THE MASON'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

SHE was buried to-day; and on her coffin was marked in gilded letters,—

LIZZIE MOWAT,
AGED
XIX.

They buried her in the quiet corner of the auld kirk-yard beside the yew-tree. She was pleasant in life, ever loving and gentle; too gentle long to combat with life's asperities. Last time I saw her she was weeping. We were talking of the past; but her tears were not bitter tears of sorrow; nor did they flow in dread that the well of tears, life, was speedily to become dry, although she lay on her deathbed and knew it. Her tears were for gentle memories, sympathetic with the past. She recalled pleasant things of her bright days. "For you see I had my bright day," she said, while her eyes were luminous with the pleasant tears. "I am not sorry it is past. God has brought me near to a brighter day, which

shall know no shadow or evening!" Her father was the burly and rough man, red-faced and red-whiskered, who followed her bier, looking sanguine even in his mournings; and these were her brothers, always to her "her little brothers," who walked before. Her father is the master mason, and in some sort the architect of the village and district. Poor Lizzie! with all his roughness, he loved her. Who was that strange figure, with the wisp of crape down his back, and the white comforter with the black spots?—a novelty that for a mourner! Why, that was James Mowat, and he sorroweth for her as deeply as one sorroweth for a first-born love. Well! which was her bright day? I fear her bright day was not oppressively bright. Indeed, very bright days do not leave very pleasant memories. Sunshine and shadow, and wind and rain, ay, and transient storm, are all needed to compose the best sense of pleasure in the past. But four years ago Lizzie was a pretty little maiden of fifteen, with a pearly complexion and a faint damask bloom on her cheek, and that gentle curve and roundness of figure which are so charming in budding maidenhood. As she went to the village school, with her linen sunbonnet and spotless printed frock, leading her little brothers, five and seven years younger than she respectively, with an old-fashioned air of prudence and patronage, she was the fairest of all the village children. I sometimes saw her at her home. In the summer evenings she conned her lessons, and saw that her brothers prepared theirs, under the shade of the apple-tree in her

father's garden. Once I found her up in the cleft of the old tree, and heard her sing an old song from her perch. I said she was a pretty bird, but too big.

"Oh," she said, "I do wish I was a bird, to fly singing all day over the green fields, and up the blue sky; for ever flying, and singing, and glad."

"But the birds are not always flying, and singing, and glad. When the snow and the cold winds come, their lodging is on the cold, cold ground."

"I suppose," she said, looking queerly solemn, "nobody, or bird can be glad for ever."

It was about that time that the following dialogue occurred. Her father and mother were the speakers as they sat at tea.

"The morn is the skule quarter-day, and Mrs. Archibald will be wantin' the fees. What for are we hauding Lizzie at the skule? She's been lang eneuch there. I'm minded tae dae wi'oot the servant lass. Lizzie can mind the bairn and sweep aboot."

"No, no," said Mowat; "Lizzie's not a strong child. She's best at school for a while yet."

"I only gat three winters at the skule masel. Ye think naething o' the meat and wages o' the lass, forbye the skule fees, though ye're aye hard up for siller."

"Oh, we can't help that. I want Lizzie to get a little more schooling. It won't hurt her, and—bother the fees! I often spend more in a foolish way, wife."

"Nae twa doots about that, gudeman. Yer drams at the public wad pay mony skule-fees, but ye'll no

think o' me toilin', and scrapin', and warkin' ma fingar banes bare; but ye'll 'bather' the fees."

"Come, come, my dram has nothing to do with this. The lassie is getting on well and is a good counter. She's not fit for much work."

"I suppose ye're to mak' a leddy o' the mason's dochter? In my day faithers haed mair sense."

"Whatever I want in the way of seuse, I often wish that my wife's tongue was more civil;" said the mason, as he got up with his face very red, and closed the conversation by going out. I daresay he went off to the inn; at least, after such bouts with his shrewish wife, he often did go there, thus vainly and falsely compensating himself for his wife's want of sympathy or her reckless speech. Certainly this mother of Lizzie would have scanty apprehension of, and no sympathy at all for Lizzie's fancy of flying and singing all day up the blue sky and over the green fields. Yet in many respects Mrs. Mowat was a true woman; full of a stern sense of duty; rigidly discharging herself of every duty to husband and children and all around her in the scrimp and stinted measure of her nature; always most thrifty and careful in housewifery; hating dust and uncleanliness as deadly sin; and most meritorious in scourings of floor and platter. The pity was, that instead of softening life and its duties with love, her hardness and coldness chilled her most tender actions. Lizzie's gladness could not be for ever.

At the northern end of the village there was a small

market-garden, open to the field, of which, indeed, it was formerly a part; and in the field and beside the garden stood a tumble-down old cottage, partly roofed with tiles, partly with dilapidated thatch. A portion of the walls was apparently propped up by rough old deals. The ivy climbed green over the roof, and hid chinks and crannies in the thatch, while over the deal wall fragrant honeysuckle clustered in rich profusion, together beautifying the crumbling old place. At the end of the cottage was a cowshed of similar frail construction; and beyond that a heap of compost and two or three old glass frames. This was "Black's Nursery," in the nomenclature of the village. But Black was dead many years ago, and it was his widow who now rented the field, making a narrow living by the sale of milk, yielded by her cow fed on the field, and of the crops of cabbages, shalots, and other vegetables, which with patient labour she won from the garden-plot. Thus she had fed herself and her only child, now a boy of sixteen years, often barely enough, sometimes with an anxious heart before rent-day, but always with a faithful courage and a patient gentle soul. She sold of her milk a daily pint to the family of Mowat the mason, and William Black, her boy, delivered it every morning.

Now that boy engrossed the widow's soul. She was tender of him as the apple of her eye; and her one absorbing desire was, that so common in Scotch mothers, that her William should be a minister. For this she struggled, keeping him steadily at school, sacrificing her

evening cup of tea, contenting herself with dry bread when there was demand for the whole milk of her cow; for the fees and books were heavy charges on her since the boy had come to learn such unwonted things as Greek and Latin. On his part, the boy took kindly to his lessons and made progress. In the long summer mornings he was often up at four, getting up his fifty lines of Virgil or his Æsop, before the cow was milked, and he was sent out with the milk-pail. Nor did it ruffle the dignity of the young scholar so to go forth. He had in him much of the humble courage and enduring spirit of his mother.

Thus it was that Lizzie Mowat knew Willie Black. He was the boy who brought the milk for her porridge. Occasionally, too, he brought her a flower from the garden; a rose sometimes, sometimes a spray of honeysuckle, sometimes of the few other flowers that grew in it tended by himself. And Lizzie was always gentle with the pleasant boy. Was she not always gentle? And in her childish way she had long ago called him "Billie B.," and she used to rhyme "Billie B., Billie B., he brings milk to me," and so on. But that was in younger days. Now Willie often looked into the sweet face of the little girl, and lost himself in the soft blue of her eyes. There was a long distance between the daughter of the enterprising mason and "the milk-boy," as Mrs. Mowat called him. Yet often, after staring into Lizzie's eyes as he delivered his little flower he would return uncomfortably to his Virgil and

Sallust, and have difficulty in settling down to address "Patres conscripti."

Mrs. Mowat had her way. Unbendingly persistent, she always, in domestic matters, had her way in the end, changing the mason's purpose, or ignoring it. The servant lass was dismissed, and Lizzie was charged with the bulk of her duties—the sweeping of the floors, the washing of dishes, the scouring of the uncarpeted floors, and the entire management and nursing of "baby Johnnie," now three years old, but feeble and sickly, scarcely able yet to put his legs under him; "delicate" they said he was. Lizzie, thus, had to lay down her books, and to abandon the conquest of the compound rule of three, which she was beginning to comprehend. Instead of books and sums came sharp lessons from her querulous mother in the scrubbing of floors and the wiping of dishes. She had been wont, under and up in the apple tree, to sing such little ditties as she had picked up, either from Mrs. Archibald at school, or from her playmates. But now indoors her mother objected to singing. "Sangs," she said, "are the weans o' idleness. A singin' tradesman has aye a cauld hearth and a dirty hoose. Nae lass o' mine 'll forget she's no a mavie while under my han's." Thus, while the soul of the little girl was longing for the blue sky and green fields, and to vent itself in bursts of song, she was held to scrubbing and dusting, and to urge her to exertion she had promises of cookery to be learned. Mrs. Mowat had a faculty for making work, and Lizzie was

fully occupied from early morning "till after the tea-dishes were washed." No doubt, some days and most evenings she was sent "out with the bairn," and then had leave to wander at her will, through the green lanes and by the hedgerows. But wearied and crushed with work, sore from her mother's acrid tongue, and freighted with the heavy boy in her arms, what pleasure had she in sky or grassy lane? None; not even in the tidiest of sun-bonnets, nor the prettiest of print frocks to be seen in the village, with which it was the pride of her mother that she should always go forth. But a sweet rosebud, or a cluster of carnations, now brought to her by Billie B., appeared more pleasant than heretofore. Put in water and placed in the window, the flowers were full of goodness and beauty; and Lizzie often turned to them and took courage when her mother was keenest for work, or sharpest with her words. Strange, was it not, that the mother never suspected an insidious spirit in the flowers, and did not rend them as evil?

In August William Black won all the senior prizes in the parish school; and the minister who presided at the examinations declared he was proud of the boy, and that if he continued in welldoing the parish would have credit through him. Then the widow confided to the minister her heart's desire to send the boy to college, whereat the worthy man smiled and shook his head. She was not discouraged. She had had a brother, she told him, long since dead, as friendless as her Willie, who went out like a stripling from a shepherd's hut, and

had won a bursary in contest with Goliaths at Aberdeen College. Why should Willie not do as much? The minister said that might happen once. He wot not of the deep enthusiasm of the widow, nor that her spirit had entered into her son, nor did he gauge the lad's capability or power of will. Thenceforth the widow would no more send her son out with the milk, and went forth with it herself; while he, recognising the responsibility of his seventeenth year, toiled on unceasingly at his books, now his own tutor, but making occasional reference to the old schoolmaster, whose curriculum he had finished. There, in the cottage, under the red tiles and the ivy, by the little window embowered in the honeysuckle, he plodded on day after day, preparing himself for the battle of life, proud of the title of "student" bestowed on him by his mother, mindful of the things and terms of her dead brother; and although anxious ever as to his preparedness, Willie, withal, was contented and happy.

The widow on her daily round with the milk saw the sweet girl, Lizzie Mowat, and opened her heart towards her, seeking to take her into its warmth and tenderness. If her own little girl, whom God had taken so early, had been spared, would she have been beautiful and gentle as Lizzie? She thought she would. What daughterless mother of a dead girl-child would not think so? And the soil-bedaubed woman yearned towards the girl as she heard the sharp tones of her mother, commenting on the scouring or the dusting of

the door-mat. The widow also brought flowers in token of amity.

"They are very pretty; thank you, thank you."

"Will missie not come to see William's annuals? Baby can see the cow in its own little house, and perhaps get a cup of milk."

And the sickly boy said, "Yes, yes, Lizzie, take me."

So one bright afternoon Lizzie turned into the field with her burden, and the little dog barked, and the widow came out to call off the doggie. She warmly welcomed the girl, and took the little boy with smiles and caresses, and went into the old cottage with him, followed by her visitor.

"My! there is Billie B. at his books."

The visitor sat down as invited, but was instantly up again examining the books—books of Latin, and books of Greek, and books with curious plates that were not pictures, and full of figures. Of all these she could make nothing; but on the table she found the "Queen's Wake," and the first line she read struck the secret chord of her soul—"Bonny Kilmeny gaed up the glen."

The annuals were admired, and a nosegay gathered; the feeble child crowed at the cow, and was set on its back, and handled its horns, and drank a cupful of its milk; and Lizzie went home with her burden and her book. It was a pleasant hour, for which, through the cheerfulness and gentleness of the widow and her son, she had forgot her daily task of work and the shrill voice of her mother. And from the book her mind

found a new pleasure. Kilmeny and fairy life were a new revelation. True, she had had some inkling of fairydom, but coupled with vague fears. Now a world of pleasant purity and most pleasant sadness was opened to her, pure and beautiful, and in harmony with her own strange fancies; and she often wished herself there when her mother scolded. And she dreamed of it under the apple-tree at dewy morning before her mother was up; and again down the lanes and in the wood when she went forth with Johnnie; and again under the tree in the twilight, when the shadows aided her strange imaginings. The old tumble-down cottage of the widow, too, took some new colouring from her dreams. Was it not in fairyland, and full of fairy promptings and light and brightness? And week after week found her with her weakly charge, sitting in the cottage with Billie B., or loitering on the grass-plot admiring the silky-skinned cow, which undoubtedly had much of fairy in it too. The widow loved the girl; and William did not grumble although interrupted in his study.

The apples had disappeared from the trees, the flowers had mostly faded from bank and hedge, even phantasy was fading in chill nights and frosty mornings. October had come, and William Black must go forth to meet fate in the bursaries' competition at Aberdeen. And Aberdeen was so far away as to seem to the widow and her friend Lizzie, and to the lad too, wrapped in the mystery of all lands unknown. He was going pro-

vided with one solitary pound note, the charge of which was an anxious affair, as serious almost as the hazards of the competition. With the pound he was to defray his passage from Inverwick to Aberdeen, 5s., for he travelled "in the steerage;" 1s. 6d. for the porterage of his box from the steamer to the Auld-toun; 5s. 6d. to cover his lodgings and food through the competition-week; and the balance was to freight him home if God prospered him not. Thus was his scrip scrimply furnished. He had not two coats. Often did the widow urge him to beware of thieves; as also of a certain wicked porter at Aberdeen, who there had defrauded the scholar's uncle on his first landing. The fraud lay in charging half-a-crown instead of 1s. 6d. for the carriage of the lad's trunk—a shameful and nefarious wrong, regard being had to the value and paucity of the student's shillings.

Lizzie bade William Black good-bye, and hoped he would win a big bursary, and not come back for long; and he, looking into her sweet face, fancied he was certain of success; and her sweet smile haunted him all through the dull dropping night, as he sat beside his mother in the carrier's cart to Inverwick, or walked by the cart-side to shake off the drowsiness that crept on him at times. And at early morning he went on board the steamer with his mother's blessing and the pound intact, and "went down into the sea" and was sick. But he won no bursary in the competition; and, I doubt not, he wept bitter tears for his discomfiture. He came

home very humble and shame-faced, feeling much as if he had committed manifold crimes. His mother met him at Inverwick. She also was sadly dispirited; but again she blessed her son, and thanked God who had restored him to her; and dully, drearily, they took their way home, all their high hopes vanished, the black night through which they wearily trudged seeming a true figure of their blighted prospects. The delivery of the milk next morning was a sore task to the stricken widow, who shrunk from the lukewarm sympathy expressed for "her laddie's failure." But to Lizzie she brought a monthly rose, "the last flower of their garden;" and said, "Willie was very dowie and downcast, and might be encouraged a bit if Miss Mowat would kindly see him."

But when the widow was gone, Mrs. Mowat broke out, "I'll no lat ye gang traiking aifter the lazy neer-do-weel. Widow Black 'll fin' oot her mistake afore she dees, breedin' up a lad to idleness and book nonsense, instead o' makin' him dig and delve. If the lazy lout was mine, I'd gar him wark I'se warran' ye. Ne'er a fut o' ye'll gang near.—Deil ha'e ye! Canna ye see the parritch-pat forenent your een, but be skailling the meal that gait, ye senseless hizzie!" and she shoved her daughter in anger from the porridge-making.

So Lizzie Mowat did not see William Black on his return, and the widow, offended, did not again invite her. And, after a few weeks, William went to teach

in a respectable family in a distant parish. "God had opened a door for him," the widow said, both in pride and gratitude.

It was August of the following year when he returned to the village. He had grown into a handsome lad, and was well dressed, and had the carriage and bearing of a "gentleman;" so all the villagers thought. In truth he was a comely lad; and his simple dress, bought with part of the gains of his nine months' teaching, looked well indeed. The widow was inordinately proud of him, and no doubt hugged him often in maternal transports in being thus restored to her. He was to stay till October, and then again to venture to Aberdeen. Mrs. Mowat and her daughter saw him at church. He too saw Lizzie. She had grown into a young woman, but she was thin and pale, and her face lacked that animation which had shone in her smile into the student's heart when last he saw her.

Mrs. Mowat was furious in her abuse of the "upstart gerd'nar."

"Gude save us!" she said, "I cudna mak oot wha the callant was, wi' his braw suit o' blacks, an' carryin' a numbrella no less—springan' oot o' the dunghill lik' ane o' his faither's rhubbrubs," and so on she railed.

The mason bade her hold her peace.

"There's much to be praised both in the widow and her son. If you have the sense of a mother, you'll bring up my boys much the same way. But you'll never do it. You'll gird them to carry and build, and

grind their young lives out of them, as you're doing now to Lizzie."

"Gude save the man's judgment, and mine tae!" she hissed. "If it wisna for ma thrift and ma thrivan', and the bawbees I brocht ye, whaur wad ye be the day? But o' coorse, o' coorse, ye're nae behadden tae prudence or thrift or raison. Na, na; and A'm, tae be sure, grindan' Lizzie's life oot, 'cause she's no lat gang traikin after the lik' o' this upstart callant. And, nae doot, ye're sair hadden doon tae, puir man, that ye're nae lettan be in the public ilka nicht o' yer life! But dinna ye lose yer poor raison a'thegither. I'll sune be oot o' yer road, an' I wish I was, to yer great relief—yer great relief."

At this stage the mason, as usual, took himself off from the contest and the house, leaving the woman raging. Such scenes were not unfrequent. Lizzie, poor thing, sat silent and pale; but, as soon as she could without challenging remark, she went to her little crib upstairs, where she had a quiet cry. When she had recovered composure and bathed her eyes, and prepared to return to the sitting-room, she found herself saying, "I wish, I wish he may get a big bursary, and lots of prizes, and be a gentleman. I do wish it, poor Billie B." It is really a dangerous game for mothers to rail beyond reason against promising and interesting young men.

A few evenings thereafter, it happened that the mason was sent for to the inn by no less important a

functionary than the Earl's factor, and employed to estimate the cost of building a bridge and approaches on the new avenue to the castle; and he was specially enjoined to forward the estimate by the next evening. And the plans and specifications having been delivered to Mowat, the factor entertained him with a glass of toddy. But Mowat stayed after the factor was gone, his friend James Moffat, cattle-dealer at Braefoot, being at the inn, and increased his quantity of drink by several glasses, and then went home to his wife in the highest spirits and at a late hour, elated by the drink, and by this testimony to his ability implied in the factor's business. Mrs. Mowat had always sense enough at such times to hold her peace, it being dangerous, as she knew, to assail the mason when in liquor. Besides, she always had compensation when next morning she attacked him, dispirited after his carouse, and conscious of wrong-doing. On this occasion the morning brought the usual sequel—the mason downcast and apologetic; he "could not get away from Moffat, having to talk to him of the renewal of some bills," while his wife was sharp, shrill, abusive, vexatious, and triumphant, and Lizzie sad and pale—paler than usual. The mason at length unfolded the plans and papers, and sat down to work, but found himself utterly incompetent for the necessary calculations. He tried various expedients to bring himself into working condition—all in vain were bitters, salt herrings, and strong tea. He gave it up at length, and went out to bespeak the aid of the school-

master, his usual assistant in difficult calculations. The schoolmaster could do nothing for him till evening, but recommended him to William Black, the student, an excellent arithmetician and writer, as the old man alleged; and Mowat directed his steps to Widow Black's cottage. William readily agreed to help Mr. Mowat in any way in his power, and noon found the mason and the student in the mason's parlour, hard at the plans and specifications. The mason was delighted with his assistant's ready figures and neat handwriting, and declared that he was born "a ready reckoner." The lad went home to dinner at two, but was speedily back after his meal; five o' clock saw the work finished, neatly copied out and despatched, and William Black "must stay to tea."

Lizzie's heart had all that day been throbbing with pride and pleasure, because William Black was serviceable to her father, and she had smiled her sweetest smile when she brought water and glasses to the parlour in obedience to her father's call.

"How are you, Miss Mowat?" said the young man, rising from the papers to shake hands with her.

"Nicely," was all she answered, but her heart was full of tender and kindly words; and her smile came to him like one of his early dreams of literary distinction and collegiate success.

But Mrs. Mowat sourly sneered all day. "Ma husban' has surely gane gyte, when it is a schuleboy he has to guide his wark. Ma certy, if it's on the like

o' him that brig-buildin' is to depen', brig-buildin' wad better gang out o' fashan."

But when the mason, in his most peremptory way, said to her, "Master Black is going to take tea with us. Get the nicest cakes and some eggs, and have them ready in the parlour in half-an-hour. We're going for a walk"—she received the order in silence. They had scarcely left the lobby, however, when her hands were upraised and her eyes contorted, and she was exclaiming, "Set us a' up! The parlour na less for the gerdnar's son. The man's dementit." She obeyed the order, notwithstanding, and the appointed time found the mason, his wife, and guest in the parlour, and the tea-tray duly garnished, but provided with only three cups.

Lizzie brought in the tea-pot and set it down, and was leaving the room when the student spoke out. "You are not going away, Miss Mowat? I hoped to have tea with you; I won't enjoy it otherwise."

The girl was standing grasping the handle of the door-lock, blushing and "like to drop upon the floor" with the vexatious thought that the lad saw "how she was kept under at home." Her mother screwed her hard face, but did not speak.

Mowat said, "Bring a cup for yourself, Lizzie dear. Let the bairns take care of one another—no fear of them for a while."

When she was gone for the cup, and William had said that she had grown very tall and was thin and pale, Mowat took pains to explain, while his wife had enough

to do to suppress her anger, that Lizzie was needed for the children and the house, as her mother thought it right to do without a servant lass, much against his (the mason's) will, for he knew that Lizzie was delicate, and that it was not the right thing to make her a household drudge.

Mrs. Mowat could not forbear muttering, "Ye're the man that never thocht it wrang for me to be a household drudge, or ony ither drudge."

But Lizzie came in and they had tea, and William Black chatted and made fun, and mollified even Mrs. Mowat, so far as that was possible. And in course of his talking, he trysted to walk out next evening at four with Lizzie and Johnnie, and the parents heard it and did not object. When the little party broke up, I fear that Lizzie in her heart was calling him "Billy B.," and rhyming it with little words of love, the silly girl. And he—his head was turned by her beauty and gentleness. So they met and walked occasionally thereafter, until October came again, and William again went by sea to Aberdeen, this time a cabin passenger. And he achieved great success. Was it not in the Inverwick newspapers? Did not Mrs. Mowat, with a grudging heart and disappointed grin, read it herself? "William Black took the second bursary of the year;" and as the papers truly observed, he thus had beaten the whole world except the first bursar, for the whole world had been invited to compete. Mowat was delighted, for he had come to think highly of the lad; and he went to the nursery to

congratulate the widow; who, now seeing of the travail of her soul, received his compliments with a courtesy proper to the mother of so distinguished a son. Lizzie also stole up to the cottage to say how glad she was; but the widow chilled all the girl's warmth of feeling, saying, "It's a fine thing, Miss Mowat, for him to be successful, poor lad! and it's happy I am to have such a son; but, in the time of his adversity for ten months, you never darkened my door." But when she saw the whiteness that paled the lassie's cheeks, she more kindly added, "I'm not angry though, Miss Lizzie; I'm lonely and want you to come to see me, and Willie will be pleased to hear you came just now." Lizzie could not tell why it was that she had not come —nor say that her hard and grudging mother had forbidden her visits.

In November little Johnnie fell ill, and his illness was even unto death, but he lingered until the long dreary haunted nights were longest and dreariest in December. In his illness they watched him for weeks, thinking every night might be his last. And as he still lingered, Mrs. Mowat made her arrangements; she would watch from the usual family hour of rest, ten o'clock, until three of the morning. Lizzie was then to be aroused to watch till daylight, with strict injunctions to call the household if there were signs of the coming change. The mason remonstrated.

"It is not fair to make a poor child, who never saw death, watch for its coming in this way. We have

plenty means, woman. Get some of the neighbours to watch the boy. Don't put it on Lizzie."

"I'll no hae a hirelin' to watch me deein' bairn."

Nor did she; for the mason had to go away to a distant job, and was absent for a few nights, and when he returned he found his wife's arrangement in operation. The father said—

"Lizzie, dear, this is hard on you."

But she meekly answered—

"No, father; I feel no hardship, if only I could ease or strengthen our poor dear Johnnie."

And she sat through the eiry, weary mornings, the chill, shadowy, shivering mornings, watching the brother who lay pining, now restless, now dwining, in moanful slumber; and she grew thinner and paler as the mornings passed. But one morning, as the wind surged in fitful howls along the snow-clad village street, and the drifting snow beat on the pattering creaking window, there was a crash and a heavy fall within the sick-room. Lizzie's mother had put her up as usual, and had left her, and had undressed, and getting into bed had awakened her husband. They heard their daughter's footsteps in the room over-head, as if going from the fire-place to the sick-bed—then came the crashing fall. Husband and wife sprang wildly out of bed and rushed upstairs. They found poor Lizzie stretched on the floor, apparently lifeless. The father raised her in his strong arms, and put water on her face and palms, but she revived not; and he broke out in a

burst of grief, calling on God to help him. His wife came with whisky to rub on her brows; but he, with clenched teeth, ordered her away.

"Woman," he said, "this is your handiwork. My loving daughter! You have crushed her to death."

But it was not death just yet. She revived, and the doctor came to her. He said Mowat was quite right. She had certainly been overtasked and overstrained. She must have entire relief; plenty of nourishment and stimulants in the first instance, and afterwards amusements, if possible. It was a nervous ailment, he thought. He could detect no serious affection; but too surely Lizzie had sat in the region and valley of the shadow of death, and the shadow had chilled her young life at its roots. But yet she bloomed awhile with increased beauty and fragrance.

CHAPTER II.

FEBRUARY found Lizzie still feeble, but enjoying all the luxury of convalescence. Her father daily came to her with kisses and kind words; her little brothers ministered to her assiduously; even Mrs. Mowat was softened, and never spoke above a shrill whisper, being now fully aware of the evil that her short-sightedness had wrought. The mother's grudging and niggardly housewifery had never been the result of necessity, and the mason was now in the full tide of prosperity. That morning's misery, her lifeless daughter, her husband's bitter words, the doctor's distinct statement of the cause, and his peremptory injunctions for the girl's future treatment, had completely routed the mother's notions of thrift and economy. Now Lizzie was lying indolently on the sofa, wrapped up in rugs. The sofa was a new one, bought specially that Lizzie might lie on it before the blazing parlour fire. It was in February—the month of valentines—and was there anything surprising that so pretty a girl as Lizzie Mowat should receive a valentine? Yet one delivered to her now did excite her a little, I fear, even before she had extracted it from its embossed envelope. The post-mark was "Aberdeen." It must be from Billie B.: she knew no one in Aberdeen excepting Billie B. Trembling a little, she opened it. It contained not a painted goddess, but a perfumed note containing the following:—

"Of love I am declining, I
Can, in my sad predicament,
Nor eat, nor sleep, nor aught but sigh,
For feverish feelings in me pent.
A restless, undefined desire;
Fear freezing cold, and hope's fierce fire;
And fancies, wild beyond control,
Cheat my weak sense and craze my soul.

"And thus it is when dawning day,
To the black clouds piled o'er and o'er
Gives feeble tinge of darkling gray,
Floating my half-oped eyes before,
An angel form from out the gloom,
Stoops o'er my bed, flits through my room;
Then melting in the brightening day,
Smiles in my face and flits away.

"Oppressed I seek the dawn. The fair
Flowers greet with grateful tears the sun:
The lark sings joyous songs; the air
Wafts indolent the perfume won
From fragrant hill and dale. I ope
My soul to all this joy and hope
Of morn; but downcast then I see
Such joy and hope are not for me.

"Shunning my thoughts, I seek the place
Where busiest crowds shall pass me by.
With heedless eye and reckless pace
I go—but I unconsciously
Gaze on a female form—and, see!
My loved one's face appears to me:
I know 'tis but a vision fair,
Yet, phantom-struck, I stand and stare.

"Thus haunted and excited, I,
With aching heart and jumbled brain,
To learned books for refuge fly,
But here am victimised again!
My books I cannot read; I hear
Low silvery tones pulse in my ear.
In gentle love-note thrills the voice,
And I, in mid-day dream, rejoice.

"The tender eve; the pensive air
With perfume thick; the cooing dove;
The stillness of the earth; the fair
Stars' gentle shimmer, cannot move
From me my mind's turmoil. My heart
Still beats with fitful pause and start;
And, in the beauty of the hour,
My passion ever swells the more.

"Devotion surely will repress
The surging of my troubled soul—
I bow me at the throne of grace,
Ah, no! it is beyond control.
I think of love divine—but 'Love'
Banishes thoughts of grace above,
And rears an idol and a shrine
Vested with grace more than divine.

"Drink, drink, my soul, the philtered cup,
Which love-born fancy holds to thee;
And keenly gulp the opiate hope
Of joy—which yet perchance may be—
Till bounding heart and reeling brain
Give me my visions o'er again;
While sleepless night and feverish day
Consume my dreamy life away.

"B. B."

It was only an exercise of the student, as any one might have seen from its struggling yet ambitious lines and broken metres, and its total inapplicability to the circumstances of the writer and recipient, and the season of the year. But to poor Lizzie it was a sign and a seal of the fact that he was dying for love of her.

"Poor Billie B.!" "dear Billie B.!" she said over and over again, as she thought of him consuming in his strong and burning affection. And she must needs write to him, if only some little word.

"Just one line," she said; and she got her pen and her paper, and betook herself to the unwonted task. What was she to say? She found she could write nothing, and still in her heart and on her lips were these words of love—"Poor Billie B.!" "dear Billie B.!" and she sat and pondered and repeated them until there grew on the paper before her

"Dear Billie B.—L. M."

Then she folded the sheet of paper awkwardly, leaving its tough folds uncrushed; and she addressed it in a large, unformed, and scrawling hand, "Mr. William Black, King's Colledge, Aberdeen;" for so the word "college" commended itself to her suppositions of orthography. So far she had overcome her difficulties, but how was it to be posted? She had no penny. She sat tired in mind and feverish in body. She could not ask her mother for a penny, or to get the letter posted for her. She had not yet forgotten the old scowl and scoff, and still dreaded them. As for her father, why,

her cheeks just then were crimsoned with maidenly blushes, as she thought of her father and his loud laugh, so kindly but so mocking withal. While thus she lay tossing and excited on her sofa, her father and James Moffat from Braefoot came in, and after enquiries as to her health, Moffat sat down, and the mason produced his bottle, and they had a dram and bread and cheese from the cupboard; and they fell to talking of bills and renewals of bills, and of sundry contracts in which Moffat stood as surety for performance by the mason. Then it occurred to Lizzie, irritated by their loud voices, that Mr. Moffat might post her letter. So when her father went for water to mix with their second dram, she took the opportunity to tender the missive to Moffat.

"It is just a shabby valentine," she said, "because William Black sent me one. Will you kindly post it? I don't want mother to know."

She looked very lovely in her blushes as the cattle-dealer gazed hard at her, and said quietly, "Yes, yes, Miss Lizzie; A'll post it for ye. But if ye're thinkin' o' the lads, just haud oot ower yonder to the Braefut, an' ye'll hae a gude steadin' ony day ye like."

His eyes were steady, and earnest, and grey, as they always were. Poor Lizzie fell back on her pillows speechless; but speech was not needed, for her father came back with the water, and Moffat slipped the letter into his pocket, and after their second dram they went out. That evening the doctor looking in to see

how it was with his patient, found her in worse state than a month before.

Now James Moffat was a bachelor, forty-six years of age, tall and gaunt of figure, very straight brown hair, grey eyes, large mouth drawn straight across his thin and tawny face, with a protuberant nether jaw and chin partially, but almost constantly, wrapped up in a red handkerchef with white spots. Starting in life with some knowledge of cattle, and a ten-pound note hardly won as a ploughman, he had gone on dealing in cattle, "trocking" at the first, but dealing extensively as he won cash and credit, until now it was reputed he "was worth thousands." Certainly he was tacksman of a large farm at Braefoot, which had long been mismanaged and well nigh run-out, but which he had well stocked and cultivated, enjoying all the advantage of a moderate rent. With much shrewdness in his calling, and a capacity for keen and hard bargain-making, he combined a frank and open-handed manner, and a temperate good-nature. Thus, while he had made money by his hard dealing, he had not refused the use of his name on the bills or obligations of his acquaintance who needed temporary assistance. He had often helped Mowat the mason in this way—so often, indeed, that it had become a thing of course that when Mowat undertook a contract in which a "cautioner" was required, James Moffat, tacksman at Braefoot, was the usual security. Had James Moffat, who had gone on living a bachelor life in the

dilapidated steading at Braefoot, eating sparingly and in discomfort his ill-prepared meals, ever thought of matrimony, or ever looked on this puling girl Lizzie as a possible spouse? I cannot tell. I believe not until that luckless little note, which was meant to certify another of her affection, was slipped into his hand; and then, certainly, it did occur to him that Lizzie Mowat was a pretty girl—very pretty; in fact, such a girl as he might be proud to see at his side at kirk or market; and, with his prompt business habits, he no sooner thought so than he resolved to have her for his wife. Failure in this never occurred to him; and as he went homewards in the drizzly night he turned over and over in his mind all the advantage and comfort and pleasure of the marriage. To do him justice, too, he thought of her weak health, and pleased himself with the notion of petting and pampering "the dear lassie;" and as he got under his thatched roof, and into his dirty smoky room, he thought how nice it would be to come home of nights to that pretty one; and, then and there, he resolved to have a new house.

Next morning the visions and resolves of the preceding night were still strong in James Moffat, and while he went about, seeing after the ploughmen, and through the feeding byres, he was busily occupied with thoughts of Lizzie, and all that he should do and enjoy when she was his wife. He made up his mind that his scheme—not his "wooing"—he had no notion of wooing—should make progress before the day was

done. He gulped down his porridge and ate his eggs earlier than usual, while he complained loudly of his servant lass, blaming her in the most snappish way; and then he went briskly off towards the village, feeling much as he usually did when he set out to conclude an important bargain, with prospect of much profit. Ten o'clock found him at the mason's door. Now, as he approached the village it occurred to him that his errand was not precisely of the usual matter of bargain. "Lizzie was not a quey to be sold off-hand to the first dealer that offered;" so he thought; and he had a dim perception of difficulties ahead as he traversed the long village street, and actually his heart was beating when he knocked with his stick at the door. While he stood waiting till some one came to him, a mocking devil suggested that the true thing to do was to ask if they had a quey named Lizzie to sell. But the servant lass came. "The maister's out, and Mrs. Mowat is washin'," said she; "but ye can see her if ye lik'; and the farmer went into the kitchen. Mrs. Mowat was up to the elbows in soap-graith rubbing away briskly.

"Deed, Maister Mowfat, ye're gey early in the toun; and yet ye're late for the gude man. He's aff to the workmen at Knockdry twa hours syne."

"I cudna bide at hame," he said, "I'm downright miserable yonder. Last night the rain cam' in through the roof o' ma auld biggin', and nearly soakit me in ma bed; and the smoke the morn was eneuch to shut oot

the daylight. I maist think I ate soot-stour for porridge. It's i' ma thrapple yet."

"Ochanee," groaned Mrs. Mowat; "ye're in a bad way, man."

"Am jist that, and am no mindit to stan' it langer. The Earl is bound to build gin I quarry and drive, and I'll no stan' it langer; so I cam' to tell the mason to mak' me plans for a new hoos."

"Ye're quite right, man. Why shud ye be burrowin' in a bothy when ye hae the ways and the means, Maister Mowfat, why shud ye? Ma man 'll be gey weel pleased tae dae the plans and the wark baith, and it'll be weel his pairt, I ken, tae dae them baith weel and cannily."

While she was speaking, the farmer was thinking of the little girl, and it was in his heart to say, "Mrs. Mowat, will you give her to me," but he could not say it; the words stuck somewhere down his throat, while the same mocking devil again whispered in his ear—"Say you want to buy their white quey Lizzie; say it, man;" and this so confused his brain that he did not note what Mrs. Mowat said, and he felt himself perspiring, and took off his hat and wiped his forehead, and so went off, saying "the room was gey hot." At the door he met the doctor, who spoke to him. Then he recollected that he had not inquired for Miss Lizzie, and he asked the doctor how she was. The doctor said she was far from strong and was very nervous, and that he did not expect she would be stronger until she went out a little.

"For instance, in such a morning as this, a drive would do her good."

"A drive!" said Moffat.

"Yes, it would brace her up, no doubt," said the doctor.

"They have no machine."

"None," said the doctor; "and that is just my difficulty," and he went into the house.

"No machine! Faith, I'll buy ane!" and forthwith a brilliant vision arose to him of a one-horse dogcart conveying him and the object of his desires in pleasant speed over roads unknown.

He went out into the village street, and was entirely conscious of his failure, for the imp was telling him that "he hadna pluck to buy or even bid for the bonny quey." He walked down to the inn, but refused the landlord's offered dram; and by-and-by he found himself at Braefoot again. There he saddled his horse, and was presently on the way to the factor's. He found the factor, and told him he was unable to live longer in that hovel of a dwelling-house at his farm. He would procure a plan, and quarry and cart the stones, if the proprietor made arrangements to build. The factor was an easy man, of pleasant modes, conversant with the lives of men like Moffat.

"What ails you, James, at the house? You have grudged the labour for eight years and remained in the old house; what has set you against it now?" Moffat repeated the story of the rain and the smoke.

"Nonsense!" said the factor, "the house was not worse last night than many nights before. Are ye thinking of marriage, James?"

The cattle-dealer blushed—"Weel, if I did," he said, "it's no afore time, sir. If I got a richt lass tae tak' me, I guess I'd be a hantle better for't."

Whatever might be his object, the factor told him that the Earl was bound to build, on Moffat providing the materials, and that arrangements would be made without delay. Another hour found Moffat at the Lowes, bargaining for Mr. Morris's two-wheeled dog-cart, which was to be discarded for a four-wheeled conveyance. He bought it for £12, and then he rode again to the village, entirely satisfied with the progress of the day, and silencing the imp that kept upbraiding him with cowardice in the matter of the quey. He had a dram at the inn this time, and then went home, chuckling in his heart at the train of circumstances he had arranged. He had distinctly set his heart on an object, and dimly fancied a way to its possession. Alas! poor man! are your dreams of happiness, and willingness to do aught to win it, anything other than a miserable storing up of grief and bitterness? Lizzie's coffin-lid too plainly told us that it was so.

William Black was in the chemistry class-room when the janitor brought the billet which Moffat had posted, and which, it will be remembered, was addressed to the college, and not to his lodgings. He was seated several

benches back; and so the letter was handed from one quizzing youngster to another, till it was put into his hand with the remark, "Gulielme Niger, a billet-doux from your washerwoman's daughter;" and there was a general titter.

The writing might have supported the impertinent allegation, and Black, proud and sensitive, blushed as he thrust it into his pocket. When he got home and opened it, did his heart warm and glow while he read the little words "Dear Billie B.," as my heart did, nay, does now, as I repeat them? I fear not. Success and a little experience had greatly altered the lad. He had been to tea in several houses, and had actually danced and supped at a reverend professor's. He was great in debating societies. But all that had not contributed so much to the change as his friendship with Miss Polson, who owned half of College Bounds, and lived alone with her maid in the midst of the students, and gave tea-parties to the young men, and patronised them, and, it was said, suffered the smoking of her masculine friends in her apartments. She had made the acquaintance of Black, and the other night had had him to her house, and in the innocency and frankness of her thirty years had sat on his knee and called him a handsome fellow, and so forth; and had injected poison into his heart, and so disordered his brain. Thus it was that my Lizzie's little words of love found no sympathetic response, but annoyed him rather; stirring up memories of the tin-pail and milk measures,

which, although not intolerable, were more pleasantly forgot.

"Billie B., forsooth!" he said. "An educated girl would have admired the verses."

And he chucked the note into his grate. But a pang shot through his heart, for, as the burning billet blazed up, he saw the sweet face of the writer in the flame; and for a moment he was Billie B. again, and for a moment, too, he felt the lovingness of the writer. The vision departed, however, with the flickering light, and all thought of it was speedily buried in his Lexicon. Lizzie, poor girl, how different it was with her! How often did she read the student's valentine, and call him by the dear name she gave him long ago! Did she kiss the lines and print them on her heart? Ah, well, we all have had our times of loving weakness. Happiest they on whose souls loving impressions are not too deeply etched.

A month and more had passed. It was early April; and Mowat sat with his friend, James Moffat, in his dwelling-place at Braefoot. They were looking over the plans of the new house, and Moffat was liberal with his grog as usual. Hitherto he had confined to his own breast his desire to wed the daughter of his friend, and his reticence had strengthened his desire, which now was almost a passion in him. The stronger it had grown, the more had he shrunk from its avowal. He had feared to approach her, and dared not mention her name. He was sorrowfully convinced that the

whispering imp spake truly, "the pretty white quey was not to be bought;" and hitherto his provision of the dogcart had had no beneficial results. He had drunk an extra glass of spirits, resolved to break the matter to the mason as one of his objects in connection with the new house, when the mason himself turned the current of his thoughts away from the revelation, by asking the use of his dog-cart on an occasional day to drive out Lizzie. The farmer's hopes were all aflame. His heart was beating so that he feared his friend would hear it. With difficulty he contrived to say, "Ye—ye're welcome tae't for the sake o' the—the lassie—but the pownie is so little used tae harness, I maun—maun drive her masel—first aince or twice."

Then it was arranged that he should be at Mowat's door next day at noon, if the day was fine. What a night of exquisite anticipation was that for Moffat! What a rich reward his foresight in the matter of the dog-cart had brought him! Wisdom in love was plainly the right thing. He would tenderly care for the girl, and would hap and screen her from every breath of wind. To have her, thus, beside him and under his protection, surely it was a foretaste of that happiness which his heart desired.

Next day, sharp at noon, he was at the mason's gate. He had driven proudly up to it, full of ardour and excitement. Mowat was at the gate, and, on the arrival of the curricle, shouted for Lizzie to come forth; and she came cloaked and wrapped up. But the horse, fretted

by the unusual harness, would not be stilled by his master's "Who-oa, who-oa," and kept plunging now forwards, now to the right, now to the left. When checked by the reins, he backed and dodged about, so that he was well-nigh into the windows of a house on the distant side of the street, when the nymph presented herself at the gate. At sight of her, Moffat, conscious that he appeared at disadvantage, plied his new whip with more force than discretion; and then the conveyance came plunging to the mason's door again, filling all with alarms or frets. With difficulty Mrs. Mowat, who had also come out, had, with many a "Losh save us, sic a brute!" got her trembling daughter seated beside the farmer; while the mason held the horse by the head. But no sooner was the beast set free than again he backed and plunged, and the mason was obliged again to seize him and to lead him along, while the village boys crowded and shouted, and all the slatternly matrons stood staring in their doorways. The mason ran so as to break the horse into a trot. When, at last exhausted, he let go the bridle, intending to climb to the back seat, the ill-conditioned brute went swiftly ahead, and he was left behind. Then Lizzie looked back, crying, "Father, father!" and saw him in the distance surrounded by the yelling boys, while the dogcart bore her and her muffled companion out of the street into the highway beyond. Now she had stipulated that her father should bear her company; and here was she carried away from him and home; and in her weak-

ness and sensitiveness she shrunk from her companion. Indeed, she was gravely discomposed. Moffat, on his part, was also "put out." He did not venture to speak. In fact, through the bad conduct of his horse and the excitement of his own feelings, he dared not speak to her, but with voice and whip he kept the horse going, and looked not to the right or left, earnestly desiring to do the driving well and safely. This he realised—his anticipated happiness on this occasion had been greatly exaggerated. On they went, each in silence digesting his or her own bitter thoughts, while the jolting of the dogcart pained the weak girl and made her head ache. But three miles of the road were soon passed over. They were at the church of Howe. Beyond it in the trees nestled the snug manse. And why did Lizzie start and utter a pained exclamation? She really was too weak for the hurry and scurry and roughness of this drive, and had been sadly jolted and pained; but they had passed two persons in the road, gaily chatting and laughing. They were William Black and Miss Rose, the minister's daughter; and perhaps Lizzie knew that Black had been at home for a week, and she had not seen him till now. Half-a-mile beyond the manse Lizzie faintly begged Moffat to return; and when he said, "Ay, jist when we get to the fut o' this brae," and cast a sidelong glance at her as he spoke, he saw her pale face wet with tears, and he wondered and sorrowed, thinking she was very ill. He stopped the horse instantly in order to return, but the untrained brute would not turn. There

was a repetition of the backing and the plunging, and Moffat had to get down and take the beast's head to turn him, and thereafter had to lead him by the bridle, for as often as he let the bridle go, intending to resume his seat, so often the beast did back or bolt, until the girl cried openly in downright fear. Thus the worthy man, in topcoat and spotted muffler, had to trudge all the weary miles back to the mason's door. Could any anticipation of happiness have turned into disappointment more vile? Moffat felt it at the time.

My good old sister and I had returned to our village home two or three days before this event, and from our cottage window we noted the circumstances of this setting out and return. We visited the little girl that afternoon, and soothed her with pleasant words, and arranged that she should drive out with us in our pony-phaeton, and be no more exposed to the rudeness of James Moffat's horse. We did not know that Moffat would regard us as the cruel means of blighting his prospects of happiness and love. But so he did look on us. For in a few days he came to regard that drive as the great event of his life. According to all ordinary reasoning, he should have felt humbled both for himself and his horse. Yet had he a sense of success and elation: had he not been with this bewitching girl for full two hours—alone with her—her sole protector and solace? It was true that he had spoken not many words to her, his longest argument having been "Wheesht! be quate, dear Lizzie. There's no fear.

A'll jist keep his heid." But it must be remembered that love can elevate a sentence even such as that into the sublimity of spiritual intercourse. True it was, also, that he had trudged on foot and perspired; but that had left a sweet sense of suffering for her sake. Whatever way it came about, there was the fact: the incidents of the day had confirmed the farmer's love, and, what was more, had, in his own opinion, put him into the position of a professed lover. What strange beings we are! Who could have suspected a curious evolvement and exquisite phase of love under the spotted comforter and greasy brown topcoat of this man of drams and cattle-dealing?

My dear old sister is an indefatigable woman, always in quest of some object on which to expend her superfluous energies and ever ready emotion. The case of Lizzie was important and providential; it gave zest to our return home; and to the young girl it was beneficial, for the quietude and gentle influences of our fireside, to which she was now daily transported, materially aided her restoration to health. She was very beautiful at that period. Slightly taller than the average size of woman, her every motion was full of natural grace. Her oval face was finely chiselled, and her transparent complexion, with a faint trace of damask on each cheek, made her lovely, even while it told of her inherent gentleness, sensitive nature, and weakness. Had I been a young man, I could—I would have loved and wooed her.

William Black came to see us soon after our return, and Lizzie was at our cottage. I fear he had postponed his visit to us, the kindly friends of his boyhood, unwilling to meet Lizzie, as he had omitted to call at the mason's house. We received him gladly, and invited him to tea on an evening soon after, and he left us much pleased with the improvement of his person and manners. That evening, my sister showed me the student's valentine, and told me she guessed the girl's deep love.

"Was a sweet young thing like Lizzie in love not the most interesting of objects?"

"Nay, old sis., I know not; I remember when you were breaking your heart for that most noble youth"—

"You are really provoking, P. F.," said she, pettishly. "with your miserable disbelief in all true affection," but here our Lizzie came cloaked and bonneted to say "good-night" to sister, and that I might escort her to her father's door. On our way thither, in the twilight, I saw a gaunt form, a man muffled and topcoated, watching our way across the street. I had no thought of Moffat, or that green jealousy was sickening his soul.

Round our tea-table we gathered some of the young gentry of the district together, with our two village friends, and I watched the tender and changeful face of Lizzie as it followed Black throughout the evening. How bright it was while they alone were our companions, before the arrival of our more distant visitors! How she drank up all the utterances of that soft voice of his! How she brightened and sparkled with smiles

at his college wit! I knew she loved him before the tea-things came. Was her love reciprocated? I could not so easily judge of that. But when our young friends were mustered, it was clear to be seen that Lizzie did not engross all the lad's thoughts. He sported with Miss Rose; he gaily dallied with Jemima Maclean; and again with Mirabel Thomson he was full of drollery and anecdote. For Lizzie he had not many words; and I was angry with him as I marked the pained expression of her sweet face. Black's college friend, Tom Rose, was unable to bring back the smiles which I had so much admired, although, captivated by her beauty, he tried hard to do it. He came to me in the window, saying she was very pretty, but very dull. I bade him send his prattling chum, Black, to her, as he seemed to have a faculty of pleasing the girls. Then Tom, in secrecy, told me the story of the lady of College Bounds, and I thought Black, with all his ability, no better than a common flirt, and utterly unworthy of Lizzie's heart. But when I looked again, and saw that the silly thing could scarce control her emotion, I knew that her heart was not in her own keeping, and my soul was grieved.

Now Moffat, filled with bitter feelings of disappointment through our arrangement to drive out the dear girl, dared not whisper his love to human ear; but he found his tongue loose in warning the mason to take care lest "that canny auld nabob was wantin' the lassie for a wife."

Mowat, however, had no jaundiced jealousy to warp his judgment on this point, and with laughter he assured his friend that the suspicion was nonsensical.

"Who could dream of marrying such a child?" he asked. "She might be his daughter."

This was no comfort to poor James, who, judging others by his own case, firmly believed that I intended matrimony. Thus, he hung about the village; but, strange to say, he avoided the mason's house, possibly with an instinctive dread, lest, within its walls, his compressed longings should burst out. He sedulously watched the outgoings and incomings of the girl; and thus I saw his tall uncouth figure many nights, when, in the gloom, I went home with Lizzie. His conduct had one result which Mowat did not calculate on: it delayed his receiving a vast amount of comfort from an unlooked-for ally and friend of his suit in the person of Lizzie's mother. That worthy matron had helped Lizzie into the dogcart to Moffat's side on the eventful day of that ride, and had witnessed, with all a mother's satisfaction, the pair drive away. She did not see her husband running, "like a gouk," at the horse's head, otherwise, possibly, the pleasure might have suffered diminution. What she saw was her daughter, cloaked and wrapped up to a portly figure, seated by the side of the man who, she knew, was both rich and kindly; and in her heart she said they "wad mak a gude couple;" and she wished her daughter so much good luck. She had thought of it and wished for it repeatedly since

then, but Moffat came not near her until the night of our tea-party. Then he came in with the mason to see a change on the plans of the house suggested by the factor. They had a dram, of course, and Mrs. Mowat joined them in the parlour. She at once went at the subject.

"I haena seed ye, Mr. Mowfat, tae thank ye for yer kindness tae ma lassie yon day. Wey, man, ye was unco carefu' o' her, walkin' hame a' yon lang road wi' her. It's jist tae a canny man like yersel that the lik o' her ought to be lippened."

"I was gey and pleased haein' it in my pooer tae drive her," said he, wiping his forehead with his hand.

"Deed, man," said she, "whan I seed ye drive aff in the braw gig thegither, I cudna help thinkan ye wad mak a richt sonsy pair, and I wish it was the case nae less."

"Hold your tongue, wife," said Mowat, peremptorily "Moffat is not a fool. He has gone through the world a deal further and quite as long as her father."

"O' coorse, o' coorse, I'm the fule; but what mair wad ony fulish woman want till yer dauchter than tae see her mistress o' the fine new hoose at Braefut, wi' a kin' man lik James Mowfat to coddle and tak care o' her? Fule, indeed!" and she went out, banging the door.

Moffat's heart bounded at the discovery of this powerful ally; but, like a wise man, he was mute for the time.

Why did Lizzie Mowat sit at her window next day all the patient expectant hours till three o'clock, peering steadily through her narrow lattice, as if anxiously waiting for the coming of some one? Early in the day she had seen James Moffat pass into the house, but his arrival did not interest her, as she sat watching still. Ah me! had she known his errand, had she known that he had come to recur to those words of her mother, to pour out his longing earnest desire to get her—Lizzie Mowat—to nourish and to cherish as his own for ever; had she heard him tell, with his dry soul staring out in those grey eyes of his, how he was building that new house solely in the hope that there she would dwell with him, and how he had bought that dogcart, in the expectation that therein he would drive her, and how his soul was not his own with longing for her; had she known that her mother was clapping the lank man's shoulder, telling him "tae keep up his heart blithely, for she wad dae ilka thing in her pooar tae get the lassie tae be his bonny bride, an' a braw bride I wot she'll be, man;" would she have been interested? Would no other feeling have aroused her poor palpitating heart than that which led her to watch there at the window with those liquid eyes of blue, intent on that dusty street? Would she not have shrunk and shrivelled like the sensitive plant which she so much wondered at in my glass-house; or, crushed by this astounding and unthought-of revelation, would she not have writhed in her spirit's anguish? Well, well, how often do we escape misery by not guessing

the evil thoughts of wife or husband, or parent or child? There she sat, merely snatching a morsel of her two o'clock dinner, lest the object of her watch should escape her. At length William Black passed by, going away from his mother's house. She had watched until he should pass by. Then she hastily dressed and went out, seeking the old cottage at the nursery.

The little dog barked, and the widow came forth and silenced it: and coldly, coldly she welcomed "Miss Mowat."

"A sight of you, Miss, might have cured my old eyes many a time through the lone months back, but an old body like me canna be looking for the company of young ladies."

The querulous tone smote Lizzie's heart more than the spoken words of reproach. She was going to say how long she had been ill and lonely and sad herself, or to aim at saying it; but the widow went on, "My young man has gone out and I kenna when he will come home." She said this stiffly, but her tone softened and her voice was broken as she proceeded. "He is much changed. He used to tell me his every outgoing, but he does not now. 'He must increase, and I must decrease,' but his mother's love is ever the same."

Then the girl sat down in the cottage unbidden, and the tears were quietly running down her cheeks. The widow saw this, wondering. "What ails you?" she said, still coldly; but the girl, with a sob, found words, "If you

knew how ill and lonely I was since Johnnie died you would not blame me."

Then the widow melted and took the maiden's hand, saying, she knew she had been ill, and feared that she must have been lonely, whatever comforts were around her. It was the lot of many women to be lonely. As for herself, all the long winter she had ailed without a comforter—her only companions the doggie and the old cow—and often she had longed for human sympathy, and pined till her son came home. Now, when he had come, he was no more the sweet all-loving boy whom she had nourished, but was self-engrossed and self-important, reckoning not his mother's heart for much among his idols; and, "Waes me!" she said, "he does whiles speak to the doggie, but he hasna gien a look to the coo." And the women were in tears together when William Black came in.

"Mother! Miss Mowat!" he said perplexed; "what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, Willie," said the widow. "I have not seen my pet lassie for weary months, and she has suffered muckle;" and they wiped up their tears while Black said, half-seriously, half-gallantly, that he must strive to comfort them both. Forthwith, as there was nothing to exhibit in the garden, he set to show Lizzie his prizes, and a number of new books—the poets chiefly—which he had brought home. And this led Lizzie to recollect his own poem, and to compliment him in her feeble way; and in downright childlikeness she told him

that after her illness it was the first thing that had filled her with new life and impulse, even while it took her heart away. Such were not her expressions. What she did say was in guileless, almost tearful little words that touched the lad's heart with their simple tenderness, while they roused his gallantry and flattered his self-esteem. So he fell into the graciousness of the moment. He would give books to Lizzie. He pointed out and read droll things to her in his books. He talked of reading and walking with her. And when she had been brought round to laugh again, and the sweet old smile, and the light of her eyes had again shone into his mind, all the old feelings, stifled within him and buried under many burdens, came forth fresh and sweet from their concealment; and he told his mother, as if it were a thing that she could have forgotten, how the little girl, Lizzie Mowat, used long ago to call a certain little boy, "Billie B.," whereat the widow smiled, lovingly in her heart regarding that little boy. Now the name must be the family name. To mother and Lizzie he must always be, "Billie B." Dear me! All their tears were wiped away. The widow had found her son, the maiden was joyous over her recovered treasure, when my sister, Tabitha, walked into the cottage to find it luminous with love. Tabitha told all about it that night with much sympathetic pleasure. I suggested that the young man, impetuous and generous as youth is usually without defined resolution or fixed affection, and not knowing himself, had, in momentary emotion, purposed

what he would not, could not, perform. My "perfidious distrust of affection," for so my sister styled my doubting, was denounced by her. I doubt not poor Lizzie recalled that afternoon among the bright hours, in her sickbed retrospect.

CHAPTER III.

YET that bright day was overcast. Mrs. Mowat was not a woman to allow the grass to grow on her paths; and from the moment when she pledged herself to James Moffat to do her utmost to aid him, she was restless till she found opportunity for action. Such opportunity was not long deferred, for Tabitha, walking with Lizzie homewards from the nursery, after that most happy interview, and strongly disposed to fall upon the girl's neck and kiss her in respect of the maiden's recovered happiness, went into the mason's house with her young friend, and there, meeting Mrs. Mowat, incautiously mentioned where she had found her daughter. My old sister had scarcely left them together, when the mother, with a mock curtsey to her daughter, commenced,—

"Jist sae, Miss, ye turn the laa o' natur' topsiturvie! Ye gang aifter this creatar o' a studdant sin' he'll na cam' tae ye. Ma leddy, ye'll miss mair nor ye'll catch that gait."

Lizzie said she had only gone to see the widow, not the widow's son.

"Noo, a wunner wus it a veesit o' chawraty, or are ye in real love wi' the dirty auld wife? She's a gey sleekit ane. Butter wadna melt in her mou'. Belik the son is muckle the same; an' nae doot ye'll get unco

sweet words frae ane an' tother o' them. But a guess, Miss, ye'd be a hantle nearer the mark gif ye helped yer mither whiles, 'stead o' glowerin' through the panes and glaikin' aifter thae gerdnar folk."

They were in the lobby, and the mother was talking with much bitterness, when suddenly William Black stood at the open door. He had come, in joyous spirits, to deliver to Lizzie her gloves, left behind in the cottage, neglected in her overflowing pleasure. He presented the gloves to the girl. Then, said Mrs. Mowat, with her hardest face—

"Aweel, Maister Blake, ye hae cam' hame frae the colledge. A's weel that en's weel, laddie."

"I'm thankful for the measure of success I have had," he quietly answered.

"Noo, gin a body mae speir, hoo muckle de ye gat frae the great colledge be the year?" she asked.

"No great sum, ma'am," he said; "and yet a large sum for me. Eighteen pound ten."

"Auchteen pun' ten!" she echoed, in that vilest of sharp voices. "Auchteen pun' ten! say ye? An' was that what a' the paipers mad' sic a yammerin' and clamour aboot. But ye ha'e surely yer meat an' claiddin' forbye."

Black was by this time fully aware that he was engaged with no friendly inquirer, yet he quietly replied—

"No, ma'am, the whole sum allowed by the college is what I mention; but it pays all the college charges,

and my board and lodging while there, and leaves me a pound or two over."

"Aweel!" she said, contemptuously; "I'd as lief ha'e ma sons at the plòu' or the truel, wi' their wames fou, as at yer colledge wi' heads jamlin wi' book pride and toum stomacks, as yers maun be mony day, puir laddie;" and she went into the kitchen, adding, "James Mowat cud buy a score o' the lik' o' him."

Black also disappeared from the door. For a moment Lizzie stood alone in the lobby, trembling. Then she followed her mother, and went up to her, and put her arms round her scraggy neck, and kissed her; and, looking straight into her face, said—

"Mother, William Black is climbing the hill as God leads him. Is it fair to cast bitter words in his path while he is struggling bravely?"

For a moment the woman was perplexed. She was not accustomed to have her violence thus met by loving action and soft words; but she thought that to yield would be to lose all hold over her daughter for the future: and family government must be carried on. So she parried this attack of love; and, as she put aside her daughter's arms, she said,—

"Are ye a fule, lass? Is it God that's fillin' the upstart skaimp wi' pride and vainety, I wonner? and dae ye ken hoo mony placks is in aughteen pun' that ye're dementit glowrin' at him? Tak' a care o' yersel', lassie."

"Mother," replied the girl, still standing straight up

and facing her, "his riches or poverty have nothing to do with your use of rude words to him. The world knows that he is doing rightly, and in the path to do better. Besides, he is my acquaintance and father's friend, and you have insulted him at your door."

She said it quietly, and simply, and firmly, and the right was distinctly on her side, and the mother, surprised at this exhibition of independent thought in her daughter, totally unexpected and entirely novel, did not venture to reply. Now, never before had Lizzie Mowat opposed words to her mother's speech or action, and she wondered at her own calmness and courage while she stood before her mother. For the first time she felt the power and state of womanhood, as she turned away and sought her little chamber. There, I fear, there was little trace of intrepidity in her trembling and tears.

After this Black did not call again at the mason's, but Lizzie met him almost daily for a fortnight at my cottage, and Tabitha drove them out together; but these pleasant days were interrupted. Black was appointed interim-master of the Inverwick Academy, where the teacher had fallen ill.

James Moffat's interests were not neglected during this time. He had had several long consultations with the girl's mother, who had told him how she "haed gien the loon a scunner o' oor door. I warran' I sent him aff wi' a flea i' his lug." But it was necessary to go on cautiously, she said; for the mason was proud and fond of his daughter, and anything like a rude approach

to her affections would "jist set his back up;" and so to begin the courting cannily she invited Moffat to tea.

"Me!" said the man; "A canna bide tea. A dunna drenk tea, and the mason kens it weel."

"Hoot, toot," said she, "ye maun learn tae drenk it. Ye'll ne'er be youngar tae learn. It's the ae road tae get speech o' yer dawtie; an' wi'oot speakan' a guess ye'll no com' muckle speed."

At tea-time in came Moffat, as if he had come by accident, and being invited to join in the repast, he at once consented, to the surprise of the mason, and had two cups of tea and many scones. Then he talked of his new house and how he would furnish it; for he "haed a few pun'-notes by his han', an' he wadna spair them," he said; and Lizzie must tell him how the houses of the grand folk were furnished, and keep him right in the matter. And Lizzie, always courteous and gentle, delighted him with her willingness to listen to him, and her promises of such aid as she could give, and by remarking that his future home would be "so nice." More in love than ever, he refused any drams, and went home sufficiently intoxicated by his tea. He came again and again to the mason's astonishment, drinking tea and still persisting in his abstinence from liquor. On the fourth occasion Lizzie was not at home, being at tea with us to meet Black, who was going to Inverwick next day. Moffat had brought under his arm a large and excellent work-box as a present for the young lady. It cost fifteen shillings sterling, he told

her mother. He was almost glad that she was absent, being thus saved the emotions attendant on the presentation. He was still more pleased to hear that Black was going away; and his pleasure was perfected by meeting Lizzie on the street next day, and being subjected to the sweetest of smiles, while she thanked him for the gift. Poor Lizzie at that same moment was not in the happiest mood. Black had been very pleasant and gay and amusing when with her since that afternoon. He constantly called himself "Billie B.;" but the love and tenderness that she longed for—a tenderness which would have sweetened the whole cup of her life, and for which through all her life she had yearned —were absent. He used not those little words of endearment that would have been precious to her; and now he was gone away.

As summer passed, James Moffat's capacity for tea was fully developed, and he became a bore unaccountable to Lizzie, who never harboured a thought that the man loved her otherwise than as the little daughter of his friend. She still had the belief that she was both very young and little. Her thoughts, too, were fully occupied by other objects than Moffat. She had not seen Black since he went to Inverwick, nor had she any letter or message from him. The widow told her that he was well and happy. He had come twice to see his mother on Saturday, getting a seat on the conveyance of a commercial traveller, led by business to our village. He had been mindful of his mother,

too, and had brought her a new gown and shawl and bonnet; and of the gown and shawl she was very proud, putting them on to show their glories to Lizzie; but of the bonnet she said, "Na, na, I'll no wear it. I have worn mutches ower lang tae feel comfortable with the like of a bonnet; 'though I'm very willing to please my lad." But for Lizzie she had no token of love, no little endearing message. It almost seemed to Lizzie that the widow was now so proud of her son that she thought he was too good for her young friend. With many a pang, too, Lizzie brought herself to feel and confess that he was too clever and greatminded and ambitious for her. What attraction had she to win or keep his affection? she painfully asked herself, forgetting her peculiar beauty and gentleness, which might have won, nay, which I am sure did win, the love of angels. Thus her heart was sore and aching; and she reckoned not of the lanky uncouth man who came every other night to her mother's tea-table. But in the end of June her mother broke the matter to her. For some time she had, in her shallow and hard way been very affectionate to the girl, fawning on her with sugary words and cat-like caresses. "Ma dear!" and "Ma dawtie!" she constantly called her: and one evening, when Moffat had just gone out, she came leering and winking to her daughter, saying, "He's awfu' fu' o' luve for ye, yon puir man!" Lizzie did not comprehend, nor did she reply; and the woman continued—"He cam' tae me the morn, sayan' he'd gie

a' he haes o' the warld tae hae ye for his bonny wife. The foolish creatur'!" At once the whole truth flashed on the daughter. This was why Moffat had lately been there so often, and why her mother made so much of him, and why she had latterly been caressed. I have often wondered at the distinctness of perception, the clearness and purity of purpose, and the determination of manner exhibited by young girls in matters of sudden trial, wherein their inexperience and new and excited feelings might reasonably be expected to exhibit themselves in tears. Now Lizzie stood before her mother, calm and erect.

"Mr. Moffat told you so, mother! Did you tell him it was foolish beyond thinking, that it never could be, and that he must not think it?"

"Na-a, dawtie," said the woman, taking courage from the gentle tones of the maiden's voice; "na, dawtie, I tellt him naething o' the kind. Ye're a vera silly quean gin ye'll nae tak' James Moffat's head, and purse, and mailin' under yer oxter. Deed, faith, maist girls wad jump at the chance. Aith, I tellt him, dearie, he was blythe and welcome for me."

"Mother," replied the girl, "the man is older than my father. He is a worthy man, no doubt, and he has my best wishes. But, mother, I will marry no man for years to come" (was she thinking that Black could not marry for years to come?) "I never will marry any man for mere worldly comfort. I never can marry Mr. Moffat. Let there be no mistake between us, mother.

When next you mention his name to me with love or marriage, I will leave home. I am not strong, but I may be fit for some work, and may earn my bread. Does my father know of this?" she asked, trembling.

"Na, na, I didna tell yer faither. Yer faither's uncolik' his dauchter, a wutless body that canna see wi' een like ither folk. He kens naething o't ava. But he's much behadden to James Moffat, and I'se warran' he'd be a cruse man geif ye tak' his freend."

"Mother, I have said it can never be;" and Lizzie went to her chamber and wept bitterly.

On the night of the 15th of July, the new steading which the mason was building at Knockdry was burned to the ground. The flames were seen at the village at midnight, and the mason's family was aroused by tidings of the calamity. Knockdry is two miles off, but being situated on the hillside, the blazing pile was visible for many miles around. The mason and his wife hurried to the spot through the pelting rain and muddy ways. Little had been done, or could be done, to stay the progress of the fire; and at six o'clock next morning William Mowat, who was sole contractor, was seated at his fireside, still excited and bewildered by the night's occurrences, and fully persuaded that he was a ruined man. £600, he said, would not cover the loss. £200 would exceed all his available means, and he was sadly dejected. His wife, as usual, was louder and shriller than he, shrieking out curses on the workmen, whose recklessness had led to the fire; reproving the

mason, too, because there was no insurance. He made no defence, but bemoaned his poor children, and cursed himself, because they must suffer, and because "that friendly man, James Moffat, must lose money by him." Lizzie stood beside her father's chair, her hand on his neck, and she said, "What does worldly wealth or poverty signify while our father is spared to us?"

She was coughing, and her father for a moment interrupted his own grief, hoping that she had not got cold and wet in that weary night; and then James Moffat walked into the room.

"Speak o' the deil an' he'll come," said the wife. "I'm fearin', Mr. Mowfat, it's a black mason ma man 'll be till ye. He's clean brock and ruined noo, and he haes himsel' tae blame."

"He canna hurt me muckle," said the gaunt man, "gin I paid the haill loss. Hoo muckle may it be noo? I gaed ower it the noo, an' I thocht twa hunner nots wad cover it outside."

"Six hundred will be nearer the mark," groaned the mason.

"Na, na; I ken better. The haill contract was jist £650, an' the stable wusna roofed in, and the west side is vera little spiled; scaumed, nae mair; and the stanes are a' there ready to be biggit again. It's jist the laybur an' the wud, man. Twa hunner 'll dae it."

"But I'm not worth a rap. I'm a brocken man, James Moffat."

"William Mowat, ye haena the speerit o' a chicken, sittin' there coanan and groanan. The wark maun be dune ower again, and ye maun dae it. Get up, man, an' coont the cost, an' if ye need a hunner pun' or mair, I'll back ye for the siller. I ken ye're worth it a'."

And Lizzie stood by and heard the man's kind words and proposals; and she saw her father, as easily elated as dispirited, get up in newness of strength, and go out with his true friend, to set himself to the work of retrieving his misfortune; and knowing the secret of Moffat's love, her soul was pained for him, whose malady she could nowise relieve.

"That's the man ye wunna hae, ye senseless hizzie," said her mother.

Tom Rose was at Inverwick in August, and came home with news of Black. Miss Polson of College Bounds was at bathing quarters at Inverwick; and Black had constant meetings and junkets with the lady, so that the gossips of the town had occasion for much excitement regarding the young classical master. This news Miss Rose communicated to Miss Mowat at a casual meeting, with the additional information that the lady was worth just £200 a-year, and was forty years of age. As I happen to know that the last two statements were not exact, it is possible that in other particulars Tom's facts were not correct. But Lizzie Mowat felt sick on hearing it, and went home and coughed more, for she had not got over her ducking and chills on the night of the fire, and she was ill. Jealousy, I fear, was hard on

her. Was this old woman to carry off the one prize that would brighten Lizzie's life? Were there no means by which the evil could be averted? Lizzie could see none. Her future seemed a hopeless, dreary blank. Moffat still came for tea, never hinting at his love, but ever wistful to gain a smile from the girl, while she shrunk from him, notwithstanding all she knew of his goodness of heart. One evening she came not to tea. She was strangely tired and discomposed both in body and mind, and lay down in her room. Moffat, alarmed at her illness, and recollecting the doctor's prescription of a drive—the only prescription he recollected—recollecting vividly, too, that one heart-cherished drive of his, urged her mother to arrange that she, with her daughter, should next day accompany him to Inverwick, to which place he was going to ship cattle. But Lizzie was ill, and told her mother that night when she proposed it that she could not take advantage of Moffat's kind offer. And the mother was angry.

"If it wus the gerdnar's son, or that stuck-up auld body Miss Tabby, ye'd gang brawly oot, I ken; but wi' this man, whase haert is worth a dizen, wha's uphaudin' yer faither's wark and credit, ye'll no gang. No, ye—ye Judas, wha wad betray yer ain hoosehald tae ruin and starvation; if the man war lik ither men."

Such was her good-night to her child; and the girl lay in her lonely little room awake for long hours, coughing in the darkness, and feeling that darker night which was besetting her soul through the loss of her

heart's idol; awake, too, with a dreary consciousness of coming evil, from which there was no deliverance; and of isolation and desertion like that of the drowning mariner alone in the surging sea. Towards morning she fell into uneasy slumber, accompanied by copious perspiration. But when she awoke the sun was shining brilliantly at her little window, and the old apple-tree, whose branches stretched to the window, looked glorious in the light, as it seemed to offer its golden fruits to her. Now her thoughts were more cheerful and hopeful as she dressed herself. If she went to Inverwick, she might see William Black, and possibly—possibly the evil she feared might not come to pass. She resolved to accept her mother's invitation to go to Inverwick, and she told her mother so at breakfast; but her cough was still troublesome. Her mother smiled her hard smile again, and her father kissed her; for he had seen Moffat there that morning enquiring if the ladies were to go with him, and had noticed his disappointment. Moffat, however, could not be far away, and little William was despatched to look for him, and quickly brought him back. So they would start at ten o'clock; and, no doubt, Mrs. Mowat took much credit, in a side conversation with the farmer, for the change in her daughter's resolution.

Then there was the hurry of preparation. The mother made the girl dress in her nicest things; and, not knowing why her daughter had consented to go, she promised to buy her a new bonnet at the town. Then

they would walk by the seaside, and see the steamer sail down the firth, and enjoy themselves very much. The drive and change would rout away the cough, and they would be early home. She wrapped her up too in her heavy cloak, and with rugs; and while she tucked up and pinned her haps, the sweetly-solemn face of the daughter had so much the semblance of a sacrificial victim, that the mother's heart was touched. Could she give her beautiful child to that uncouth cattle-dealer? But the hour was come, and Moffat drove to the door, and there was much the same scene of backing and plunging as before. At length they were seated, Mrs. Mowat on the back seat, her daughter in front with the man, and they set off. And the mother and Moffat kept up jocular converse, and the road was quickly passed over, and the manse of Howe was reached. Here the man produced a large packet of sweetmeats, and delivered it in silence to the girl, and was pleasantly thanked; and he was watching her use of them and neglecting his horse, when they came to the foot of the ascent of Knock Howe, three-quarters of a mile beyond the manse. The horse suddenly paused in his trot at this point, and Moffat thoughtlessly tugged the reins and cut with his whip, and then the horse backed. Mrs. Mowat screamed and jumped down from behind, for the ascent commenced with an unfenced embankment there about ten feet high. Still the horse backed. Moffat strove to undo the tightly-buttoned apron of the gig, but he could not; and he called to

the woman to seize the horse. Then Mrs. Mowat, with her parasol up and her shawl flying about, rushed at the bridle-rein, and in an instant horse and carriage were off the road and lying smashed at the foot of the embankment.

When Mrs. Mowat looked down from the roadside, the horse was quietly standing in front of the dogcart, but still attached to it by the traces. Both shafts were broken, and the box of the carriage was upturned. Lizzie was lying motionless, still enclosed, and held to her seat by the apron, while her head and shoulders were on the ground. Moffat was wriggling behind, but he was quickly on his feet, apparently unhurt. He uttered a yell as he came back to the motionless figure of his companion. "She's deed, she's deed," he cried, "an' it's a' my faut. It's me wha kilt her," and he was wringing his hands and yelling still when Mrs. Mowat came to him.

They raised the girl from the broken dogcart, and laid her gently on the grass and brackens, while the mother bade him "Stap yer screachin'. She's no deed. It's only a dwam lik what she haed at Christmas. It's mair my faut than yer's." And the woman undid the girl's haps, and she lay in the pleasant sunlight, her ashy cheeks contrasting strangely with her dark mourning dress. Moffat carried water from a pool in his hat, and her mother sprinkled her, and slowly, slowly life came back with faltering course. They were both stooping over her, when the first faint flush of

blood came to her cheek; and her breathing was still feeble and gasping, and her eyes were still closed, when she muttered, "Billie B." They did not understand or note it. And while each of them bent over her in bitter self-accusation, Tom Rose came strolling along, and, learning the facts, instantly ran home for his father's phaeton, and half-an-hour saw Lizzie, still faint and feeble, set down with her mother at the manse. There she was somewhat recruited, and Tom afterwards drove them home.

Lizzie was again put to bed, and again the doctor came to her. Her feebleness and considerable emaciation surprised him, and her cough soon caught his skilled ear. Why need we linger. Lizzie's lungs were affected by tubercle, and she was on her deathbed. Months of fancied improvement and real relapse intervened before they told her. And in long nights of hacking coughs and clammy perspiration, another lover sought and found her, a lover, nobler than the noblest of human ideal. So that when they told her she must surely die, life had ceased to be greatly to be desired. But her lively fancy and gentle spirit gave many happy tints to the past, and draped with brightness many days which had been dark enough in reality—days in which she had yearned to be loved, and loved and yearned in vain.

What have I been writing about for hours by the clock? The silly, uneventful life of a village girl, gone to her rest in the churchyard. Only that. And

what matters a village girl more or less? Well, not much, perhaps. But the humble wallflower yields richer fragrance than the rarest cactus; and a village life may evolve a sweeter memory than the biography of a prince.