

Durrand, over a glass of punch with Mrs. Balders, told her of his hopes in this matter. She was very hard and dry regarding it. Her opinion of Ellen Ross was, "She's a flauntin' flarin' gouk. I only seed her i' the kirk, but she pits on mair airs than wad the Countess. An' I'se warran' ye're deceived about the auld man. Ma ain puir man! wha that kent him wad hae thought he wad leave his widdie tae sell tapes an' odds an' ends o' things, jist for a leevin'. Och! och! Tak' ma word for't—the auld man's no a Jew."

Mrs. Balders was very bitter, and the truth was, she had personal reasons for it. But this notwithstanding, Durrand cultivated old Ross's good opinion by all the means in his power, and sought the young woman's society and favour as much as his opportunities permitted him. One day Ross was driving a young horse in a cart in the field where Durrand was at work. The horse was startled, and the old man was thrown off the cart. Ellen Ross was in the field also, "lifting" potatoes; and Durrand and she were speedily together over the prostrate form of her father; and, in the excitement of the occasion, while he was stilling her screams and soothing her, Durrand once more called her "Nellie, dear Nellie;" and was not rebuked. He continued thereafter to call her Nellie, and to adopt towards her a tone of tenderness, and she did not resent it. Indeed, at this time Durrand was fully impressed with the necessity of form-

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ing an alliance such as this, for he had received a letter from a solicitor in Inverwick, who, as agent for Messrs. Macfitt & Co., clothiers and men's mercers there, demanded payment of £25:6:4, attour 2s. 6d. as the charge for writing the letter, and intimated the service of a summons unless payment were made within ten days. The said Macfitt & Co. were creditors of poor Durrand for those splendid coats and hats which he wore of evenings, but the value of the goods was not one-half of the prices charged. Durrand walked to Inverwick, and having no money to tender in payment, was thankful to arrange the matter by granting his bill for the sum at four months' date. How could he be gay with Nelly Ross or any one else with this burden on his mind? How could he be otherwise than dull at Mrs. Balders' fireside, where he was allowed to be natural and unrestrained?

It happened about this time, that on her way home from church, Maggie Scott met an acquaintance, with whom was Mrs. Balders. Maggie did not know the widow; but the widow knew Maggie well, and as she would say, "a' the ins an' oots about her." It was the most casual meeting, and lasted only for a minute or two; but, in course of it, Mrs. Balders contrived to do as much mischief as possible.

"Dearie me, lassie, I hae a bit news for ye. Ye'll be glad tae hear that yer auld flame, Jo, is busy courtin' yon bouncin' baggage," and she pointed to Ellen Ross, who was then passing from the church. Maggie knew Ellen by sight.



"It's vera lik'ly lik'," was all that Maggie could reply. Then she turned away hastily and sped her home, weeping as she went. For this was the secret which was crushing Maggie's life and soul—she loved the lad Forsyth, whose love she had rejected. She did not call on Mrs. Forsyth that afternoon. She could not.

I daresay that if Mrs. Forsyth had had a daughter of her own, the Sunday visits of Maggie Scott would have been of little importance to her. As it was, these visits were a great matter. There was something about the little red-haired woman that had got into the widow's heart, and kept possession of it. It was no wonder, for Maggie had a womanly, gushing heart, which was felt in all she did. So the widow, who was too frail to travel to the distant church, sat awhile at her Bible after Jo came home that Sunday. At length she raised her head and asked, "Wus Maggie i' the kirk, lad?" Jo said she was, and the old woman resumed her reading. By-and-by she again turned from her book and exclaimed, "What can hae stoppit Maggie the day?" Her son made no reply, and after musing for a little, she resumed her reading. But again she ceased reading, and took off her spectacles and wiped them, and, with emphasis, inquired, "Wus she lookin' weel, ma son?" and being assured on this point, she burst out, "What i' a' the warld haes keepit Maggie? I dinna feel lik' settin' about the denner till she com'."

"Get ye the denner ready, mither, an' I'll step oot an' speir for her by-an'-by," said Jo.

So the old woman went to her duties, repeating again and again, "What i' a' the warld?"

When Jo Forsyth that evening stepped into Maggie's kitchen, she was sitting by the fire, and alone. He entered as he used to do in other days, without knocking, and when he put his hand on her shoulder, and she, startled, turned round her face, he was surprised and touched to find that her eyes were red, and she was weeping. "Are ye no weel, Maggie?" he eagerly asked.

"Quite weel, Jo," she answered, half-choked, as she got up and pretended to look for a pan.

"Then, Maggie, what ails you?" he asked kindly.

"Och, naething, naething; I'll be a' richt by-an'-by."

"But, sister dear," he said in his tenderest voice, for he saw that she was really distressed, and he was grieved. "Dear Maggie, ye took me for a brither aince. Tell yer brither what ails ye."

Then there followed such a fit of crying and sobbing that the young man was perplexed beyond measure; while all the articulate sounds that he heard from her were, "Leave me the noo, dear Jo; leave me the noo;" and at length Jo, greatly distressed, was fain to take himself away from a grief which it seemed impossible for him to mitigate. But he did not go beyond the door. There he stood, and said to himself, "I think it's a' richt. She's certain sure in luvè noo agen; an' wha wi' but masel'?" and he stood for a minute absolutely chuckling. Then he went back to the kitchen, and took the woman in his strong arms; and with as matter-of-fact a voice

as he could command, and a tearful smile on his face, he said, "Maggie, Maggie dear! am thinkin' ye're in luve agen; and am no tae let ye past me a'thegither, wi'ooten anither refusal o' me. Will ye hae me, Maggie? Ye ken I ne'er looded anither."

She held her breath in almost painful silence while he spoke. Then she flung her arms round his neck, kissed him a few hungry kisses, and broke into hysterical sobs and laughter. Then Jo knew that she loved him with all that intense nature of hers, and he was very happy as he held her in this paroxysm. His sense of happiness made him entirely self-satisfied and cool, so that while her head lay jerking on his bosom, he winked hard at the plated dish-covers that adorned the kitchen-wall, sole witnesses of his felicity. But in came Mrs. Thompson, with "What earthly is the matter, Maggie?" and seeing how Jo held her, and that she was sobbing convulsively, the lady sternly demanded what he had done to her.

"Nought ava," said Jo, somewhat dourly, for he had not called for the attendance of witnesses; "onless," he added after an interval—"onless an offer of mairriage be ony wrang;" and again, after another pause, "An' am thinkin' she'll tak' me tae;" and he pressed his loving burden in his stalwart arms.

Then in came Farmer Thompson, attracted by the voices, and learning the position of matters, he took Jo into his parlour, while Mrs. Thompson took charge of the young woman, who was greatly favoured, as she

deserved. Jo was congratulated and got a dram, and had five minutes with Maggie afterwards reassuring her; and she told him of Mrs. Balders's gossip which had distressed her, and he laughed heartily and happily thereat. Then he went his way. And on his way, although it was the Lord's night, Jo cut capers, and could not refrain from whistling, for the dram and the love-making had gone together to the poor fellow's head. At length he got home.

"An' wus she vera ill?" asked Mrs. Forsyth eagerly, when Jo came in.

"Aye, gey an' bad," said Jo; "but she's a' richt noo."

"Was it a cholic-lik' or a dwam?" asked she. "I'm a' anxiety tae hear."

"Na, mither," replied Jo; "it was the hairt."

"Ah, the puir dawtie! She haes ower muckle hairt, an' ower saft. Did Mrs. Tamson gie her some brunt speerits?"

"Na, mither, but she's ower wi't noo. Leastwise she'll be a' richt when she comes tae ye aifter the term."

"Winna she be able tae be oot neist Sunday? I hope she's no vera ill. I wish I cud traivel her length, puir lass!"

"O, I'm sure she'll com' in neist Sunday. She beet tae dae it tae get yer blissin', mither; am tae mairry her at the term."

"Mairry her! mairry her! na, lad, na; that canna be! I ken it's His will ye maun mairry a lass—what wus the name again? a lass, Charlotte. It canna be?"

“I ken noucht o’ ony Charlotte, mither; an meantime I ken I hae promised tae mairry Maggie Scott, an she haes promised tae mairry me. I wadna gie her for a thoosan’ Charlottes! I’m gey happy, mither, for she’s a luv’in’ lass!”

“God grant there com’ nae ill o’ it,” said the mother, solemnly. “*I* dinna see hoo it’s tae be. It shud be Charlotte!” And, to the amazement of Jo, his mother began fervently to pray for him and Maggie. But he saw that love for both of them was the cause of it; and greatly he marvelled that love could breed such vagaries as he had that night experienced.

Widow Balders was not satisfied with her shop-keeping. It yielded but an indifferent return for her trouble, and was very slow and worrying. So she lighted upon another and more pleasant way of making a pound or two. Perhaps, too, her sagacity led her to form ulterior projects from it. She swept out the old threshing-floor of the barn which Balders had built, hired a strolling dancing-master, canvassed the lads and lasses to attend his instructions, illuminated the barn with three tallow candles, and set up a dancing-school at the moderate charge of twopence per night for each lad, and each lad was allowed to bring “a partner.” Cakes and sweetmeats, treacle-beer and ginger-beer, tobacco and pipes, were for sale in the adjoining out-house, which in former days was the byre; and there Martha Balders, aged ten years, poor thing! dispensed

these commodities at moderate charges. This arrangement was, no doubt, spoken of disparagingly as "Luckie Balders' penny reels;" but it was new and was successful; and the Dandy Drainer materially contributed to its success. There he was supreme,—all but James Leask, the joiner, unhesitatingly admitting his superiority. It really was wonderful how he could and did disport himself here while that bill was hastening to maturity; and, no doubt, the widow had to stimulate him to exertion by an occasional dram. The Dandy took no partner to these dances. His delight was to get hold of the partner of some youth well steeped in love, and to annoy him by a flirtation with her for the night. The widow, by divers influences and by a special invitation, prevailed on Ellen Ross to visit the scene one night, "just for a dance." On that occasion the rivalry of Leask and the Dandy nearly led to a quarrel, and Ellen came not again. But this led Durand to press his suit more closely. So one night he followed her from her father's hearth to the byre, and, dandy clothes and all, he set to clean it out for her, while she stood by and rewarded him with many smiles. With a vague attempt at feeling he referred to their former courtship.

"Oh, Nellie," he said, "ye altered a' ma life for the warse when ye cast me aff."

"Puir chiel! Ye war slippery yersel'; but I bear ye nae ill will noo."

"Is that all?" said he, pathetically.

"Na, Deeran, I'm na gain' tae tell ye mair, man. What mair hae ye speired for?"

He would fain have craved a renewal of their old relations, but he could not shape his speech, for the thought came upon him most strongly and unfortunately at that moment, that he had no home to propose to take her to; and a marriage deferred did not suit his projects. He saw, too, that she was entirely self-possessed, and not to be hurried away into rash engagements. So he left the byre, and went off to Widow Balders, very much dejected. Was it strange that the conversation set Miss Ross thinking the same thoughts? "The chiel haes neither hoose nor haddin'," she said to herself, "naething but his claes! Ane cudna leeve inside *his* coat, braw though it be." Then and there she formed a decided preference for Leask.

In March, when field-work began to press on the young men, and their attendance at the dances began to slacken, Widow Balders resolved to wind the season up by "a ball." Then there was great preparation for this coming event among the young people. Several men of Jo Forsyth's squad of labourers had attended the dances, and a deputation of these came to Jo requesting him to countenance their ball by his presence. This they did at the suggestion of Mrs. Balders, who desired to secure as many guests and as much respectability as possible. Jo consented, anticipating much happiness in the company of Maggie, his engagement with whom was now well known. So he agreed

to go, and, as a preliminary, he got Mrs. Thompson's consent to Maggie's absence from household duty for the night. But it was hard work to prevail on Maggie to go.

"A'm ower happy, Jo, dear," she said; "ower happy far, an' ma hairt ower fu', tae gae dancin' an' caperin'."

But when Jo looked vexed about it, she said, "I'll dae onything; but dinna look that way."

So she, too, set to her preparations; and when dressed in her white muslin skirt and black boddice (how neatly some of those lowly girls do dress), with a white rose in her wavy auburn hair, for her hair had faded from red to auburn, she certainly was a pretty little woman, and right proud of her was Jo. Now, when Jo had first asked her to the ball, he had tendered her money, saying, "Maggie, here are twa-three notes. Ye maun get a nice frock an' things."

But she, taking his hand, said, "Na, na, Jo. Whan I'm a' yer ain, twa months tae com', ye'll claid an' up-haud me, but I'll no tak' siller the noo."

This night on the way to the ball, while Jo was wondering at her pretty garments, and saying that she must be bare of money, while he had plenty, and would fain have repeated his offer, she broke out a-laughing at him, saying, "Ye dinna ken yer wee wifie! ye dinna ken half o' her! She haes twenty pound o' her ain savin's, a' in Will Watson's bank (she meant the Savings Bank). But it's no hers noo; it's yer ain, dear lad."

The occasion of the ball was not a happy one for



William Durrand. He was working, working hard; but having only small jobs, and only one man employed with him, his profits were not in excess of a fair day's wages. His bill was past due and unpaid. Not knowing what to do, he had gone to Inverwick to beg for time, and had then been served with a writ charging him to pay within six days, under pain of imprisonment. The six days were also expired, and on the morning of the ball he had received a note from the lawyer intimating that a warrant for his apprehension would be applied for unless the debt were paid that day. Poor fellow! At first he thought of running away, but gradually he calmed down, and resolved to make the ball the occasion of asking Ellen Ross to have him for her husband. If she accepted him, then, perchance, some arrangement with these urgent creditors might be come to. If she did not, he must face the sheriff's officer with resignation.

The ball was a grand affair. The sum realised by Mrs. Balders at the door was two pounds twelve shillings, showing there were fifty-two men present, we presume, with as many ladies. The room was decorated with branches of evergreens and other ornaments of a simple kind, and was very brilliant with numerous candles, two fiddlers, and the crowd of muslin and mole-skin there assembled.

"Lik' heeven!" said one barn-yard beauty, who had just finished a dance, and was squeezing her way

through the crowd for a mouthful of fresh air near the door.

Ellen Ross was there with her father; but the old man went off to "the refreshment room" to have a pipe, and having found a resting-place on some peats, there he remained for hours.

On went the dancing; and the Dandy Drainer, certainly a strapping, well-looking fellow, nicely dressed, rose to the occasion, and "danced as gracefully as a girl," some of the men said. And there was daffing and laughing, and much expenditure of muscle, as reel followed reel in endless succession. But at length Mr. Durrand ceased to dance. Lucky Balders drew near him.

"Maister Deeran," said she, "what for are ye no dancin'?"

"Wha can dance forenent that brute Jamie Leask?" answered Durrand sulkily. "He aye hauds at the heid i' the kimpany, an' kicks oot lik' a cowl. I wunner Nellie Ross sticks sae till him."

"Ay, lad; Nellie maybe kens the chances o' him. He's as likely a chiel tae mairry as ony i' the barn."

"They say he cam' courtin' ye aince, Mrs. Balders," said Durrand pettishly. "What ailit ye at him, if he's sae likly?"

"Maybe this, maybe that; but a handfu' o' trade's worth a goupin o' goold. Ony gait, I'd as sune hae young Leask, the jyner, as the dandiest drainer i' the parish," was the widow's tart rejoinder.

"That's sauce for ye, Bill Deeran," said Bell Fraser.

"Luckie Balders aye gies as guid as she gets;" and Bell, who had been listening unobserved, went off with a laugh.

With whoop, and shout, and frantic snapping of fingers, on went the dances. And now the drainer had got Ellen Ross, and she heard the praises of their dancing on all sides, and she saw Leask looking on glumly. When this dance was done there was an interval to rest the fiddlers, and while most of the couples resumed their seats, Durrand and Miss Ross promenaded up and down the room.

"Nellie," said he, "hoo cam' ye to daunce a' nicht wi' Leask? Yer shins maun be black and blue wi' him. He's a tairin' dancer."

"Noo, Deeran, dinna ye be speakin' ill o' Leask. He's a brave chiel, although, maybe, nae sae weel buskit as yersel'. Trowth, ye're ilka lass's laddie. Noo, Leask is nae sae prodigal."

"Weel, maybe it's mair ma fate than ma faut, 'Nelly," said he; when up came Jo Forsyth, saying, "Miss Ross, ye war tae daunce the neist reel wi' me."

"Dinna ye see her engaged wi' me the noo?" said Durrand angrily.

"Speak whan ye're spoken to. Am no speakin' tae ye, man," Jo tartly answered.

"Be aff, man," said Durrand contemptuously, "she's wi' yer betters."

"Bettters!" echoed Jo, losing his temper; "some folks tak' on airs whan they're oot o' a job."

"Some folk mak' a job o' an affcast," said Durrand. "Be aff, man, an' stick tae ma leavins."

The words were scarcely uttered when Jo struck him heavily with his fist on the face, and Durrand went down on the floor. Instantly there was a tumult. Mrs. Balders screamed and rushed to help Durrand to his feet, while a number of men were threatening Jo, and as many or more were ranged about for his protection; and Maggie Scott was clinging to his neck in terror.

"Let the blaggard say it agen," shouted Jo. "Let him say it agen, an' doun he gangs agen, as am leevin'."

But Ellen Ross calmed them all by speaking out—"I promised, ye see, tae daunce neist reel wi' Forsyth, an' he cam' tae claim me. That man," pointing to Durrand, "keepit me, and insulted him; an' forbye him his bonny bride. He desairves what he got, an' mair."

James Leask spoke out too—"If the vagabone said it o' me or mine, I'd hae his hairt oot."

Widow Balders led Durrand off to her dwelling-house, bleeding profusely. Up struck the fiddlers, and on went the dancing. Jo resigned Miss Ross to Leask, and sat with Maggie in a corner. Ere the dance was done the excitement of the quarrel had passed away.

Durrand held his bleeding nose over the bowl of water with which the widow supplied him, for her basin

“was crackit.” She consoled him, saying it was mean of Forsyth to strike him unawares. “An’ yon hussy, Nell Ross, tae spake up agen ye. Ye see hoo the lan’ lies wi’ her noo?”

Durrand blubbered while he bled. She gave him some whisky, pouring it into a cup for him to drink from, as no glass could be found. After that the poor fellow became maudlin, for he had been drinking previously to stimulate him for the business of the night. “Oh,” he whined, “she’ll no tak’ me noo; she’ll no tak’ me.”

“Nellie Ross’ll never tak’ ye, man; if that’s what ye mean. She’s pleedged tae the lad Leask,” said the woman energetically. “I heard her say it masel.”

“Am brock; clean ruined an’ dune for,” whimpered Durrand; “the offishers ’ill tak’ me the morn! Lord, Lord!”

The poor fellow’s state was piteous. Widow Balders cocked her ears at the mention of “officers,” and gradually she extracted the whole story from the man. He was sure he would be seized to-morrow.

“Deeran,” said the widow, “ye an’ me ken ane anither weel, an’ hae haen a bit dauffin afore noo thegither. I hae has muckle as will pay the debt, an’ start ye in the warl forbye. Let it be a match atween us.”

Durrand shrunk within himself in the chair, and wiped his nose in silence over the bowl. She gave him more drink. At length the bleeding stopped, and Durrand fell asleep, and she put him to bed.

Just as Durrand anticipated, M'Nab the sheriff-officer, found his way to Widow Balders's door next morning before Durrand left his bed. "Jess," said Durrand to the widow, calling her by her Christian name, "ye maun settle this for me."

"Then, yon's agreed on? Whan will the day be?"

"Whan ye lik'," said he, with the driest of throats.

Then the widow called in M'Nab and his man to the room where Durrand lay, and after some account of his injuries, she told him that the lad had long been courting her, and that now she must just take him and take charge of him; and as it was all settled between them, Mr. M'Nab would write the notice for proclamation of the banns of their marriage. She would pay him for it. M'Nab quickly did the writing, and Durrand, submitting himself to his fate, signed the paper. The widow gave them a dram all round, and did not forget her right to a share of the liquor. Then she took money from a drawer, and took M'Nab to another room "tae settle wi' him, quietly," and she counted out forty pounds before him. "Ye see I hae the siller, Maister M'Nab," said she; "but am laith to pairt wi' it till I'm surely buckled wi' him. He's a slipp'ry chiel! What shall I dae?"

"Weel, widow," said the officer, "I see noucht that ye can do, unless ye tak' an assignation tae the deeligence."

"What's that?" she asked.

"Just a bit paperie that a lawyer will mak' for ye, making over the debts and warrants till ye. Then, if the

lad tries ony pranks, ye can clap him by the heels whan ye send for me."

"That's the thing," she said; "the assienation is jist the thing tae mak' it siccar. I'll gang tae Innerwick wi' ye aifter I see the session-clerk."

This precaution was taken, and Durrand was married to the widow within a fortnight. All the villagers laughed and jeered. On the wedding-night few were found to enter the house of the new couple, and bitterness in their revilings were the poor old tailor and his spouse.

It was a very unfortunate marriage, a union of all the elements which tend to destroy domestic comfort and peace. The woman, too, had exhausted the small balance of her former husband's means in paying Durrand's debt and law charges. Very soon M'Nab visited them again, and roused off her shop-goods and most of the household furniture, to satisfy a claim against Durrand "for aliment," at the instance of a Betsy Morrison. Do you wonder at the present state of the Dandy Drainer? A drunken, untidy, loud-voiced slut of a wife, four poor little bairns as step-children, and a proclivity to drink himself, when, in the language of the village, "he can win at it"—have reduced him to the man you see.

A pleasant contrast is the life of Jo Forsyth and his wife, Maggie Scott. Widow Forsyth is now very frail. It was long before she got over her sense of insecurity regarding the marriage which she feared "wus no or-

daint." But Maggie is more than a daughter to her; and happy in her husband's love, and the mother of several fair children, she is joyous as little woman ever may be, and all the happier for that struggle with her affections, unworthily engaged, and for the culture of a pure heart and generous aims.