

ALFRED HAGART'S HOUSEHOLD

BY ALEXANDER SMITH

AUTHOR OF "A SUMMER IN SKYE," ETC.

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ALFRED HAGART'S HOUSEHOLD.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH A BATTLE TAKES PLACE IN THE SCHOOL
PLAYGROUND.

THIRTY years ago, before it had become enmeshed in a network of railways, Greysley was a second-rate Scotch town of considerable picturesqueness and individuality. In those days Greysley was self-sustained, and had an existence of its own. It sat at its looms and drove its shuttles all day. The inhabitants had their peculiarities of dress and *patois*, and one of them walking in the streets of the neighbouring city of Hawkhead—of which city Greysley is now a kind of outlying suburb—could be detected at once by a sharp

eye. Hawkhead was an energetic place, and was distinguished by the most varied industrial activity. It worked in iron, it built ships, it was continually deepening its river, for on the river its prosperity mainly depended; the glare of its furnaces hung nightly over it; and it was skilful besides in more nice and delicate arts. It hummed with cotton mills, it printed cloths, and its muslins were embroidered by the girls of Ulster as they sat before their cottage doors, in sight of their plots of ripening flax, in the summer evenings. As a consequence of these industrial means and appliances, Hawkhead could keep its pot boiling in tolerable comfort, for while one branch of industry suffered, another was certain to be in request. Printed cloths and embroidered muslins fluctuated terribly at times, but coal and iron and ships were in constant demand. Greysley, on the other hand, had no variety of occupation. It was to all intents and purposes a weaving town. During the entire day, in the old-fashioned, crooked side-streets, the monotonous click of the loom and the sharp

whirr of the shuttle were continually heard. While trade was brisk, Greysley stuck to its work and lived well ; when depressed, it stood in groups about the market-place and the corners of the streets, and in the evenings read and argued over the fiercest political newspapers. Thirty years ago trade *was* good, and in the spring and summer evenings the weaver, having comfortably dined, bird-nested, or botanised, and later still, discussed European and local politics in cozy taverns, went to bed with the idea that he was the most intelligent of human beings, and that Greysley generally was the axis on which the world revolved.

The town was ancient too, and in the olden time had dealings with the more fabulous Scottish kings and queens. Some two miles distant, in the direction of Hawkhead, stood an old castle, in which, tradition asserted, Queen Mary—who must have been a great gad-about, and of vast experience in the matter of beds—once slept. In the eastern extremity of the town was an old abbey, with old graves about it; and at night the moon silvered

very prettily the broken arches and the fine traceries of the main window. In a corner of the abbey Divine service was performed every Sunday, after the Presbyterian fashion—psalmody and sermon, according strangely with the arches, the worm-eaten pews, and the half-twilight of the place. Past the abbey, across the bridge, through the market-place, and away westward, ran the principal street, till it disappeared in a sort of open suburb of houses of one story, across whose window-panes festoons of birds'-eggs were hanging, and on whose window-sills flowers were blowing in summer, and where loom and shuttle were heard from morning till evening. In the market-place was an inn,—a picture of a ferocious Saracen with a crooked scimitar, stuck upon the front of it like a hatchment,—and on market-days, at the open windows, groups of rosy-faced farmers were continually smoking and drinking ale. Beside the inn was a tall steeple, with a dial with gilded hours; and on a parapet beneath the clock, Roman candles were displayed—the grown-up inhabitants could

remember—on great occasions, such as when a prince was born, or when Lord Wellington gained another victory in Spain. Then Greysley had a river, which came flowing into it very prettily from the moors; and at the entrance to the town, flanked on either side by flour-mills, where meal was continually flying about, said river tumbled with creditable noise and foam over a ridge of rocks. These rocks were regarded by the inhabitants with pride, and great was the uproar when the river came down after a day's rain; or, better still, when a six weeks' frost broke up, and the boards of ice were wedged and jammed and crushed and broken there. On quiet nights the dull thunder of the ice could be heard over half the town, and the schoolboy starting from his sleep heard it with awe, and buried himself deeper in his blankets. The river came into Greysley with a bold look enough, but after its fall over the rocks it lost spirit, and sneaked through the town in a broad, shallow stream, which carters and their horses forded on occasion. At the further end of the town stood a small disconsolate

quay, which seemed always waiting for vessels that never came. Past the quay the river flowed broad and shallow, and soon after it got amongst green fields and trees, and ultimately lost itself in the larger river which came down from Hawkhead—prefiguring the fate of the town, which is doomed to lose all separate existence, and to lose itself in Hawkhead also.

The scenery around Greysley was distinctly pretty. To the south rose a range of green hills, and one with a taste for the picturesque could hardly employ his time better than by walking to a summit, and sitting down there for an hour. There could he see Greysley at his feet, blurred with smoke, with church spires and one or two tall chimneys sticking out. Beyond, the Hawkhead river on its way to the sea; in the other direction, to the north-east, the great smoky stain of Hawkhead. And if possessed of a glass, he could discern the canal that connected that city with Greysley, and perhaps on its way the long white passage-boat drawn by trotting horses, and the black

caps and scarlet jackets of the riders. He would see also woods and an old castle or so, a score of gentlemen's seats, and farmhouses without number, with the yellow stacks of last year yet standing in the comfortable yards. And he would be touched by the silence and movelessness of the mighty landscape, for at the distance of a few miles man is invisible, the noise of his tools is unheard, his biggest cities become smoky ant-hills; and at the distance of a few years——!

On a certain summer day everything went on in Greysley as was its wont; loom and shuttle clicked and birred; shopkeepers chatted at doors, or were busy with customers; hawkers with barrows made publication of the cheapness and excellence of their wares. The sunshine which had lain on one side of the market-place all the morning had deserted it, and was now sliding along the walls of the jail, and making cruel visitation of the prisoners window by window; round the gilded dial in the steeple went the clock hands, and lustily in the upper air were thumped out the quarters

and the hours; and in the schoolroom, the dominie, in rusty black—who, twenty years before, had given up all hope of a kirk—was busy teaching, setting copies, hearing complaints, punishing culprits, and ruling as best he could his murmuring kingdom. At twelve o'clock into the playground streamed the scholars from their lessons, the girls consorting together after their fashion; the boys knuckling down to marbles, or pursuing one another like swallows in the game of "Tig." All at once amongst the boys engaged at marbles an altercation arose; loud shouts were heard, and through the skurrying of scholars—one little girl, weeping, and with loosened hair, attempting to separate them—two spitfires were visible, with doubled fists, pitching into each other, closing, rolling on the ground, springing up, and making eager play again. Two or three rounds had been fought, the little girl weeping and pleading all the while, when the school door was opened, and the assistant teacher, or monitor, as he was called,—who, during the hour's recess, was instructed in Latin by the schoolmaster in lieu of

payment,—with a piece of bread in his mouth, looked out to see what was the cause of the uproar. Making himself aware of the position of affairs, he darted on the combatants, seized them by the collars of their jackets, shook them separate, and marched them, caught red-handed, into the presence of the schoolmaster, in whose countenance on such occasions the cane was sternly visible. How the schoolmaster really looked could only be known by the culprits themselves, for when the assistant entered with his prisoners he shut the door behind him with his foot. The scholars in the playground were thrilled with the event and its probable issues. The boys stood in groups talking ; the girls gathered round their crying companion, who had now got her bonnet on, when all at once the angry clangour of the school-bell was heard, a full quarter of an hour before the usual time, and the assistant—who had masticated and swallowed his piece of bread—reopened the door, and peremptorily required the presence of the school. It was evident that there was to be an investigation into the flagrant breach

of discipline, and the cane might not improbably visit certain backs before all was over.

What really happened does not much matter. A number of witnesses were examined, a number of boys were rated soundly, several punished more or less as being act and part, or participators, and one who was supposed to be the aggressor severely flogged; and his punishment the little fellow endured without a sob or tear, which very naturally exasperated the feelings of the schoolmaster. The bell again rang at three o'clock, and out rushed the scholars—boy and girl—their books in satchels and in bags. They came out in tumult, ran across the playground, descended the stairs into the street, and went homewards—the boys in noisy parties, the girls in groups of twos and threes, with affectionate arms linked round each other's necks. Just as the last group of girls descended the stair, and was about to go down the street, one of them, glancing round, beheld a little face pressed against the railings of the playground, looking down.

“Are ye comin’, Katy Hagart?” cried they, in their uncouth Greysleyan accent.

The little face shook a negative, but said never a word.

“Come awa, or we canna wait. Johnny’s keepit in, an’ ’ill no get oot for a while.”

Whereat the little face was again shaken, and then came a pure, clear voice, pure and clear as the colour of a primrose, and without any rude Greysleyan accent, “I cannot go without Jack,” she said. “I’ll wait for Jack;” and then the child turned away, and sat down on a playground seat with her books in her lap.

“Weel’s ye like,” cried her companions; and, like a covey of partridges, one leading, they streamed down the street at a run.

The solitary occupant of the playground—the girl who cried while the battle was proceeding, the sister of one of the combatants, and from the fact that he was “keepit in,” apparently the most blameworthy—was a mere windflower of a thing, with auburn hair, blue eyes, and a colourless face, or a face that

seemed colourless when compared with the red and white of her ruder companions. Amongst them she seemed delicate, but it was not so much the delicacy of weakness as of breeding. Grace and paleness belonged to her, as grace and paleness belong to the lily. As she sat there patiently, her eyes fixed on the school-door, which seemed as if it would never again open, her face had its own beauty, but it was a beauty of an over-sensitive kind; especially there was a tremulousness about the slight mobile mouth, which was indicative of an unusual capacity for joy or sorrow. To a little thing with such a face and mouth, a harsh word would come like a blow, a kiss of forgiveness melt like a reproach. She was a child that a father who had been knocked about in the world would regard at times with a slight sinking of heart, remembering what sorrow life has in store for even the happiest, and how open she was to the arrows of sorrow, and how deeply they would rankle when they struck. And while she sat on the playground seat, and when the better part of an hour had passed,

the little tender mouth began to grow piteous in expression, and the blue eyes to fill.

The door opened at last, and Jack, her brother, came out with his books, accompanied by the little wizened schoolmaster who locked the door with one out of a bundle of keys which he carried. The schoolmaster looked grave, as befitted the occasion, but the boy's face had a latent rebellion in it. As they came across the playground Katy rose from her seat and timidly took her brother's hand. The schoolmaster, who was a kind-hearted man, noted the little sisterly touch, and a shade or two of sternness went off his face. Just when they came to the stair which led from the playground into the street, the schoolmaster laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, and said, in a tone which had a not unkindly ring in it—

“Now, Hagart, I hope your punishment to-day will be a lesson. I have never had to punish you before, and I hope I shall never have to punish you again.”

At which words Jack's eyes brightened, and his face flushed a wonderfully proud scarlet, as

he turned round, looking up, for he had already descended two or three of the steps.

"If I had told a lie like Thomson, sir, I would not have been punished more than he was, nor have been confined. But I would not change places with him for all that has happened. Come, Katy."

And with a doubtful expression the little schoolmaster looked after the children as they went away. Into his mind the suspicion darted that he had been too severe; he stroked his chin thoughtfully once, locked the door of the playground, put the bunch of keys in his pocket, and walked slowly home.

But at home the highly unimportant matter of Jack Hagart's punishment would not betake itself out of the little schoolmaster's head. Reading, as was his wont of an evening, in his treasure of a black-letter Chaucer, he came to the grand passage in the *Knight's Tale*, where Palamon and Arcite, both mad with love for Emily, confront each other in the wood outside the Athenian walls, and where Arcite, too noble to take advantage, gives his rival bed-

ding and food, and brings out from the city in the morning weapons and two suits of armour, and allows Palamon to take his choice, and assists to arm him, and when for a space two white faces look out of their steel on each other before the great bright swords flash in the May sunlight, and the blood rains down. Reading this passage, the schoolmaster looked suddenly up as if the boyish quarrel had been somehow prefigured therein. "I don't know that I did right to flog that lad Hagart to-day. I suspect he was not so much to blame as I supposed. I like his frank and fearless eye, and must look into the matter to-morrow. What a prince Arcite is; what a sneak Palamon what a grand fellow is Esau; what an undermining one Jacob: and yet Palamon gets Emily, and Jacob Rachel. It's the way of the world. The arms and kisses of the beautiful woman are for the sneak; and the dominie's cane falls heaviest on the undeserving back. If things go so strangely in the big world, it is not surprising that they should go strangely in that little noisy one—the school."

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH KATY AND JACK ARRIVE AT HOME.

THE children, Katy still holding her brother's hand, walked home silently. Katy's mind was full of the battle, the flogging, and the confinement; but she did not care to speak about them, and in fact received no encouragement to do so. Jack started from the school in a truculent mood, he was angry with his late opponent, and as he walked he gave him in imagination many a sound thrashing; he was angry with the schoolmaster, and vividly pictured to himself how the schoolmaster would act when he came to know the facts of the case, how he would apologise perhaps—how he would frown on Thomson! As the children walked along, all this passionate play of mind and fancy kept Jack quiet; but

the stress gradually wore off, and before they were half-way home he attained to a normal condition, and was able to take cognisance of the world outside. They lived in an eastern suburb of Greysley, and their way led them along the banks of the river, where they stood for a moment to watch a flotilla of ducks, a drake with a dark-green head leading, oaring its way across the shallow stream. The bridge was before them, across which a man on a white horse was riding hastily. They passed through the dusk coolness of the arch without speaking. On a bit of bright sunny ground beyond, a blind beggar was sitting against the wall, his hat placed between his knees for the reception of halfpence, and a large sheet of white paper, bearing a badly-spelt appeal to the charitable, pinned to his breast. The children glanced at the poor creature rolling his sightless orbs in the afternoon sunlight, but said nothing. In a short time they came in view of the ridge of rock over which the river fell in a broad and noisy sheet, and here at last Katy found her voice.

"Mamma will be wondering what has kept us," she said.

"Don't tell her that I—I was thrashed and kept in," said Jack.

"She will ask what has detained us, and what can we say?"

Jack's silence indicated that he was posed by this view of the question. He knit his brows over the problem, and at last said, with a trifle of hesitation in his voice, "Shall we tell her that we have been playing? or that we went to see something?"

"But that would not be true—that would be telling an untruth, Jack," Katy said, half-turning round to him.

"But not a mean lie, not a cowardly lie, not like a lie told to escape a thrashing. It would be what I call a proper lie, and mother would not know anything, and would not be vexed."

But Katy was proof to all this casuistry. She shook her head, and said quietly, "No, no, Jack, we must tell the truth—always." And so this matter being settled, the children relapsed into silence again.

They had now got beyond the fall, and were walking along the upper reach of the river, where the water was comparatively deep, where a small boat was moored to a weedy stake, where lilies unfolded their broad disks, and where a row of whity-green willows spent the time in gazing on their own shadows. The river was on their left, on their right a range of distilleries, which emitted a peculiar odour, and across and around which a white steam continually curled. Passing, they were clear of houses till they reached the clump in which stood their own. The canal connecting Hawkhead and Greysley, hidden by the distilleries, was visible on their right now, and as they proceeded, the long white passage-boat, with its horses and black-capped and scarlet-jacketed riders, flitted past. The sight wiped out every trace of anger and annoyance from Jack's mind. "See," he cried, pointing to the horses, "there's Smiler the leader, the other is Paddy-from-Cork, who was lame a while since. I'm glad to see him out again. Did you ever walk along the canal?" he asked, as the passage-boat, horses, and riders, disap-

peared. "No!" "Then we'll go on Saturday. Oh, such a place! No houses to be seen, beautiful banks, plenty of hips and haws. And the birds! not the gray sparrows you see here, but shilfas and bullfinches and yellow-yeldrings. I know their names, for father told me, and found out their nests for me, with the eggs in them. Did you ever see a bird's-nest, Katy? And then we can see an old castle, and the canal carried across the river by a bridge—water above and water below—and an old coal-pit. If you drop a stone into the pit, you wait for five minutes, and then you hear it plunge far, far down. I sometimes dream I fall in, and feel the air cold as I cut through it, and waken in a fright. Will you go, Katy? I have sometimes walked half as far as Hawkhead, and then got afraid because I could see no one."

By this time they had reached the half-dozen irregular villa-like houses in one of which they dwelt. Katy opened an iron gate, and ran in and tapped at the door—she was barely tall enough to reach the bell—which was opened by a maid with face and garments indifferently

clean. "What's kep' you? yer dinner's cauld," said the maid, somewhat testily, as the children entered.

In the parlour Mrs Hagart rose, with her knitting in her hand, when the children entered, and came forward. "What has kept you?" she asked in a soft pure voice, of which her daughter's was the echo. "You are very late," she went on, as she took the books from Katy and began to unloose her bonnet. "Your dinner has been ready for more than an hour, and I have had to keep it warm in the oven. Bring in the children's dinner, Martha. I was getting anxious." But Katy, instead of replying, flushed only. "What has happened?" she asked, turning to Jack, who was struggling to disengage himself from his book-belt. "Why don't you speak, one or the other? Something surely is wrong." Whereat Jack, who was drawing his belt across a red face—for somehow the process of extrication was unusually difficult that day—suddenly blurted out, "I was flogged by the master, and was confined besides for an hour," and then having finally got quit of

his books, he flung them on the floor with a thump.

"Flogged! confined!" said Mrs Hagart. "I am sure you had your lessons perfectly in the morning. I heard you repeat them myself."

"Flogged! kep' in!" cried Martha, who had just entered with an ashet of smoking potatoes in one hand, and an ashet of smoking minced meat in the other.

"Yes," said Jack, stoutly; "but I could say my lessons quite well. I was flogged for fighting."

"Fechtin'!" cried Martha, as she set down the viands and smoothed the white cloth. "What for sud ye be flogged for that? The scoun'rel that was fechtin' wi' *you* sud hae been flogged."

"So he was; but I was flogged also;" and then Jack went on to tell how Thomson tried to cheat at marbles; how he (Jack) had remonstrated with Thomson on his attempted crime; how Thomson had become insolent and began to call names, at which the other boys laughed; how he (Jack) again remonstrated with him

on his ungentlemanly conduct; how Thomson had made a grimace, and how his (Jack's) fist, without his very well knowing why, came in violent contact with Thomson's nose; how the battle became general; how he (Jack) would have licked his opponent, although half a head taller than himself, had not the monitor pounced upon them and brought them before the master; how, when examined, Thomson told the most horrible lies, asserting that *he* (Jack) had attempted to cheat; that he (Thomson) had been struck first—which was true; and how the result was that both were punished—Thomson slightly, for being engaged in combat, and he (Jack) severely, for being the aggressor; and what he thought hardest of all—for Katy was waiting for him—confined to the schoolroom for an hour after all were gone. "But," so Jack concluded his narrative, "I got the flogging and Thomson told a lie, and I would rather get a flogging any day than tell a lie."

While the children were at dinner, Mrs Hagart made private inquiries concerning the combat, and what injuries Jack had sustained

therein. Satisfied at length that no harm had been done, she delivered a little homily on the virtues of truthfulness and courage, and of the lustre which they lent to a manly character, which had been simmering in her mind during the foregoing relation. "I don't wish you to be quarrelsome or a bully, John," she said; "but I hope when you are put upon that you will always show a proper spirit. I fear there are many rude boys at school with you; but never forget that you are a gentleman, and make as few companionships with them as you possibly can. Above all things, respect the truth. A gentleman may be poor, he may be in rags, but he never lies. To tell a lie is the most cowardly act of which man or woman, boy or girl, can be guilty. Never tell a lie. Than do so, I would rather you came home to me with your face cut and your clothes torn." And then, startled by her own energy, and by the terrible picture presented to her imagination, the poor lady rose hastily and kissed Jack, while from the tenderest eyes a drop or two fell on that young fellow's curly head.

"Never fear," said the hero, with a spoonful of minced meat in his mouth. "I'll never disgrace you or father. I'm getting big now. Father says I'll be a man soon, and I'll take care of you and Katy then. Won't I, mother?"

"Yes, yes, John," said Mrs Hagart, as she resumed her seat with a half sigh. "You'll be a man soon, very soon; but get on with your dinner, dear, and take care not to soil your jacket."

In the depths of Jack's consciousness there was a slight feeling of dissatisfaction with his mother's closing counsel. It clashed somehow with his heroical mood, and he felt angry for a moment almost. But he soon dismissed his trouble, and when dinner was over he went out for an hour's play before he began his attack on to-morrow's lessons. Katy, meanwhile, had taken her seat on a stool at her mother's knee. She was always tired, poor child, when evening came, and for her the day had been one of unusual excitement.

Jack went out and joined certain of his

companions, and around the clump of houses, for an hour or so, in the game of "I spy," they rushed like wild horses. When the young fellow had expended his superfluous energy, he came in and prepared his lessons; that over, he came into the little parlour—Katy had by this time gone to bed—and by candle-light—for the twilight was closing—he sat down beside his mother, who was knitting, with an odd volume of *Old Mortality* in his hand. After reading a while he closed the book, one finger in the place where he had stopped, and stared earnestly into the fire.

"When will father come home?" he asked at length.

"On Saturday night, John."

"I wonder if he will have sold his sketches?"

"I trust so, John."

"Will he walk home all the way from Spigleton this time again?"

"I believe so. It's a long way. Twenty miles almost. Father will be very tired."

John was silent for a little. He then asked, suddenly, "Are we very poor, mother?"

Mrs Hagart gave a little start at the question. "Why do you ask?" said she, looking down on him.

"Because if we were not poor, father could come home in the coach, could he not? Don't the rich people ride, and poor people walk?"

"Yes, John. Father is poor; he works hard; and when he walks these twenty miles across the moors, it is for your sake and for Katy's, and for mine. He thinks of us when he is coming, and that makes the way seem shorter. We are poor, John; but there are many poorer people in the world than we are. When we see you and Katy well, and happy, and obedient, we sometimes think we are rich enough."

Another pause. "Were you always poor, mother?" Jack was in a terribly inquisitive humour that night.

"No, John, we were rich once—that is, comparatively rich; and I thought you would have been rich also. And perhaps you may be rich yet—after father and I are gone. Stranger things have happened."

"And how did you become poor, mother?"

"Never mind to-night, John. You will hear all about it when you grow older and wiser. You could not understand now."

"When I grow big I shall become rich. I'll work; I'll do something."

"Will you? But don't suppose that money alone will make you happy, although it goes a great way, certainly. You must be good also; well-mannered, kind to all under you; brave, hating lies, never guilty of any meanness. Grow rich if you honestly can; but whether rich or poor, try always to be good."

"Oh, yes. I'll be rich and good too. It's easy enough to be good, isn't it?—much easier than to be bad? I don't think I could tell a lie if I tried ever so much; and if Thomson makes faces at me again, and calls me names, I'll strike him again. I wish to be rich, mother. I wish to be a gentleman."

At this last word a slight colour came into Mrs Hagart's face. Remember, John," she said, seriously, "that you *are* a gentleman, and have a good right to be one."

"Am I? And that is because you were rich once, is it? You did not live in Greysley then?"

"No, no. In the Highlands you read about in *Rob Roy*—only much farther away than the places described there. Heigho! how far that time seems removed now. I think I see the rocky islands, the miles of sea-sparkle; I smell again the heather which the shepherds are burning in Rum in the spring evenings, through the whole twenty miles of distance. Although I did not know it, I must have been very happy in those days."

The last few sentences Mrs Hagart had spoken more to herself than to her son. He, however, caught at the closing words.

"And are you not happy now?"

"Why do you ask, you foolish boy? Of course I am happy. Don't I love you and Katy and father? and so long as I am with you I shall be happy."

"Shall I ever go to the Highlands, where you lived when you were young?"

"Perhaps. And your eye and brow would

make you welcome. Every woman would say prayers for you, and every shepherd would be proud to carry you through the moors."

Again Jack stared into the fire, and again his mind reverted to the riches which he was resolved to acquire.

"Do you know what I'll give you, mother, when I become rich?"

"I don't know."

Jack's mind was stumbling amidst all conceivable pleasures and grandeurs till it got fairly bewildered.

"Well, then," said he, "I'll give you a fine house to live in—much finer and bigger than this one; and I'll give Katy a silk dress, and I'll give you a silk dress too, and—and a pair of gold spectacles, like those old Mr Cargill wears in church."

Mrs Hagart fairly broke into a smile.

"Much obliged to you, John, very much obliged indeed. But I must wait a little before I need the spectacles. And now, dear, go to bed. You have sat up later than usual. Kiss me, now, and go to bed."

Jack would rather have waited, for his fancy had been roused by the talk ; but his mother rose to put away her knitting, and he knew his wishes were of no avail. Then, in search of companionship, he went into the kitchen, where Martha was scrubbing. "Tell me a story, Martha, before I go to bed. I don't feel sleepy." And Martha, nothing loath, told him, in her uncouth *patois*, a wonderful story of how the foul fiend, in the shape of a gallant young shoemaker, carried on a flirtation with a minister's servant-maid ; how he nobly, of a Saturday night, treated her to a glass of ale, and paid the reckoning with a crown piece, and feloniously pocketed the change ; for when the landlord, on the Sunday forenoon, before proceeding to church, was counting up his gains, he found a bit of slate in his till instead of the broad silver piece ; how the pious maid was reading her Bible one night in her best cap and apron, after her work was done, and how the shoemaker entered and began to abuse the Holy Book ; how the maid was shocked at her sweetheart's wickedness, and catching a glimpse

of a cloven hoof, adjured him to depart, making mention of a sacred name; how the shoemaker disappeared in a flash of fire; how the maid screamed and then fainted; how the clergyman, busy up-stairs with his sermon, came down to the kitchen, threw water on the maid's face, who then told the story; and how both were conscious of a strong smell of brimstone, which was satisfactory evidence of the character of the visitor;—all this Martha told with awful pause and emphasis, and big, wondering, believing eyes fixed on Jack's, so that the young fellow went to bed all in a tremor, and dreamed that the fiend was chasing him along the river-bank close to the walls of the distilleries, and that he could hear behind him as he ran the soft thud of a shoe alternating with the sharp ring of a cloven hoof, and awoke in mortal terror, and was afraid to go to sleep again.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO
MR ALFRED HAGART.

THE Hagart household was composed of Alfred Hagart, his wife Margaret, Jack and Katy, and Martha, maid-of-all-work and Mrs Hagart's confidante and counsellor in general. The house-accommodation consisted of the kitchen, where the aforesaid Martha worked and slept; the children's bedrooms; the bedroom occupied by the master and mistress; a large bare room, in which was a large bare desk—apartment sacred to Alfred himself—and the sitting-room, in which the Hagarts received their friends, when any called, and in which they breakfasted, dined, supped, and spent their evenings.

And if, as philosophers aver, everything a

man does is indicative of personal character; that an old pair of boots tells tales of the wearer, (what a history Mr Carlyle could have read in Cromwell's!) that a pair of gloves noticeably worn on the thumb of the left hand, gives a clearer insight into the nature of the owner of the gloves than the perusal of a packet of his early love-letters, for instance; that an old hat, battered and grease-stained, all lustreless of nap, gray and bare with usage, is a piece of authentic autobiography:—if these things be true, it may be expected that the Hagart sitting-room should be indicative of the habits of the Hagart family in general, and of Mr Alfred Hagart in particular. And there can be no doubt that it was so. I, who knew Hagart well, who sat not unfrequently at his humble board, feel this. And yet the room did not look in any way specially strange or odd. But neither did Alfred Hagart. You required to know Alfred Hagart, and you required to know the sitting-room; and when known they threw light one on the other.

The room was small, and the fireplace fronted

you when you entered. At the extremities of the mantelpiece stood two china vases a good deal cracked and chipped, and out of these vases rose gracefully towards each other, as if in acknowledgment of mutual beauty, two gorgeous feathers from a peacock's tail. Alternately between these vases stood an egg of the sea-urchin, and a hollow paper cylinder about the height of an ordinary candlestick; and on these paper cylinders fruits and flowers, and such arabesques and devices as we see on Oriental shawls and Japanese crockery, were glowingly depicted. On the wall above the mantelpiece hung a Highland target, studded with circles of brazen nails, and on the right-hand side there was an indentation as of a pistol-bullet. Across the target were slung two formidable claymores, which, in the grasp of a bold clansman, may have flashed at Sheriffmoor and Culloden, and drunken English blood on both those celebrated fields. You do not know Mr and Mrs Hagart yet so well as I do, and consequently cannot feel the significance of those little matters of household adornment. Alfred was an

artist after his sort ; he loved all natural objects, and had a genuine delight in colour. The azures and emeralds of the feathers pleased him ; so did also the rosy hues and the rough surfaces of the shells. The paper cylinders were patterns prepared for the weaving-houses of Greysley and the shawl-printing houses of Spiggleton—for the preparation of such works of art was the occupation of Alfred, and by brain and pencil he kept the wolf from the door as best he could—patterns which had not been fortunate enough to find purchasers. Alfred did not consider his walk of art high ; in earlier days he had trod a higher, and been starved out of it ; but yet it ministered to his vanity at times,—as indeed what does *not* that a man pursues ? Calcraft has his own satisfaction when he turns off his man neatly,—as well as to his profit. An author travelling first-class express is delighted when he beholds, in the compartment opposite, a sweet young creature perusing eagerly the pages of his last charming volume. A similar pleasure, a titillation of vanity quite as noble, our friend experienced when he beheld a lady

wrapped in a shawl, the fashionable and elegant pattern of which he had laboriously designed. The mercer had shown that lady dozens of shawls, and expatiated on the beauty and style of each, and out of the glowing assortment the lady had selected *his*! It was a proud moment. On the other hand, if a pattern did not sell, Hagart despised it, as a mamma despises a daughter left a spinster on her hands. The daughter and the pattern had failed in the end for which they were created, and had become mere lumber. These unsuccessful patterns fell to Mrs Hagart, who, with a woman's deftness and quick wit, whipped them into rolls, stitched up the backs neatly, scalloped the edges with her scissors, and turned them into indubitable ornaments. And thus it came about that they stood on the mantelpiece between the shells, and overhung by the peacock's feathers. It is not every wife who can make household ornaments out of her husband's unsuccesses. My wife, for instance, can make nothing of my rejected poems and magazine articles.

The target, and the claymores slung across

it, had their own significance also. They belonged to Mrs Hagart, and were portions of her personal property when she married. Mrs Hagart—her maiden name was Margaret M'Quarrie—was of Highland descent, and was related to some of the oldest Highland families. In particular, her mother was a daughter of the second cousin of the great M'Claymore of M'Claymore, and on this intimate and honourable relationship Mrs Hagart plumed herself highly. On the nobility and splendour of her ancestors the good lady was accustomed at times to dilate. She talked of the princely state in which they lived; of the number of times they had turned the tide of battle; of their crowds of retainers; of the loyal family ghosts that followed them whithersoever they went, flitting down staircases, tapping at windows, scraping at doors, and the like, when one of the great race was about to die. Mrs Hagart's family was servitored by both worlds. Hagart was wont to listen to these stories with great patience; but the apparitions touched him somehow on his comic side, and much irreve-

rent laughter they kindled in him at intervals. "There is nothing like having a number of family ghosts," he would say good-humouredly, "they add mightily to one's family dignity; and then they are *cheap*. They cost nothing in the way of rations; they provide their own wardrobe; they exact no board wages. It would be curious to compute how many ghosts could be kept on the wages of a single footman." At these sallies Mrs Hagart would bridle, and declare she had no patience with vulgar witticisms. But with all his fun Hagart was nearly as proud of his wife's descent as she was herself; and once or twice he has spoken to me of her great connexions with awe. Of Mrs Hagart personally, if pride of family was a fault, it was almost the only one she had: she loved her husband, she was devotedly attached to her children, she was kind and, as far as her means went, liberal to Martha, who would almost have laid down her life for her mistress. The far-descended fingers stitched and darned industriously as if they had come of a race of hedgers and ditchers. She was

patient, gentle of speech, economical of habit, as if her great-great-great-grandfather had never ruled broad lands or strung up a follower before his breakfast window of a morning when it pleased him. And if, along with the catechism and the stories of Joseph and Ruth, she taught her children genealogy, what harm did it do them, pray? No harm, but a deal of good. Katy's voice had not a touch of the Greysley-an accent, she never shrieked or screamed or romped in the school play-ground as did her companions. She was always quiet, unassuming, demure,—a little lady; and her mother's stories had a good deal in bringing that about. As for Jack, if under his mother's direction he had not drunk so deeply of the well of family history, his clenched fist would not have come in such desperate contact with Thomson's nose, nor would he have gloried so hugely in the fact that he got a severe thrashing for telling the truth, while his opponent got a slight one for telling a lie. Depend upon it, neither man nor boy is the worse of having a grandfather, and of knowing it too.

On one side of the sitting-room hung a small bookcase containing a few religious works, some odd volumes of the Waverley Novels, the *Edinburgh Almanac* for the year 1826, and certain loose numbers of the *London Magazine*. In the Waverley Novels, so far as he possessed them, Hagart delighted, and was wont in the evenings to read portions of them, so that Jack and Katy were not unacquainted with Balfour of Burley, Cuddy Headrigg, Miss Wardour, and Jeanie Deans. The almanac was valued because it contained a list of the regiments of the British army, with a description of their facings, and a catalogue of the actions in which they had been engaged. The loose numbers of the *London Magazine* Hagart had picked up during his residence in that city : and many an hour he spent talking to Jack about his metropolitan experiences : of Westminster Abbey and St Paul's ; of the newspapers in mourning for the death of Lord Byron ; of Edmund Kean in "Richard ;" of Edward Irving, with his squint and raven hair ; of Mr Thurtell ; of Tom Spring, Deaf Burke, and Simon Byrne,

departed heroes of the fistic ring ; of the Duke, in white trousers and blue surtout, riding past on his cob ; of Mr Turner's wonderful landscapes ; and of the First Gentleman in Europe, Hagart had a great love for London, and was wont to aver—when his patterns would not sell—that it was the only place in which a man of parts and genius could expect proper encouragement.

On the opposite wall from the bookcase hung three water-colour sketches. On the right was a gamboge sunrise ; on the left a vermilion sunset, and in the middle a sap-green forest. In the corner of each of these works of art might be traced " Alfred Hagart, 1824." These sketches were regarded by the household—Hagart included—with much pride. When Alfred made a hit with his patterns, and when the manufacturers were purchasing freely, it was his custom—sitting over his tumbler of punch with his wife, after the children had gone to bed—to make pathetic allusion to these.

" If I had but continued at that," he would say, pointing with his thumb to the pictures,

"we might have been driving our carriage to-day. With the encouragement I had, I was a fool to give up art. A fellow like me, condemned to paint shawl and garment patterns for the blowsy wives of cobblers and tallow-chandlers—by Jove! it's Flying Childers brought to a hackney-stand—a poet become sub-editor!"

And this reminds me that it was while living as a water-colour artist in London—to which city he had come up from Scotland—that Alfred Hagart won his wife. Miss M'Quarrie, youngest of that distinguished family, had, for the improvement of her mind and manners, been placed at a London boarding-school, which Alfred attended in the capacity of drawing-master. Miss Margaret was young and pretty; Alfred a blooming young man, with bold bright eyes, and a heart that would conquer the world. He had a good figure, and he dressed well. He was alert, vivacious, high-spirited; wherever he looked he saw a star glittering. Pupil and master became attached; and as it was not to be

hoped that the far-descended and many-grandfathered M'Quarries would consent to the match until they could not help themselves, the foolish young people, thinking they were performing a stroke of astute generalship, ran away, married, and then, in dutiful epistles, sued for forgiveness. When the letter reached old M'Quarrie—for many years the young bride had no mother, and her mother had been her father's second wife, of which union she was the only child—wounded pride and rage nearly threw him into a fit. He cursed and swore horribly; vowed that, having disgraced her family, she might starve, for aught he cared; and threatened to knock the head off man or woman who should dare so much as mention her name in his presence. Old port and bad temper in a year or two assisted the irate gentleman into the other world; and then his money—and report said he cut up well—was divided equally between his children by his first marriage—Kate, a spinster lady, living at Hawkhead; and Hector, sheep-farmer and married man, in the remote Hebrides—leaving not a

stiver to his youngest daughter, and, up till the period of her disgraceful marriage, his best beloved. When she heard he was ill, forgetting everything, forgiving everything, she would have run to him, like Cordelia to Lear. It was not her father's anger and curses that kept her back ; for these she would have cared little : it was the great distance and the scanty purse. And I think the old gentleman would have felt more comfortable in the other world if that loving daughter's face had been the last sight he had seen in this.

But this had not yet happened. The young bride had a small fortune of one thousand pounds, and this sum she, with much pride and many blushes, handed over to her Alfred. The simple gables resolved that they would not touch one farthing of it, but would lay it aside for contingencies, one of these being looked forward to with much interest by both. Alfred unhappily read his newspaper, and, attracted by an advertisement of a joint-stock something or other which promised large returns, he was induced to risk the thou-

sand pounds in that bubble speculation. He had hardly done so when the bubble burst, and the money was gone. It was in the horror of this time that the Hagarts received a letter from their half-sister Kate, intimating the resolution come to by her father, and her entire agreement therewith. From her half-brother Hector she never heard.

To the young wife this was dreadful news, and it would have killed her outright had not consolation come in the shape of a little baby face nestling in her bosom. The sharp joy turned the sharp grief out of doors, and she became quite contented and happy. She wished to call her boy after her father—who was yet alive—but Alfred flew into such a dreadful rage at the proposal, that she was obliged to give it up. Many names were tried and thrown aside as unsuitable. At last John was suggested. “Well, what if we *should* call the boy John?” said the husband. “John Hagart does not sound so badly to my ear. Milton’s name was John; my father’s name was John. Besides—and this makes me like it best of all”—

a good deal of acid came into the voice here—"the name has not been borne by any of the M'Quarries through their countless generations." And so the boy was called John, and grew apace. How proud of it were father and mother! "It smiles so prettily in its sleep, you would almost fancy it was seeing angels in dreams," said the poor mother. When the child cut its first tooth, the two fools were as pleased as if they had come into an estate. Alfred was in ecstasies when it recognised him, fluttered to his arms, and was able to babble, "Papa." When it began to care for toys, the talent that child displayed would have delighted a stoic. And when, on one occasion, the horned autumn moon shining quietly through the London parlour window, it howled lustily because it could not have that luminary for a plaything, the fond parents agreed that the child was a child of unmistakable genius, and actuated by an ambition that would have results.

In some fifteen months after John's birth a little girl made her appearance, and a difficulty occurred as to what *her* name should be.

Alfred was anxious that she should be called Margaret, after her mother. The mother—and the poor lady was only working out a scheme which had come into her head as she sat alone one day nursing it—wished it named Catherine, after her half-sister. Alfred demurred, his wife pleaded; he raised objections of various kinds, his wife pleaded only the more vigorously; at last he consented—he would have cut off his head to please her, the affectionate fellow—and Catherine the girl was called. Having succeeded in this part of her plan, she prepared to carry out the remainder. Alfred being out, John disposed of somehow, Catherine asleep in her crib, the mother whipped open her little writing-desk, scribbled an anxious fluttering letter to her half-sister, full of details of the little girl,—“Your namesake,” she cunningly added,—telling all about her beauty, her intelligence, her goodness, the pleasant way in which she took medicine, &c., and enclosing a bit of the christening cake. This epistle, into which the poor girl had emptied out her entire heart, and which she fancied

capable of touching the hardest, was carefully sealed and directed, and in the evening she slipped out quietly and dropped it in the post-office. This whole thing she kept secret from her husband. It would be pleasant, she thought, to astonish him, and be praised for her cleverness in effecting a reconciliation with one who might be useful to the children.

The little stroke of generalship miscarried, however. Alfred came in one day and found his wife crying. "What is the matter?" he shouted, as he ran up to her. "Oh, Alfred, this cruel letter," and the little woman fairly broke down. Alfred pounced upon the epistle, which had dropped from his wife's lap to the floor, and read it with an angry face. He saw Margaret's tender manœuvre, and with what studied sarcasm her advances had been repelled. And while he tossed the letter into the fire, and poked at it there with his stick as if it were a living thing on which he was revenging himself, his wife had flown to the cradle, picked up Katy, and was covering her with tears and kisses, intimating in a fond blind way, that

that love and those caresses were now her little girl's only portion. "You 'll promise," cried Alfred, speaking in large capitals, "that you will never again open any communication with that hag, that harridan, that old, cold, heartless she-dragon ! That you will never write to her, never answer a letter of hers should she write to you !" and the tender-hearted mother promised that she never would ; and from that day the name of Miss Kate M'Quarrie of Hawk-head was unmentioned in the Hagart family.

When Alfred Hagart was born, Providence instead of fortune had given him hope. His home was in the rising sun. When drenched by the shower, he always saw the sun shining brilliantly in the next field. And so it was, that finding that he could not make sufficient money by his water-colour sketches to keep the pot boiling, he saw in the clearest manner that a competency could readily be realised if he turned his fine genius to the production of patterns for the manufacturers of shawls and the printers of dresses. Into this new occupation he flung himself with characteristic ardour;

and while he encountered greater technical difficulties than he expected, his exertions were rewarded by a moderate amount of success, and finally by a burst of prosperity which was something more than success. This burst of prosperity was nothing other than a proposal by one of the most eminent manufacturing houses in Greysley, that, in consideration of £300 per annum, paid quarterly, he should take up his residence in that town, and devote himself to the production of patterns under the direction of the House, and for its special behoof. On receiving this communication, Alfred Hagart all at once saw his way. He would go to Greysley; he would produce designs of the most astonishing splendour and beauty; the business of the House would increase rapidly; a partnership would be offered him out of sheer gratitude; he would accept it, wealth would flow in; on every birthday of his wife he would present her with a precious jewel; he would have ponies for his boy and girl; he would have a fine house in the country, and lying a-bed in the sunny silence of the April morn-

ings, he would hear from afar the cawing of his own rooks; he would start a carriage, and when Miss Kate M'Quarrie ate humble pie and sued for forgiveness,—ay, she would be too glad to make friends *now*,—he would spurn her advances, and freeze her with the scorn with which she had already frozen him. Alfred saw his way very clearly; he broke up his camp in London, and came down to Greysley, where he bent his neck to the yoke for the sake of £300 a-year and his expectations.

It need hardly be said that these expectations were not realised. The splendid and elegant designs were produced, of course; but the business of the House did not extend with the fiery rapidity looked for; a partnership was not offered him, nor even in any way suggested. On the contrary, Hagart found to his disgust that the House regarded him strictly as its paid servant, and took the liberty of instructing, directing, and even remonstrating. Several of his elegant designs the House had not the taste even to appreciate. The House, which was affable enough generally on its own premises, would

pass him in the street without recognition or with the scantiest nod. The wife of the House had never called on Mrs Hagart; had never taken the slightest interest in the children. This was hard for a man of genius to endure. Hagart grew restless, ill at ease, cantankerous. One day when the House was sharp-tempered—perhaps it had been kept waiting for breakfast, or had received a letter intimating losses—an explosion took place. There were high words, mutual recriminations, a ripping up of old sores, and the result was that Hagart nobly walked out, shaking the dust off his feet against the House, leaving behind him £300 a-year and his brilliant expectations, which had of late become somewhat shadowy and wan.

I have noticed that the wives of men of genius—their husbands being generally of uncertain means—have a sordid respect for fixed salaries, and consider that to secure or to retain said fixed salaries their husbands should allow their noble and delicate spirits to be fretted and wrung. Mrs Hagart was no exception to the rule. When Alfred came home in a tempest of

pride and rage, with the intelligence that he had left the service of the scoundrelly House, and scorned its wretched pittance, I am ashamed to say that his wife did not catch fire from him and blaze in company. On the contrary, the poor lady—I am afraid there must have been something grovelling in her nature, in spite of her great descent—thought only of her weekly bills, her children's wardrobe, and sat down and cried. And Alfred dried her eyes, even as the regal sun of a morning dries the eyes of the drooping flowerets with a golden handkerchief.

“What's the use of lamenting?” he said. “I have never heretofore had a chance. Till now, my light has been burning under the bushel of the House. I am a free man now. The large manufacturing towns of Greysley, Hawkhead, and Spiggleton are eagerly waiting for designs of a superior character, and I am now in a position to supply the demand. The season is about to begin, and I'll take the field with the season. I'll make money for you, Mag, more than you will know what to do with.”

Alfred was radiant and confident, and what

could a dutiful wife do but dry her eyes, and try and become radiant and confident also?

It was then that Alfred procured the big bare desk which stood in the big bare room which was part study and workshop, as already mentioned. Here he painted his patterns, working all day, and occasionally taking a spell by candle-light. Into this room would his wife steal twice or thrice a-day, to speak a few encouraging words, and to admire the work which happened to be in progress. On these occasions Alfred would say, "Isn't this fellow coming to his features, eh? You see the full effect dawning, don't you, eh?" or if the pattern was completed he would hold it at arm's length, look at it sideways, with one eye shut: "This fellow will make Hogg's and Blogg's mouth water; but they shan't have it under five pounds. I'll put it in the fire first."

Of course Margaret admired the patterns, whether in progress or finished, and her approval gave her husband the most genuine satisfaction. When the representative of a manufacturing house paid him a visit, Alfred

received him with much dignity, and tacitly gave him to understand—sometimes told him so in so many words—that he might consider himself a favoured person in being allowed to make a purchase on any terms. This was at first, for as years went past, Alfred grew more humble, and sometimes was frank enough to admit that he needed money, and rather than not effect a sale, would let a whole lot go cheap. When patterns accumulated on his hands, he would walk across the moors to Spiggleton, hawk them through the manufacturers there, sell them for what they would bring, and return next day with what cash he could procure in his pocket. These walks to Spiggleton and back were fatiguing, but he declared that he had need to stretch his legs now and again—that on the whole he preferred walking to travelling by the coach, because he liked to smell the gorse, to hear the linnets sing, to watch the plovers sailing over his head,—although he could have enjoyed these things almost as much on the top of the coach as on foot. Alfred, you see, had his peculiar tastes.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH, RETURNING FROM A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN, MR ALFRED HAGART MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

AT the very time that Jack was fighting with Thomson in the school play-ground, Alfred Hagart was making a successful raid amongst the Spiggleton manufacturers. Trade was brisk, patterns were in request, and good prices were freely given. By Friday afternoon—the combat came off on Thursday—he had sold the last of his stock, and had a more satisfactory roll of bank-notes in his pocket than it had known for months. On Saturday morning he started on his homeward way out of Spiggleton, with a parcel neatly done up in brown paper dangling from his left hand, and in the highest possible spirits. He thought he had

never seen such a beautiful morning. The air exhilarated him like wine, and as he walked along he could not help admiring the soft braided autumnal clouds. He hummed incontinently snatches of the old songs he was wont to sing when a young, blooming, courageous man in London, certain to conquer the world, and to make a name in art—and it did not strike him how strange these had been for some years to his lips. Success had come, and these songs returned to him as swallows return in spring to the old eaves. He gave cheerful salutation to the stone-breakers by the wayside. He stopped a little girl, whose face he fancied bore some resemblance to Katy's at home, asked her name, patted her on the head, told her to be very good and obedient, and to mind her lessons, and nearly drove her mad by a present of sixpence. He thought the waggoners who trudged past a very prepossessing set of men. He could not remember to have seen the gorse so yellow, the bunches of heather so purple, and chaffinches and bullfinches with such pretty coats,

or hopping in such numbers across the roads, or feeding so lustily on the hips and haws in the hedges. "That ill-looking rascal, Poverty," he said aloud, "has been hanging about my door for a year past; but I have given him a kick now which will make him keep his distance for a while." He was in high spirits, and walked on rapidly, dangling the brown paper parcel as he went.

An hour brought him to the moor, and another hour to the clachan of King's-barns—a sort of oasis in the moory desert. At King's-barns the coach running from Spiggletton to Greysley changed horses. The inn was a white one-storied building, with a large sign, containing two gilded keys crossed on a blue field. Over the inn hung a large willow-tree. Beyond the inn was a smithy, from which proceeded a noisy clanking of hammers, and through the door Alfred could discern a permanent fiery glow, and at intervals a brilliant shower of sparks. Before the smithy a horse stood meekly, with its bridle tied to a nail—waiting the smith's attentions. Opposite the

inn were barns, and against the walls of one of these leaned a new cart-wheel, the centre and spokes of which were painted scarlet. Before the inn door a large Newfoundland dog lay dozing in the sunshine. While Alfred was yet some score of paces distant, a troop of white pigeons came over the willow with a whirr of wings, and alit in the roadway—another whirr of wings as he advanced, and they streamed over the barns opposite, two of them throwing the most curious summersaults on the way, as if making fun of being shot. As Alfred came up he looked at the inn wistfully for a moment, and then his face brightened. “Hang it,” said he, “what’s the harm? I’ll have a glass of ale and wait for the coach, which will be here in an hour. Why should a man walk when he can afford to ride? This has been a lucky campaign, and after a victory a man may sing *Te Deum*. Margaret, poor dear, won’t think me extravagant;” and so saying he turned into a sanded passage, pushed open the door, entered a low old-fashioned room, with a huge

green bull's-eye in the window, around which the ivies and later honeysuckles clustered prettily, and thumped with his knuckles on the little deal table.

When the ale was placed before him in a pewter tankard, Alfred took a mighty pull at it; then laying it down, he pronounced the monosyllable "Ha!" aloud, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. He then took out the roll of notes from his pocket, counted them over leisurely, and while doing so his face became perfectly luminous, as if struck by an idea of extraordinary brilliancy. What was the idea, it is not for me to say; but, his face quite beautiful to behold the while, he divided the parcel into four equal divisions, placing one in each of his trousers' pockets, and one in each of the pockets of his waistcoat. He then undid the brown paper parcel, which consisted of some dark dress stuff, and a smaller parcel wrapped in tissue paper. The dress stuff he hung over the back of a chair, and retired a step or two to admire the effect. "Poor Mag," he said, "it's not

much, but you'll value it at forty times its worth. I'd slipper thee in gold if I could!" The dress stuff he folded carefully and put aside. He then opened the smaller parcel, displaying a slip of crimson silk sleeping in its folds, and with a dexterous movement of the hand he twisted it like a scarf. "She'll look a little sunbeam in this, with her white frock," he muttered, smiling at it with his head on one side. He then wrapt up the silk in its paper, put it inside the dress stuff, tied the whole up again in the brown paper, and laid it on the table. He then applied himself to the pewter, and when he had emptied it the sound of wheels was heard outside, and by the time he had paid the reckoning the Greysley coach was at the door, and the smoking horses were being led round to the stables.

He had no sooner climbed to the top of the coach than he was accosted by a little gentleman with prominent whiskers, who sat there. The little gentleman was dressed in gray, and wore a white hat with a band of crape round

it. "Ah, Hagart, how do?" extending three fingers to be shaken. "Glad to see you! How's Margaret? What has brought you to this part of the world?"

At this salutation Alfred became painfully conscious of his brown paper parcel. He felt that to carry such a parcel was far from distinguished, and so he slipped it out of sight between his legs, while he became scarlet with vexation. "I have been at Spiggleton on business," he said, "and am on my way home. I hope your family are well, Mr Stavert. What are *you* doing here?"

"Business also," said Mr Stavert. He then, while he kept his head in its old position, twisted his eyes into their left-hand corners so that he could take a view of his companion, while he smiled knowingly. "Business also, Hagart. Money can't rest, you know. Heard of an opening for a little capital in this quarter. Come down to look at it. Have half a mind to go in. Faint heart, you know, never won fair lady. Mines!" And he closed his mouth hard, and made a rattling cataract of the loose

silver in his breeches pocket—which people richer than you are in the disgusting habit of doing.

While the fresh horses are being yoked, which put a stop to conversation, I may as well tell who Mr Stavert was, and how he became acquainted with our friend.

Mr Stavert was a man of some little means, and had for wife a remote and out-lying descendant of the great M'Quarrie family. Hagart and he were connexions therefore, and they had met perhaps some half-dozen times previously. Stavert had called on Hagart in London—the only one of his wife's relations who had done so—and our friend had rather a liking for him on that account. Mr Stavert had neither business, trade, nor profession, but having money at his disposal he dabbled in house property here, in shares in this thing or the other there; and being a shrewd man enough, he generally contrived to make such speculations pay. He lived quietly—Cuchullin Lodge, near Hawkhead, was his address—and he flitted into the business world as a rook

flits into the street of the country town before the inhabitants are stirring—to see what he could pick up. He had a keen eye for bargains; he was present at auctions and sales of sequestered furniture, securing for an old song this thing or the other. He was under the impression that luck was in store for him in these quarters; that if he bought a dozen snuff-coloured oil-paintings at a sale, one of them would be certain to turn out a Raphael; that if at a country house, the family of which had gone to wreck, he bought a cabinet at the price of old fire-wood, he would be sure to discover in the cabinet a secret drawer, and in the secret drawer—well, he did not know what, but something worth his while. No such stroke of good fortune had yet come his way, but he was daily expecting it. At all events he had his profit and his pleasure, and Cuchulin Lodge was plentifully furnished with old tables and chairs of curious workmanship, old China cups and saucers, cracked specimens of Bohemian glass, old Highland brooches and broadswords—the last being Andrea Ferraras,

of course! Having no recognisable grandfather of his own, of his wife's noble descent, and especially of her connexion with the great M'Quarrie family, he was extremely proud. He drew nobility from his wife, and wore it proudly. His house, as I have said, was called Cuchullin Lodge. His seal was a stalwart hand grasping a huge battle-axe; and this noble device he was careful to imprint on all his letters. His own family names, so far as they could be discovered, were John, James, Robert, and the like; but these he scorned utterly: his eldest daughter was called Flora, and his sons, all of them at least who were alive, were severally named Hector, Norman, and Torquil. He was a member of the Hawkhead Highland Society, and once a year, clad in "the garb of old Gaul," and with glittering claymore in hand, in company with a number of individuals similarly attired, to fierce bagpipe music he marched through admiring streets to the field where pipers strove in dissonance, and lean, long-winded fellows from Lochaber ran races and

leaped hurdles, and brawny men from Athole tossed the mighty caber. When Conacher died—the pride of his house—he wore crape on his left arm for six months, and spoke of the deceased in a respectful tone. Resident in the neighbourhood of Hawkhead, the Stavert family were in constant communication with Miss Kate M'Quarrie, who was regarded by them as a very august personage indeed. To her they were continually bringing presents of fruits and flowers from the Cuchullin gardens; and, in spite of occasional tiffs, they were regarded by the entire circle of their acquaintance and by themselves as the old lady's heirs-apparent.

Miss M'Quarrie was seldom out of the thoughts of the Stavert household, and the coach had no sooner started from King's-barns, than Stavert asked, "Have you heard anything of Miss Kate of late?"

This was always a sore subject with Alfred, and his face grew red. "No," he said, "I am not likely to hear anything from that quarter, and I don't much wish to, either."

Again Stavert's eyes went into their left-hand corners, while his head remained immovable and the knowing smile came to his lips. "What will you take for your chance of her cash?"

Alfred did not like this talk at all. He knew the Staverts were to have the money when the time came, and he thought the question somewhat uncalled for.

"Money down!" said Stavert, the eyes and the smile still fixtures.

"I'll take nothing for my chance, as you call it. I don't wish her money. I have never looked for it, and I don't think, besides, there is any likelihood of my getting it."

"You heard that she has been ill?"

"Mrs Hagart—her sister"—(Hagart could not help laying a little emphasis on the words,) "heard some report of that kind, but as it did not come directly, and as we have both been badly used by her, we took no notice of it. But I trust she's better, all the same."

"Miss Kate has made a new will. Did you hear that?"

"I did not hear a word about it. How should I? But what does it matter? *you* of course come in for everything at the end, everybody knows that."

"Do you know, I think your chance is looking up," and Stavert now turned round and looked Hagart full in the face.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I'll tell you. When Eliza—Mrs Stavert, you know—heard that Miss Kate was ill—and they heard it in no more direct way than you did—she and Flora—my daughter, whom you have never seen, I think—set off to Hawkhead at once to nurse her, leaving me to follow in a day or so. I had a letter from my wife every day, giving me information of the invalid's condition—so attentive was she and anxious. Three days after, I packed up my portmanteau, put in my black clothes,—for one, you know, could not tell what might happen, especially at her age, and it's always best to be prepared for everything; and besides, if the worst was to come to the worst, I mightn't be able to get home, there would be so much

to arrange. When I presented myself with my portmanteau, what do you think I found? My daughter crying, my wife hysterical, and Miss Kate, worn to a shadow, sitting up in bed in a most terrible rage. I asked what was the matter. 'Take me away,' cried my daughter. 'I'll never enter this house again, never,' sobbed my wife. 'Don't till you're asked,' shrieked Miss Kate, sitting up with the bed-clothes around her, out of which her head stuck like an angry hawk's. 'I'm not dead yet! Do you hear? Sorry to disappoint you.' Well, this was unpleasant. I got my womenkind into a coach—for they would not stay in the house another moment, although it was just time for luncheon, and I was somewhat hungry—and there they told me the whole story. It seems that Miss Kate has a brooch, as big as a Highland target, set with precious stones, and that this brooch was lying on the looking-glass on the invalid's dressing-table. As Miss Kate seemed asleep, Eliza asked Flora to try it on, to see how it would become her. In a trice Flora pinned it on her dress, and they both were admiring it in

the looking-glass when the sick woman opened her eyes. 'Put that down, you gipsy; it's not yours yet!' You may fancy the brooch was dropped at once, as if it had been red-hot. But Eliza, who has a spirit of her own, I can tell you, said something about its being promised to Flora years ago. '*She* won't have it: *you* won't have it!' cried Miss Kate. 'It won't go past my own sister.' 'Your sister, Margaret Hagart!' cries my wife, beginning to sob, 'what has she ever done for you? Has she ever attended you in sickness, or made your gruel, or mixed your medicines, or slept on the floor beside your bed, as I have?' 'She has let me alone,' said the other; 'and that's more than ever you have done.' 'What ingratitude!' says my wife, her feelings getting the better of her. 'Margaret Hagart was an un-dutiful daughter; she broke her poor father's heart, she disgraced her family, she made a low marriage, she's as poor as a church mouse, and'——but I beg your pardon, Hagart, I quite forgot, I really didn't mean to——.'

"Never mind," said Hagart quietly, "worse

has been said of me than that by my wife's relations. I know you didn't mean to offend. You are only speaking in inverted commas. But you said that Miss Kate had made a new will."

"Oh, yes. After this disagreeable passage of arms I was a good deal nettled, as you may suppose ; but my wife and daughter, after the first natural anger was over, behaved like angels. From their hearts they forgave her entirely, and would have been at her bedside next morning, I believe, to give her her medicine, if I had allowed them. The fact is, I fully expected that when Miss Kate had thought over the matter she would have sent for them. But as no message came I didn't know what to think, so last week being in Hawkhead, I stepped into Hook and Crook's office—Miss Kate's men of business—and learned casually that she had sent for them, and that a new will was in progress. That's the sixth she has made to my knowledge during the last six years," added Stavert, somewhat testily.

Alfred remained silent. "I don't care a

straw for the matter myself," continued Stavert. "It's weary waiting for dead men's shoes, and when you get them, as often as not, they pinch your feet. If Kate's money should come your way, I'll be content, Hagart. Your wife is nearer her than mine; and, between ourselves, she likes me as little as she likes you."

After that the talk broke into indifferent channels, and at the next stage Stavert got down to look at the something he had heard about in the neighbourhood, leaving Hagart to journey alone homewards, much meditating on what he had heard.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH JACK AND KATY WALK ALONG THE CANAL BANK.

THE day after the fight Jack found himself in high popularity. He had shown pluck in the encounter with Thomson, who was the bigger and elder boy; he had been severely punished, and his punishment he had taken bravely, and as a consequence his mates admired him more than they did his foe, who, by dint of fibbing, it had become generally known, had got off comparatively easy. Thinking over the matter during the previous evening, the schoolmaster had come to the conclusion that the lad had been unfairly treated, and that some slight reparation should be made in the presence of the whole school, if circumstances provided a decent opportunity. As he entered the schoolroom, he smiled on Jack and addressed

him in a few words of studied civility, which made the boy's heart jump; and when during the class examination—for on the Friday the entire work of the week was gone over—he fairly tripped up the heels of all opponents and placed himself in the position of dux, he received from the master a public compliment. This was a triumph! It was like being knighted by a king in the presence of a whole army. Jack felt it, the whole school felt it, and Jack's popularity reached its acme. When the classes were dismissed to the play-ground, Thomson was standing in a corner looking vicious, and Jack went up at once and offered to resume the game of fisticuffs with him that afternoon, in some place where they would be beyond the jurisdiction of the schoolmaster, and where no assistant could have a chance of interrupting them. "Perhaps you think you can lick me," said Jack, "and if you think so, I'll give you another chance." Thomson lowered, and looked as if he could have eaten his opponent with much pleasure; he then muttered some words of declinature, and walked away. Jack's com-

panions were witnesses of the obliging offer, and of course Jack was a hero in their estimation, and Thomson a sulky fellow, a coward, and a sneak. The resumption of hostilities in the manner suggested would have been an event; and the boys were naturally disgusted that the sulky Thomson had declined to contribute to their amusement. Figuratively speaking, they carried Jack shoulder-high, and trampled Thomson under contemptuous feet.

In the evening, after Katy had gone to bed—for the child was delicate, and was often looked on by Mrs Hagart till tears from a foreboding heart came into the maternal eyes—Jack went into the kitchen, where Martha was ironing linen, her sleeves rolled up over her red arms, and the implement which was not in use placed on the toaster before the fire. The young fellow liked the kitchen for its warmth and light, and because he could there listen to Martha's stories, which were chiefly of a ghostly character, and repeat what portions of the Waverley Novels he had heard his father read, or relate feats which certain

of the British regiments had performed in the Peninsula and at Waterloo—on which subjects his father was garrulous when they walked together. On the present occasion Jack brought one of his schoolbooks with him, and sat down on a low stool in the centre of the light and heat.

“I am going to read you a story,” said he.

“Read awa,” said the maiden, laconically, as she took up the fresh iron from the toaster, wiped the smooth surface of it rapidly with her apron, and resumed operations on the front of one of her master’s shirts.

He then began reading aloud from the schoolbook an abridged account of Mungo Park’s African experiences. Read how he travelled for days and days through the hot wilderness; how he was thirsty and hungry; how he lodged at night in trees, while jackals and hyenas prowled underneath, and the vast roar of the lion was heard in the distance; how, in his sore distress, he saw the delicate moss in the desert, and drew courage from the thought, that the Power which planted

and supported *it* there would also care for and support him; how the African women took pity on him, took him into their huts, gave him food and a couch of skins, and sang, as they spun, melancholy songs—that he had no sister to bring him milk, no wife to grind him corn. Jack affected himself by his reading, and when he came to the end he looked up in Martha's face—who had by this time struck work, and was standing with her back to the dresser quietly devouring every word—expecting to gather therein some response to his own moved feelings. But Martha was a damsel of an imperturbable and unsentimental cast; and although interested in the narrative, her interest was of a different kind from that of the reader.

“Save's! tae hae gaen through a' that—what a horse o' a man!”

“But,” said Jack, colouring a little from the unexpected shock, “think of the moss, Martha.”

“Bonny eneuch; but he wad hae been better pleased if he could hae made his dinner o't,”

said Martha, as she took an iron from the toaster, and drew her finger swiftly across it to see if it was sufficiently heated.

Jack could laugh a little by this time, and he put the book aside. "Martha," said he, after a little pause, "Katy and I are going to make a journey to-morrow."

"Ay! an' whaur are ye an' Katy gaun?"

"Along the canal bank. I promised to let Katy see the canal, and the old castle, and the old coal-pit."

"Tae fa' in an' be drooned!"

"Oh, there's a paling round the pit; it's quite safe. And I wish to show her the canal going across the river, and everything along the banks. She's never seen them."

"But will yer mother let ye?"

"She said she would, if I took great care of Katy, and did not go too far. I said nothing about the old pit, though."

"Ye manna gang far. Miss Katy is no strong, and canna be fatigued. When will ye turn back?"

"If Katy gets tired, at the place where the

passage-boat stops. We can see all we wish by that."

"Ye should turn at the second brig. It's a lang way for ye to gang yer lanes. But noo aff to bed! I hae that basketfu' o' claes to sort before I sleep, an' the maister'll be here the morn. Aff wi' ye!"

And so Jack had to carry his brain, seething with Mungo Park and his excursion of to-morrow, off to bed with him, where it shaped during the night the most extraordinary dreams.

Next morning Jack and Katy rose quite eager about their walk. The boy had something to show, and was delighted to act the part of *cicerone*. The canal had always affected his imagination powerfully; he knew it led to Hawkhead and other towns, and it suggested to him in some obscure way a whole big world lying outside his experience. He had walked often for some distance along the bank alone, but a sense of solitariness more than weariness had driven him back. For Jack, like most imaginative young people, who have not yet become familiar with them-

selves, was sadly disturbed in lonely places, where there were no houses, and no palpable signs of human life. The external unfamiliarity was not greater than the internal unfamiliarity. Queer thoughts came into his head; he was conscious of strange feelings which he could not yet comprehend or give a name to, and he was scared by these quite as much as by the silence and the emptiness. There is no terror like loneliness; no curse so heavy as isolation. Childhood, if at all impressible or imaginative, has always been troubled after this fashion; and it is from this trouble that, a few years after, youth draws its passionate delight in poetry; for, in reading the poets, the youth finds that these thoughts and feelings are not personally peculiar; that by them he connects himself with the race; that although new and inexplicable, they are as old as the heart of man. Through poetry the world becomes a mighty room of mirrors, where from every corner recognition is flashed back. And so the young man comes to look upon the poet as his best friend, and to find

his dearest society in that solitude which was aforesaid irksome. Katy, who had never travelled farther than from the fireside to the schoolroom, was quite tremulous with a pleased expectancy; she was that day to behold wonders; her brother was to be a magician; and her excitement brought an unwonted colour to her cheek, and lustre to her eyes. It was her first excursion, and it was an event in the child's life, as the first ball is an event in the girl's. Mrs Hagart smiled at her children's enthusiasm, and insisted on clothing them warmly; mixing her motherly precautions with counsels and advices; telling Jack to take care of Katy, imploring Katy to have an eye after Jack, and on no account to allow him to climb trees, break through hedges, or to walk near the canal edge; concluding finally with instructions not to go too far, as their father was expected home that afternoon, and it would never do for them to be absent on such an occasion. The children were standing on the doorstep with their mother and Martha while these injunctions were being delivered,

and just as they were passing out of the little gate Martha suddenly exclaimed, "Deil tak the laddie, his collar's gaen wrang again," and ran out after them. "Here, bairns," she said, producing a small bag, after she had pushed them out of Mrs Hagart's sight, "here's a piece for ye, but dinna be late, and dinna let Miss Katy walk owre far. Be aff wi' ye. Yer collar's a' richt, I see."

It was a warm bright day towards the middle of October, when the world was at rest after the travail of growth and ripening; and over the children as they walked hung the warm azure spaces, and the soft bars and wisps of autumnal cloud which Hagart, on his way from Spiggletton, was at that very moment admiring. Jack and Katy walked on smartly, and in a short time they left the road, and descended on the canal bank. The land was high on either side, and Katy looked at the hips and haws in the hedges, and the dark-green firs with their bronze trunks, and the red beeches, and the slender ashes with their clusters of scarlet berries, with that admixture of wonder which gives

such a zest to all the delights of childhood. The world loses much when it ceases to become strange. An old king regards his crown very much as an ordinary mortal regards his old hat. And when a rook came sliding slowly along through the summer air, and folded his wings on a tree top, and croaked audibly, she fairly stopped.

"It's only a crow," said Jack, with some contempt, as he divined her feelings, "and a crow is little better than a sparrow. As we get on we shall see birds worth looking at."

In due time they reached the bridge which carried the canal across the river. This was one of the promised sights of the day, and Jack was resolved to make the most of it.

"Look here, Katy!" he cried, as he pressed his face against the railing, and looked down on the stream beneath. "You see the bridge carries the canal across the river and not a drop falls through. Don't be afraid. Look down; isn't it deep? I don't know how it was done," he continued, in a puzzled tone, "for when the bridge was building the canal water must have

poured out at both sides. I will ask father about it. See, see the water-hen, yonder, flying across the river! Ah, she's got among the rushes. Do you know, Katy," here he spoke in a strictly confidential tone,—“Do you know I can swim across the river down there? but don't tell mother, else she won't let me out on the Saturdays next summer—of course she'll be afraid I'll be drowned.”

“Oh, Jack, don't swim ever there again! Michael Hamilton was drowned, you know, last year.”

“Yes, but not down there. It's quite safe down there. Besides, it was in winter, and Michael was on the ice when it broke up. Father has promised me a pair of skates next winter.”

Katy somewhat timorously looked down through the railings, and shuddered at the depth; she saw the water-hen skim across the surface of the stream; she was also puzzled with the engineering difficulty which beset Jack, and agreed with him that father should be applied to on the matter. They then resumed their walk.

"Isn't all this strange, Katy?" went on the young gentleman, with the air of a man who had seen the world. "*I* have been half way to Hawkhead! When I grow big I shouldn't like to remain at home. When father walks with me he tells me about foreign countries. Egypt—where Joseph and Pharaoh lived, you know—and the Pyramids; the desert and the Bedouin robbers, with their horses and dromedaries, and black tents; America, with its big lakes and prairies, and wild red Indians, and galloping hordes of buffaloes, ten miles long, and trappers telling stories by their watch-fires at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. When I grow big I shall go and see those places. Father says I shall be a great man. I wonder what I shall be, Katy? I should like to be Edmund Kean, or Edward Irving, or Bonaparte when he ran across the bridge with the flag in his hand, and the cannon-balls whistling about him; or Sir Walter Scott, who wrote the stories about Balfour of Burley and Jeanie Deans. Father is always speaking about great men, and

tells me I shall be one. But I think I should like best to go abroad."

"I don't want ever to leave home," said Katy.

"That's because you are a girl, and girls never like to leave home. Mother never likes to leave home. But look, look yonder, over the woods, where the crows are flying, that's the castle!"

And in a short time, on the opposite bank of the canal, on a rising ground cinctured with woods, the red bulk of the castle was distinctly visible, with broken arches and windows that let through the sky, and with dark-green patches of ivy here and there on its walls. Around the turrets jackdaws and starlings were flying like gnats. The sun shone full upon it, and on the billows of coloured foliage that surrounded it. This was felt to be the supreme sight of the day, and the children sat down to contemplate it at leisure.

"I would like to live in a castle," said Katy, at length.

"All the people that lived there are dead long since," said Jack. "That castle is nearly as old as the abbey in Greysley. Queen Mary lived there, and she has, may be, looked out at yon window. How queer that seems, Katy! She slept there the night before the battle of Langside. Father says that Queen Mary was the most beautiful woman that ever lived, and that every man who looked on her face fell in love with her, and that every man who fell in love with her was brought to the scaffold, and was proud to die for her. I wish I had lived in her time. But see! Katy, Katy! there's a shilfa—chaffinch, father calls it."

Katy looked, and saw a pretty bird hopping at a little distance on the canal bank, but in a moment it was gone, with a flash of coloured wings.

"Oh, Jack, what a pity; what a pity!" said Katy, almost crying; "the shilfa is better than the bridge or the castle."

A brilliant idea struck Jack when he saw his sister's distress. "Katy," he said, "let us take the bread which Martha gave us and crumble

it on the bank, and hide ourselves behind a bush, and we'll see shilfas and a lot of other birds coming to peck them. Never mind the old pit to-day! We can see it some other time. I'll keep a bit for you in the bag, in case you should get hungry. Shall we? Well then, hide yourself behind the bush here, where you won't frighten them, and I'll scatter the crumbs."

When Katy was properly ambushed, Jack took one of the slices of bread, and broke it into small pieces which he sprinkled on the ground. He then took his place beside his sister, who had watched his proceedings with much interest. Katy grew excited, and Jack had some difficulty in preventing her from peeping over the bush at intervals. "You mustn't do that, you'll frighten them. I can see beautifully, and I'll give you my place when they come."

Then something made a jerking flight across the canal, and the chaffinch alit near the crumbs, looked round him warily, and then began to peck. "There's the shilfa again!

Do you see it well? Isn't it bonny? Here are other two—bullfinches, by jing! cock and hen! Ain't they making a capital dinner? And, my eye!" whispered he, getting quite excited, "see the new one just lighted, that's a yellow-yeldring." And next moment Jack was knocked almost speechless at the success of his *ruse*, for there amongst the crumbs, pecking away with diligence, was a redbreast, just as if it had hopped out of the most pathetic story-book in the world, where indeed—to town children at least—it is best known.

"That's a robin," he said; "I never saw one before, except in winter."

"The pets," whispered Katy, looking with all her eyes; "couldn't we catch one and put it in a cage? It would be so nice to feed it, and give it bits of sugar."

"They'll be off if we move or speak loud. But I'll get you plenty of young ones when summer comes, and then you can feed them as much as you like. Ain't they tucking in! The crumbs will be finished in a jiffy. Look!

look ! the robin 's going to fight !" and Jack, leaning forward in his eagerness to witness the combat, slipped his foot, and went rolling down the bank.

When he picked himself up the birds were gone, of course, and there was Katy standing up behind the bush, and looking down on him with a face of alarm. "I 'm not hurt," he cried out, laughing, as he knocked the dust from his elbows and knees. "I 'm not hurt in the least. Come down, and take care and not slip. I rather think I astonished them !" and he laughed heartily, as if he had performed some very clever action.

"You have never seen a bird's-nest ?" said Jack, as they resumed their walk. "I knew dozens this spring. Father found them for me ; he's a splendid bird-nester, but he would not let me take away so much as a single egg. He knows the name of every bird that flies, I think. The shilfa builds in trees. I don't know where the bullfinch builds. I never saw its nest, and I never heard father

speak about it. The yellow-yeldring builds in dry banks and ditches, and under long tussocks of withered grass, and its eggs look as if they had been splashed with ink. But the prettiest eggs of all are the hedge-sparrow's—a sort of blue-green, just like the stones in mother's ring. I'll show you lots of nests when summer comes."

When they drew near the station-house, which was the bourne of their journey, Jack, in huge delight, spied at some distance beyond, and coming towards it, the long white passage-boat, and the black caps and scarlet jackets of the outriders. At the station-house the boat stopped to allow passengers to get out, and to take in others. He hurried Katy forward, that they might reach that point in time to see all that could be seen. He wondered what horses would be out that day; hoped they might be his favourites, Smiler, the gray, and Paddy-from-Cork, the roan; and promised himself much enjoyment in pointing out their several merits to Katy. The boat and the

horses were to his mind better than even the birds. The excursion had been successful, but the passage-boat was a pleasure on which he had not calculated, and on that account the pleasure was all the greater.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH JACK AND KATE MEET MISS KATE
M'QUARRIE, AND IN WHICH MISS KATE'S
SIXPENCES TRANSFORM THEMSELVES INTO
SOVEREIGNS.

THE station-house, situated on the bank of the canal, about three miles' distance from Greysley, was a small white inn, which, if one might judge from its somewhat dilapidated appearance, did not drive a roaring trade. Behind were one or two outhouses ; and on the same line with itself was a large shed, in which luggage for the passage-boat was stowed. The whole place was sleepy enough usually, and only when the boat appeared did it wake up to some semblance of life. As the children approached, half-a-dozen intending passengers came out of the inn with their parcels, and

stood upon the little wharf. A country road, with beechen hedges on each side, came right down on the canal bank by the side of the station-house, and at the end of the road a plain carriage waited, the coachman seated on the box; while a little farther forward a serving-man in dark livery stood at ease, one white-gloved hand clasped on the other. Jack glanced at the somewhat unusual sight as he passed, and thought he had never seen horses with such sleek coats, or that arched their necks and tossed their heads so proudly. The children had hardly got in front of the station-house when up trotted Smiler and Paddy-from-Cork, with their riders, who seemed to Jack to look down haughtily, as befitted their dignity. The drag-rope was immediately unloosened, and the long boat, with its white awning, under which the people sat, came alongside the wooden wharf with a bump. Parcels were tossed in, parcels were tossed out; passengers stepped in carefully, and disappeared under the awning; passengers emerged from the awning, and stepped out carefully on the

wharf. Amongst the passengers who came out Katy noticed an old lady with her maid,—the old lady mightily interested in the matter of luggage; and to her the serving-man in dark livery came forward and touched his hat. A sentence or so was interchanged, and the man took the luggage under his own special charge, and, with the assistance of one of the station-house hangers-on, had it conveyed to the carriage, which was waiting. This Katy noticed with her quick eyes. Jack was busy watching Smiler and Paddy-from-Cork, the latter having at the moment its hot nostrils thrust into a pail of water, which an ostler was holding up to it on knee crooked for the purpose. Released from the care of luggage, the old lady took her maid's arm and came along the wharf, assisting herself with a stick. She stooped a little; her face was thin and pale, but her eye was keen and sharp, and, in its glances, seemed to pierce everybody and everything. She was strangely dressed, the child observed, and in some particulars not specially well. She wore a dress of black

silk—silk which had evidently been turned—and the upper part of her body was covered with a white tippet. The hand that rested on the stick was thin and withered, with big blue veins wandering through it; and the fingers, Katy saw, were covered with massive rings. She was speaking to her maid, and her voice was sharp and imperious—a voice that could administer rebuke as a strong and willing arm a lash, and which seemed to be unaware that there was such a thing as contradiction or dissent in the world. Passing towards the carriage in front of the children, she bent on them her keen eyes, then stopped short, and gazed on them for a moment or so, much to Katy's trepidation—Jack was at that moment watching how the ostler was dashing the remainder of the pailful of water on Paddy-from-Cork's fetlocks—and went slowly on. After going half-a-dozen paces, she whirled her maid impatiently round, and came towards them. Jack was now conscious that he was the object of scrutiny; and although he coloured, he returned the gaze with steadiness.

The old lady stopped right in front of them, at about the distance of a yard.

"Come here!" she said; and she beckoned with a finger that was like a wild bird's claw.

The children advanced: they could not very well tell why.

"What is your name?"

Jack did not like to be catechised after this fashion, but there was an imperiousness in the lady's manner which he could not resist.

"Hagart," he said.

"And you live in Greysley? Your mother's name is Margaret, your father's—Alfred?"

"Yes," said Jack, a good deal astonished.

"Your father is an artist, or a painter, or something of that kind?"

There was something in the intonation of the question—some little spice of contempt or hostility, as it seemed to the boy, which nettled him; and, lifting up his head proudly, he blurted out, "My father is a gentleman," and then he blushed scarlet at his own temerity.

The old lady's eyes lingered on his face for

a little, after a somewhat inscrutable fashion, "Your name is John," she went on, "and this is Katy! Let me see you, Katy."

Katy, who had shrunk back a little, was drawn forward by the strange questioner. She was trembling; and when the old lady placed both her hands on her cheeks, lifted up her face, and gazed into it as if to read something in it, she fairly broke down and cried.

The quick colour flooded Jack's face in an instant—but this time it was anger, not shame—and his eyes grew bright. "Let Katy alone!" he said impetuously. "Who are you? I never saw you before. You have no right to question us. Come away, Katy!" and he took his sister's hand.

And thereat the curious sweetness of a smile came into the severe mouth, which puzzled the boy. She looked at him till the smile died away, and when it died the face did not seem nearly so stern. "Who am I? You may well ask! It's my turn to be questioner now. Did you never hear your mother speak of her

sister?—of her whom you were called after, Katy?”

“No,” said Jack, “I never did,” while he mentally contrasted his mother’s youthful figure and soft outlines with the bowed figure before him.

This response of Jack’s was true in the letter, if not in the spirit. He certainly had never heard his mother speak directly of Miss Kate M’Quarrie—but then his mother had spoken of her frequently to Martha, and through Martha some dim shadowy notion of Miss Kate, her habits and whereabouts, had oozed and percolated to the children—sufficient to make them recognise her now.

“So, so; but I have no reason to complain. She took her way, I mine. Tell your mother that I have seen you to-day, and that I recognised you by your faces. Tell her that I would not act to-day as I acted long ago. Tell her I don’t ask to meet her. Tell her that I have been ill, and that I am going to stay with some friends near this. Will you remember?”

“Yes,” said Jack and Katy, both at once.

"Then go home, dears," said Miss Kate M'Quarrie—for, as a matter of course, it was she—as she turned away. But the next moment she had left her maid's arm and came hobbling back. "Stay," she said, and then she thrust a coin into Katy's hand and closed the little fingers upon it. "It's a sixpence; but don't open your hand till you come to the first tree. Mind! Here's a sixpence to you, John, and don't open *your* hand till your sister opens hers. If you disobey me, I'll come to you in your sleep and frighten you in your dreams. Kiss me, Katy!" and the old lips came down and lingered on the young cheek and mouth. "Now go home, go home, and the first tree—remember!"

Miss Kate looked after the children. "Oh, me!" she said, as she put her hand to her forehead, and pressed it wearily, "their faces vex me sorely;" then turning round, she took her maid's arm, and walked towards the carriage.

Jack and Katy began to walk home in a perfect state of bewilderment. During the colloquy the passage-boat had started, and the

black caps and red jackets were seen ahead disappearing round a curve of the canal. But they had on a sudden lost all interest. "That was our aunt," said Jack, finding his voice at last.

"She said I was called after her," said Katy.

"Isn't it strange we never heard of her—from mother? Mother told me that her people were rich: I wonder if aunt is rich! I wonder what she has given us," continued he, suddenly remembering and working the coin in his hand. "It seems bigger than a sixpence; it's a shilling perhaps! Shall we look?"

"No, no; wait till we come to the tree."

"Then run, and we'll be able to find out all the sooner;" so off they started.

"Now!" said Jack when they reached the tree. They both opened their hands, and were appalled by the gleam of gold. Miss Kate's sixpences were sovereigns!

"Hallo!" cried Jack, staring at the gold piece glittering in his palm.

"Let us go home," cried Katy, all in a tremor; "let us go home to mamma, Jack."

Jack thought this was the best thing to be

done under the circumstances, and they started off at once. A crowd of birds were pecking at the crumbs which had been scattered half an hour before, and flew off at their approach unheeded. The old castle had lost its charm, although the sun shone lovingly on the red walls, and the birds were yet sailing around the turrets. They crossed the canal bridge, and saw the stream beneath, but they did not pause a moment to look through the railings. The strange meeting, and the sixpences which had transformed themselves into sovereigns, had got into their bewildered brains, and abode there to the exclusion of everything else. They walked rapidly, and when they came to the path that led down from the canal by the side of the distilleries to the road along the river bank, they were further astonished by beholding their father trudging briskly along with a brown paper parcel dangling from his left arm. Expected in the evening, there he was walking home in the early afternoon !

“ See ! ” cried out the children, both at once, as they ran up to him, and displaying the

sovereigns that had grown warm in their perspiring palms—so closely had they been held.

“Where did you get these?” said Hagart; “did you find them? or have you become a highwayman, Jack?”

“We got them from our aunt,” they said, both at once.

“From Miss Kate M‘Quarrie!” said Hagart, coming to a full stop and staring at them. “And where did you see Aunt Kate?”

“At the station-house on the canal. We walked there this morning. She came out of the passage-boat while we were standing there. She said she knew us by our faces. She slipped this into our hands, and told us that we were not to look at what it was till we came to the first tree.”

“She frightened me very much, and then she kissed me, and told me that I was her namesake. Am I, papa?”

“I never heard you speak of Aunt Kate, father!” She said she was sorry for something she had done to mother, and that we were to tell mother that she had been ill, and was

going to stay with friends near the station-house."

"Why, this beats Stavert!" said Hagart. "I never was so astonished by anything in the whole course of my life. What a bundle of news I have for Margaret, to be sure! She won't care much for my present now." And then, as some happy idea struck him, his face became luminous as we saw it in the little inn at King's-barns. "It will be as good as a play," he muttered half to himself. "But come along," said he, thrusting his parcel into his left armpit, and taking his children one in each hand. "Don't speak to your mother about this till once I give you leave. Remember. But it's very odd."

They walked for a little space in silence, and then Hagart said suddenly, "Do you remember the stone griffin I once showed you on Sir Andrew Freemantle's gates, Jack?"

"Yes."

"Do you ever remember to have eaten a half-cooked rhubarb dumpling without sugar—a dumpling that set your teeth on edge?"

"Yes; and very sour and bitter it was."

"Exactly! I should fancy your aunt resembles the griffin and the sugarless dumpling. What is she like? I never saw her in my life."

"Very old," said Jack. "She has a hooked nose, and stoops, and walks with a stick, and leans on the arm of a maid—but she has the sharpest eyes; they go through you."

"She had the funniest old-fashioned bonnet, and wore a black silk skirt, and a large white tippet," said Katy.

"Humph! Well now, say nothing about this till I give you leave. Do you know, Jack, I have been in luck! Spiggleton's a very Peru. This campaign has been like one of Napoleon's Italian ones—victory on victory! I have sold all my sketches, my boy!"

"All your sketches!"

"All! every one, Jack. And I'll take the field with a new army in a fortnight. Napoleon did not let his enemy rest—no more will I. I'll invade Spiggleton, and dictate my own terms to the rascals. Trade is brisk, and I'll have my own prices."

When Alfred reached his own door he gave the bell such a triumphant peal that his wife started and ran to the window, where she stood gazing on him with some surprise. He had hardly time to kiss his hand gallantly to her when Martha opened the door. "Now, Martha, take these children off, and make them wash their hands and faces. They are to dine with me to-day. And, Martha, don't let them into the parlour till I call for them. Off with you!"

By this time Mrs Hagart was in the lobby. "You are earlier than we expected, Alfred, and dinner is not quite ready. Where did you meet the children?"

"On the way home," said Hagart, as he entered the parlour with his wife and closed the door; "and I promised the rogues that if they tidied themselves they should dine with us. And now"—by this time he had dropped into a chair, and was regarding his wife with a beaming countenance—"I suppose you are dying to know what fortune I have had?"

"Yes, indeed, Alfred," said his wife, extracting considerable comfort from his pleased face.

"Mercenary minx! What do you think of that?" and out of his right breeches pocket he took a small roll of notes.

His wife counted over the roll, and when she was done she smiled. "This is pretty well, Alfred."

"And that!" and out of his left breeches pocket came another small roll. When his wife had counted *it* she said, "Bless me! you have been quite in luck."

"Should you like any more?" cried he.

"Well"——

"For I have got more yet;" and out of one vest pocket came another roll, and out of the other vest pocket yet another roll. "There they are—fifty pounds in all." And then he got up and kissed his wife, who was at that moment the happiest little woman in the world.

"Fifty pounds is a large sum, Alfred. We will be able to pay"——

"Don't talk of paying! You'll pay everything and everybody. I'll be back in Spiggletton in a fortnight, and bring more."

"But why didn't you give it me all at

once?" his wife asked, as she rolled up the money.

"To bring surprise to a climax! I separated them two hours ago. Every roll of notes brought an additional sunbeam to your face, Mag, very pleasant to see. You would not deny me that pleasure, would you? I've been thinking about it all day. You have been pale and anxious enough at times—God knows. I would do anything to make you happy."

"And you make me always very happy, Alfred. We have had our trials, but"—

"Now, don't speak," said Alfred, putting up his hand. "I have something more for you yet." And he brought over the paper parcel and opened it. "Now then, isn't that pretty?"

His wife admired her dress hugely, and went to the window to examine its texture; but her eyes had no sooner fallen on the scarf which Alfred had uncovered, than—divining its purpose, and for whom it was intended—she put her hand to the bell, saying, "We must have Katy in to see this."

"Wait a bit. They will come in good time. Sit down, Margaret! Do you remember Stavert, who called on us once or twice in London when we were married first?"

"Yes."

"Well, he came in on the coach with me from King's-barns—for with fifty pounds in my pocket I nobly scorned to be a pedestrian—and he spoke to me about your sister."

Mrs Hagart's face was covered in a moment by a pained flush. This was the first time that her husband had alluded to Miss Kate M'Quarrie in her hearing since the day he thrust that lady's letter into the fire.

"He spoke to me about your sister:" and he then related the conversation, interpolating his own remarks by the way. "That's what Stavert said. He and his wife are in disgrace; but whether our chances are looking up I shall leave the youngers to tell." He then went to the parlour door, and called out, "Come here, ye freebooters, and explain to mamma how you come to be in possession of golden coin!"

In a moment Katy and Jack were in the room, the sovereigns in their hands.

"From whom did you get that money?" cried Hagart, glancing at his wife, and managing his household drama with considerable dexterity.

"From an old lady who told us she was our aunt. We met her at the station-house by the canal. We were to tell you she had been ill. She said she knew us by our faces."

"She kissed me, and told me I had been called after her," said Katy.

"She put sovereigns in our hands and told us they were sixpences, and we were not to open our hands and look at them till we came to the first tree; and so we ran to the tree, that we might see what we had got. I thought my sixpence was a large one."

Hagart was in great spirits; but what was his dismay when he saw a complex trouble come into his wife's face! She suddenly took hold of Kate, pressed her to her heart, and broke into a great fit of crying.

"Margaret," said he, "what's the matter?"

"Oh, Alfred!" she sobbed, still straining the child close, "I am so glad—and so sorry. You can't understand me. You don't know what I have been keeping in my heart for so long. I wish the children had not met my sister."

"Why, Margaret? There's no harm done, so far as I can see; and perhaps some good may come of it. I don't care, of course, for her money; but I shouldn't be surprised if she came to see you one of these days."

"No, no, Alfred; she won't come; she won't write. I don't know why I should feel so vexed"—the little woman here began to wipe her eyes—"and perhaps, after all, it is better that she should have seen the children and liked them, poor dears. You must think me very foolish! We'll have holes bored in the sovereigns, Alfred, and the children will wear them. I value them very much, and would not exchange them for anything ten times their value."

And so, aided by many comforting words from her husband, Mrs Hagart regained composure; and after running into her bedroom

to wipe away the traces of tears, the whole family sat down to dinner. When the meal was over, and the children gone, Hagart, over his second tumbler of punch, worked himself into the belief that he was to make a fortune out of Spiggleton, and his wife believed that he was so destined—as she had believed that out of this thing or the other he was so destined a dozen times before.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH ALFRED HAGART INVADES SPIGGLETON, AND THE CHILDREN MEET MISS M'QUARRIE FOR THE SECOND TIME.

THE meeting with Miss Catherine M'Quarrie caused considerable speculation in the Hagart household; but as days passed and nothing came of it, it died away in the minds of the elders, very much as the gleam of the sovereigns died in the minds of the children, and became commonplace. Miss M'Quarrie was not seen or heard of afterwards. She did not call, she did not write, she sent no message; and the subject died out of the family conversation, and out of the family thought. Perhaps, although she said nothing on the matter, Mrs Hagart brooded over it in her heart, wondering whither-unto it might tend. If she did, no one was the wiser. Hagart was

preparing for what he called his invasion of Spiggleton—that is to say, he was getting ready as rapidly as possible a fresh collection of patterns for the manufacturers there, nothing doubting that, when ready, they would be purchased as greedily, and be paid for as handsomely as the former collection had been. The high spirits of the man during that fortnight! the magnificent castles he built! And Mrs Hagart, like a dutiful wife, conceived that these airy castles were solid edifices, and that she and the children had nothing to do but enter and take possession.

For that good lady was no philosopher, and had not yet learned to tremble at sudden strokes of good fortune—of these, indeed, she had but scant experience; or to detect the irony that dwells—like east wind in a day superficially sunny—in every song of hope. She was taught the lesson, however, by and by. As for Hagart, he was radiant with happiness. Everything was to go well with him now! Spiggleton would never cease to want patterns and to pay for them, and he would never cease to supply Spiggleton with patterns.

If Hagart found a bag of gold on the highway to-day, he was perfectly certain that he would find a bag of gold on the highway to-morrow. Pitiful, pathetic, this faculty of hoping—yet useful, as it keeps men alive. For in truth—and this his wife was just beginning dimly to suspect—Hagart had been an unlucky dog; had been constantly foiled, thwarted, and pushed to the wall; and an unlucky dog he would remain to the end of the chapter. At school, when he played at marbles or chuck-farthing, he was invariably the loser. He married into a good family—many a man makes his fortune by that—but he had no sooner married than his wife's family turned their backs on him—and her. His wife had a thousand pounds; other men speculate with their wives' money, and make a good thing of it; *he* speculated with the thousand pounds, and lost every farthing. He obtained a good position in the Greysleyan House; but the position, in which another man would have fattened, he contrived heroically to lose. I verily believe that if Alfred were one of twenty shipwrecked per-

sons on a raft, provisions would fail on the second day, lots would be drawn on the third, the lot would fall on *him*; his right arm would be opened, and before he was properly cold a rescuing sail would be espied bearing straight down. Hagart had been chasing the rainbow all his life, and had tumbled into countless morasses; but no sooner did he get himself extricated than he dashed on again, quite certain that this time he would come up with the beautiful apparition, and secure the crock of gold that stands at its foot. There is no spectacle so sad as your uniformly unsuccessful man—unless, indeed, it be the good spirits and brave hopes he contrives to maintain under his uniform unsuccesses.

In a fortnight Hagart was ready to invade Spiggleton. He had produced a brilliant collection of patterns, which, he flattered himself, would astonish his patrons by their style and elegance.

He took farewell of his wife gaily, like a knight who goes out to easy victory, and who is to return laden with glittering spoil. With

his expectations—rather with his certainties—he disdained trudging across the moors to Spiggleton, and so he walked down to the Saracen's Head, and took his seat in the coach. He sat beside the driver; and as they tooled along he communicated certain of his metropolitan experiences—rarer in those days than now—and talked learnedly of horses. When they arrived at King's-barns he ordered a glass of brandy for that functionary; and while the horses were changing, entered the small room in which we previously saw him, and called for a glass of ale. While drinking his ale, he began to think how much money he would count there the following day; he fixed the sum mentally, and felt it already in his pocket. When he had finished his liquor, he resumed his seat beside the driver, who had conceived a great respect for him, and in an hour thereafter he was set down in the Spiggleton market-place. He set to work at once; called on the manufacturers, displayed his patterns with a lordly air, but found them strangely unsympathetic. They looked at his sketches, but declined to buy—like trouts that

play about and examine the tempting flies of the angler, but declined to hook themselves thereupon. He stepped from the torrid zone of anticipation to the frigid zone of fact. "Trade had become unsettled," his friends said; "markets were glutted at present; they had a large stock of goods prepared against the winter season, and styles might change by spring. They must hang on their oars. Perhaps in a month or so they might be able to treat with him." Hagart could hardly believe his ears. He felt as if the solid ground had yielded from under him. He reduced his prices, and by that means disposed of one or two sketches to the less important houses. High-flying Hope had tumbled like a shot swan. When four o'clock came—for at that hour active business closed in the Spiggleton counting-houses—he retired to his inn defeated, humbled, sore at heart. Next day he went through the manufacturers once again, and offered his sketches at what they would bring—*jobbed* them, in fact—and got quit of a few at low prices. There was nothing for it now

but to turn his face homewards. He could not now afford the coach, but must pace wearily the twenty moorland miles. One-half of his patterns he had to bring back with him. The edges of these his wife might scollop with deft scissors, sew them up, and place them on the mantelpiece for ornaments. They were fit for nothing else now.

Hagart left Spiggleton in the forenoon, and a mile or so before he reached King's-barns he heard the rattle of wheels. Glancing round, he saw the coach bound for Greysley, and his friend the driver sitting on the box. At the sight he flushed all over with vexation. His mind had been so occupied, he had not calculated on this annoyance. He did not wish that the man to whom he had talked so freely, and for whom he had ordered a glass of brandy, should notice that he was a pedestrian. He then remembered that he had encountered Stavert on the coach the last time he had come that way, and the thought that *he* might be there again—looking after one or other of his schemes—did not lessen his confusion. If he

had but sold his patterns he could have ridden on the box, and talked about horses as if he had stables of his own, and asked questions about the county gentlemen whose houses or plantations came into view, with the best! Hagart would not tell a direct lie for the world, but he did not scruple to tell an indirect and silent one—as the best of us do not scruple to do at times. So his hasty pace became an idle saunter, he twirled his stick carelessly, he looked about him as if taking in the features of a scene in which he was deeply interested; and when the coach rattled up he returned the salutation of the driver—who, with a sharp remembrance of the favour of the previous day, thought it unfortunate that the rencounter had not taken place a mile or two farther on, when he would have had a little leisure—with a mock cheery voice, and remarked that “this neighbourhood was exceedingly pretty.” The smile passed out of Hagart’s face immediately after the coach passed, but he retained his sauntering air and the careless twirl of his stick until it rounded a turn of the road, and then

he struck into the sharp pace that bespeaks a pedestrian with a journey before him.

After the coach passed, Hagart mentally wished that he was beyond King's-barns. The moor became dreary after that, and he felt its dreariness would be in consonance with his feelings. Besides, he remembered how brilliant his hopes had been while there on the previous day, and he fancied that the place would reproach him somehow. When he drew near, there was the white inn with the willow drooping over it, and the sign of the golden Cross Keys on the blue field. There also were the barns on the other side of the way, but he noticed that against these the new cart-wheel with scarlet boss and spokes was no longer leaning, and that a broken barrow had taken its place. On this occasion the big dog did not bask in the sunshine, for the excellent reason that there was no sunshine to bask in—the day being cloudy and somewhat cold. The landlord stood in the door, and Hagart thought he divined the reason that he did not enter the little sanded room with the ivied window, and

call for a glass of ale, as he had done on previous occasions. "A glass of ale would be refreshing," thought Hagart, "but I have not the heart. I could not sit in that room—it would be like remembering Austerlitz at St Helena. It's not for myself I care, but for thee, Mag, for thee!" And so with a gulp and a quickened step he passed the inn, gained the crest of the rising-ground beyond, and set his face valiantly against the stretch of brown moor—trudging along which I shall in the meanwhile leave him.

Before starting, Hagart had instructed the children to wait his return by the coach on the following day after they left school, suggesting in pretty broad terms that if they did so they might not improbably be rewarded for their pains. The hint set Jack's imagination on fire. Splendid visions hovered before him; Katy had recently received a crimson scarf: it was his turn now, and he hardly dared to fancy what good thing might be in store for him—perhaps the long-promised history of Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, filled with pictures,

would be his at last. He suspected that the wonderful volume would arrive on this occasion, and he promised Martha that when he had covered up the brilliant boards with brown paper, and if she would be content to look at, not to touch the pictures, he would bring it into the kitchen and read it to her every word. The coach was due at four o'clock in the afternoon, and Jack and Katy were standing at the Saracen's Head by half-past three. Never surely did clock hand move so slowly as did that clock hand move to Jack. He talked about his present, wondered what it would be, hoped it would be *Robinson Crusoe*, and was almost angry with his sister because she did not enter into his enthusiasm. "Perhaps you will get something as a present this time also," said he in a reproachful tone, of which the next moment he was ashamed. But to the inuendo Katy made no reply.

When the clock hand pointed to five minutes to four o'clock, Jack cried out, "Only five minutes to four now, Katy! The coach will be here in five minutes! I'll have my present in five minutes. Just think!"

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And sure enough almost as he spoke the rumbling of wheels was heard, and in a minute or so the coach from Spiggleton, crowded with passengers outside and inside, came up the street at a gallop, and pulled up at the Saracen's Head.

"Now, Katy, now! Here comes father, and I hope it will be *Robinson Crusoe*!"

Then the passengers from the inside came out on the pavement and stamped their feet, and the passengers from the top came down on short ladders and stamped *their* feet also, but Hagart was invisible. Meanwhile the guard was chucking all kinds of parcels out of queer receptacles which he opened in the body of the vehicle, and then a couple of ostlers appeared at the horses' heads and led them and the empty coach round to the stable-yard, and at the sight Jack felt desolation creep into his very heart.

"Father has not come," he said, "and there is no other coach. What can be wrong?"

"I don't know," said Katy in a faint voice, and with a slight shiver. "Let us go home—quick."

They then started homewards, Jack full of his disappointment, and yet manfully hoping. "Perhaps father did not get his business done, and will bring the book to-morrow; perhaps he can't get the money for the patterns till to-morrow. Perhaps—but what is the matter, Katy? Are you ill? Your face is as white as paper!"

"O Jack, I can hardly see! Give me your hand! Take my books! Let me rest a little. Oh!"

"Katy! Katy! what is it? Are you ill? What is wrong? Don't frighten me, Katy dear!" He took the books from her hand, and then she leaned against him, with a white face, and with her eyes closed.

"O Katy! look up, look up! Do you hear me, Katy!" and poor Jack getting no response, and holding his sister tightly, else she would have fallen he thought, began to cry.

A washerwoman who happened to be passing laid down her basket of clothes, and with the instinct of her sex came to the rescue. "Puir thing," she said, in a strong Greysleyan

accent; and taking the child into her possession, she began, with rough tenderness, to chafe her hands.

"Are ye far frae hame? Whare's her mother? What's the cause o' her fentness?"

"I don't know: she's ill. I never saw her ill before," cried Jack, weeping and wringing his hands.

At this moment a carriage slowly passed by, which Jack stared at in a sort of stupor of recognition, as if he had seen it before in a dream, or in an earlier existence. He no sooner, however, caught a gleam of the face of the occupant, than he left his sister in the hands of the charitable washerwoman and ran after it. "Stop, coachman, stop! I know Aunt M'Quarrie. Tell her Katy's ill—is dying! Stop, stop!"

Thus passionately adjured, the coachman pulled up, but not before Miss M'Quarrie had let down the window and poked her head out.

"Is that you, John Hagart? What are you crying for?"

"Oh, aunt, Katy has been taken ill, and

mother does not know. I saw you as you were passing. I don't know what to do, indeed I don't. Katy, Katy!" and the boy's grief broke out with greater intensity than ever.

"Bring her here," said Miss M'Quarrie, "bring her here. Tell that woman to bring her here. Be quick—and come in yourself too."

Jack immediately ran back to the washerwoman and delivered his message. The washerwoman lifted the child and carried her towards the carriage. Jack followed after, picking up his own and his sister's books, which had fallen on the ground, and lay there unheeded.

"It's jist a dwam, my leddy," said the good-hearted Amazon, as she deposited the child on the carriage cushions. "Something has come oure the puir thing's heart. If ye hae some hartshorn, or a smelling-bottle, or a drap o' speerits, it wad bring her roon'."

Miss M'Quarrie instantly tore open Katy's dress, dislodging as she did so a sovereign, which was worn round the neck by a thin golden chain—but this at the moment she did

not notice. She then whipped a perfume bottle from her reticule, poured out some of the contents in her palm, and bathed the child's face. After a moment or so, with a great sigh of relief, the languid eyes opened. But when Katy became conscious of the stern face which had a fortnight before frightened her on the canal bank, she started up with a cry, and caught hold of her brother's hand. "Where am I? Take me away,—take me to mamma!"

"Don't be afraid, Katy," said her aunt, in a voice unusually low; "I am taking you to mamma. Don't you feel better now?"

Reassured somewhat by the soft voice, Katy could only lean back on the cushion and sigh, while Jack got hold of one of her hands and held it in both of his.

All this time the carriage-door had remained open, and the washerwoman, culpably careless of her basket and the property of her employers, had stood looking on, making sympathetic ejaculations at intervals. When Katy had revived and leaned back, she exclaimed,

"Ay, she's come to hersel noo. It's a bonny bairn!—as like my ain Mary that died five year syne as—"

Here Miss M'Quarrie interrupted her. "I am sure I am much obliged to you for your kindness, and I need not detain you longer," and she had her purse in her hand.

"Na, na," quoth the washerwoman, drawing back a step and putting up her hands in rejection. "Na, na, I'll tak nae siller for onything I hae dune, and for a bairn sae like my ain Mary too," and with that she turned away.

But this seemed to rouse the truculent blood of the old lady. "If you won't take the money, I won't keep it. You'll not let it lie on the ground, I daresay." And she flung a coin after the retreating figure, which Jack could hear rattle on the pavement. Without waiting to see whether it had been picked up, she called out to the coachman, "Drive on slowly, and I'll direct you when to stop." Then she closed the door and window.

By this time the colour had come to Katy's cheek, and although somewhat afraid still, she

was gradually regaining composure. Her aunt then drew her to her knee, and busied herself smoothing her hair and re-arranging her dress. In so doing she came again in contact with the pendant sovereign.

"What is this?" she said, holding the coin in her palm.

"The sovereign you gave me, aunt, on the canal bank—which you said was a sixpence."

"Mother would not allow us to spend them," said Jack, "so she took them to a jeweller's and got them pierced, and put them on two old locket chains of her own, and made us wear them. I've got mine here," he continued, putting his hand on his breast.

"Did you tell your mother you had met me?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

Both Jack and Katy remained silent.

"What did she say? Can't either of you speak?"

"She only kissed Katy, and cried very much," Jack said at last.

Miss M'Quarrie leaned back and said nothing for a little—only the withered hands were wandering tenderly over Katy's hair and cheek. She then said, "John, you must be near home now! Tell me when you are at home," and relapsed into silence again. Katy was getting used to the caressing hand, and began to think its touch soft and pleasant.

They had now got beyond the distilleries, and looking out of the window, Jack watched the familiar objects gliding past. When they were within twenty yards of the house, he said, "We are at home now, aunt." The old lady pulled the check string; the carriage stopped, and the coachman opened the door. "Lift out the child—carefully. Good-bye, Katy. Good-bye, John."

Katy was lifted out, and when Jack followed he turned round.

"Won't you see mother? She would like to thank you," he said.

"No, no, no!—not now," said the old lady, in a voice that sounded strangely in the boy's ear. "Drive on—quick!" And when Mrs Hagart

came to the parlour window, and Martha to the door, there were the children standing outside the gate, and the carriage driving rapidly away.

Mrs Hagart had known tribulation, but this afternoon, after she had heard the children's story, she was more troubled than she had ever been before. Katy was unwell, her husband had not arrived by the coach as he had promised—she knew pretty well how to interpret *that*—and here again was a meeting with Miss M'Quarrie! As was natural, her mother's heart rushed out towards Katy, and her husband's unsuccesses and these strange appearances of her half-sister were regarded as trifles in comparison. The child did not seem specially ill—she never did—she made no complaint, she felt no pain, she said: all along her temper had been unnaturally quiet and sweet, undisfigured by those sprits of petulance and rage which are common with healthy children, but this afternoon her demeanour was meeker than ever. Her caresses were constant and fond; and when the afternoon began to settle into the early

autumn twilight, Mrs Hagart's heart sank as she felt the heat of the dry little palms and noted the unwonted brilliancy of the eye. Katy was put to bed, some simple medicine was administered, and then she threw her hot arms round her mother's neck, kissed her, and said she would go to sleep. The little figure was tucked in carefully under the bed-clothes and left. Mrs Hagart slipped into the room at intervals, and on one of these occasions she found the child's hands moist and a soft perspiration on the forehead.

Meanwhile Martha was busy at work in the kitchen, and in the kitchen Jack sat preparing his lessons for the morrow. He had to get by heart the proper spelling of a column of six-syllabled outlandish words, and although his memory was ready enough usually, he could not this afternoon fix his attention on the page before him. His father's absence, Katy's sudden illness, his second encounter with his aunt were continually spiriting him away from his work, and leading him into a maze of speculation. He at length gave up his task in despair,

and thought he would like to sit beside his mother. Laying down his book, he went noiselessly—for in that frugal household shoe leather was a matter of importance, and Jack was at present in his stockings—toward the parlour door. It was slightly ajar, and on the walls he could notice the flicker of the firelight. Awestricken, frightened, he did not know why he glided into the room which he had at first fancied to be vacant, noting nothing but the dance of red light and umber shade on the furniture. Then a low murmur struck his ear, and led by the sound, he saw his mother kneeling beside a chair and pleading with Heaven for her child. Jack heard only a broken sentence, and he was out of the room and in the kitchen like a shot. "Martha, Martha!" he cried wildly, "I am sure Katy is going to die."

"Wheesht, laddie," said Martha, pausing in her work—"wheesht, laddie, what will Katy dee for? She's fawn on a fine sleep, an' will be better i' the mornin'."

"I don't know. She was very ill on the way home, and mother is afraid about her."

"It's nat'rel she should be anxious wi' nae-body in the hoose but me."

"Why has father not come? He said he would come by the coach. Katy and I waited for him. He promised he would bring us presents too!"

"Presents! never mind presents, be thankfu' if ye get your denners. It's the fulishest tredd that man's! Sitting in the hoose here like a leddy, an' workin' away wi' pents in a bit brush on a bit o' paper. Why disna he gang oot to his wark like anither man? If he had ony speerit he wadna warm a seat at that tredd again."

"But, Martha, he sold his patterns well last time," said Jack.

"But hoo often does he sell his paw'trenes? Is 't ance in sax times? If yer mother was na' an uncommon managing woman he micht tak you an' Katy, ane in each han', and gang sing-
ing through the streets. Presents, quotha! But dinna greet," said Martha, dropping into a softer tone, "Katy will be better when she waukens, an' ye'll hae her rinning about wi' ye in a day or sae."

So comforted, Jack wiped his eyes and really felt that the world was not quite so black as he had painted it a few minutes before. After staring in the fire pondering certain late strange matters, he said, "Isn't it strange that we should have seen aunt Kate again to-day?"

"Strange indeed!"

"She stopped the coach the moment she saw us, and ordered Katy to be taken beside her, and was so kind. But why doesn't she come to see mother? I asked her to come to-day, but she just lay back in a dark corner of the coach, and told the coachman to drive on fast."

"Your mother and her quarrelled lang syne, an' thae quarrels canna be made up in a day. But she's comin' roon. She's seen yer faces, an' she canna help hersel. Nature's stronger than pride. Ye'll see her sune again, or I'm muckle mista'en—but here's yer mother," and Martha suddenly broke off and began scrubbing the dresser with energy.

Mrs Hagart entered the kitchen with a quiet settled face. She told Martha that Katy was still sleeping peacefully, and that her skin was

moist and her breathing regular. She then busied herself preparing tea against her husband's arrival, which was instantly expected. The tea was infused, and was left on the kitchen hob, and Martha carried cups, a plateful of buttered toast, and the remainder of a beefsteak pie into the parlour. In about ten minutes after these matters were satisfactorily arranged, the bell rang. "There's father!" cried Jack, as *Robinson Crusoe* rose faintly on the horizon of his imagination, and he ran and opened the door.

"Is that you, father?—you are late. We were at the coach to-day."

"My poor boy, my disappointment includes yours. I hoped to have brought something for you and Katy, but I come home defeated—like Napoleon after Waterloo." And *Robinson Crusoe* faded at once and for ever out of Jack's expectations.

Mrs Hagart in the kitchen could not hear what was said, but she caught the tone of her husband's voice and detected failure in it. It was sober and low-pitched, and she drew her own conclusions. In luck, Hagart was inclined

to be somewhat loud and boisterous; in misfortune, he was quiet, tender, deprecating,—almost obsequious. She divined disaster; but dressing her face in her best smile she came into the lobby where Alfred was taking off his coat,

“O Alfred! you are late, and must be sadly tired. The children were at the coach, but did not find you.”

“I walked home, Mag; it’s a long way, and it was made all the longer by the patterns I had to bring back with me.”

“You have not been successful then, dear.”

“Never was so disappointed in all my life. Every one admired my sketches, but they would not buy. I have only sold six, and these at what they would bring.”

“Well, well! never mind, so long as you are home again safe. You had better go to the kitchen, John—are you sure you have your lessons correctly?”

Jack went off, and Mrs Hagart led the way into the sitting-room. When there, she turned round suddenly and caught hold of her

husband's hands: "Katy became suddenly unwell to-day on her way from school. I have been so alarmed, Alfred! Will you come and see her?"

In an instant Hagart had his boots off, that he might tread noiselessly. His wife lifted the candle, and he followed her into Katy's room. The child lay peacefully asleep with lips apart, a brown curl escaped from her cap astray on her forehead, and one arm thrown over the coverlet. Her cheek was flushed just a little, but her breathing was low and gentle, and her skin still moist. Mrs Hagart came close to the bedside and held the candle over it, shading it the while with her hand.

"Do you think there is anything serious?" she said.

"I hope not, Margaret; but you must have Dr Crooks in the morning."

"O Alfred," said she, laying down the candle and throwing herself into his arms, "I cannot bear to part with her—indeed, I cannot! If we should lose her, Alfred, if we should lose her! We don't deserve her, but I cannot part

with her." And the tender mother broke into fresh crying, as if she had not been crying half the afternoon already.

While trudging across the moors that day Hagart thought himself wretched enough—thought, in fact, that he could hardly be *more* wretched. If he had not discovered before, he discovered now that misery is a sea that has no bottom. On a stroke of this kind he had not calculated, and his failure at Spiggleton was for the time entirely thrown into the background and forgotten. When he saw his wife's tears he felt that he must do something, and he acted the part of comforter as best he could. He did not think the child was really ill—at least there was nothing to cause alarm. Katy was always delicate, and this was only a slight ailment that would be off in a day or so. At any rate, if anything should be wrong, Dr Crooks would be able to dispose of it; and he would be sent for in the morning. In such matters it was always better to have the doctor at once. And so with sentences like these, he allayed his wife's anxiety so successfully that

when he said it was very cruel in her keeping him from dinner after such a long walk by a false alarm, she—Spiggleton failure notwithstanding—smiled on him as they went into the parlour.

Jack slipped into the room, and sat down by the fire while that meal was in progress. He heard his mother tell about the second meeting with Miss M'Quarrie, and her kindness in driving the children home. He heard his father's speculations on that event. Then they talked of their prospects for the coming winter, of monetary embarrassments, of anxieties of various kinds; and listening to all this the boy discovered for the first time that he had been born into a difficult world, in which there were other things to do than playing at marbles and discovering birds'-nests, and greater hardships to be endured than even a disappointment in the matter of *Robinson Crusoe*.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH DR CROOKS CALLS, AND MRS GRAVES
PAYS A VISIT.

THE following morning Dr Crooks called and saw his patient. He was a little, dapper, clean-shaven man, who entertained a tolerably good opinion of himself; he wore a white neckcloth, a gold repeater, a cluster of large seals at his fob, and when walking he carried his clean-shaven chin erect, and twirled dexterously a black cane with a golden head. He saw his patient, felt her pulse, studying the while his gold repeater, and when satisfied he dropt the little wrist on the bed-clothes and the repeater into his pocket at one and the same moment. He then examined Katy's tongue; that done he rubbed his dapper hands together, stroked his clean-shaven chin, ad-

justed his white neckcloth, and intimated that, if Mrs Hagart would attend him, he would write out a prescription.

When they entered the sitting-room, Hagart, who was anxiously waiting, rose, and Dr Crooks made a little bow and smile in reply to his sign of recognition.

"I trust you don't find anything seriously wrong with my daughter?" he said.

"Well, nothing serious as yet: nothing at all serious as yet," said the doctor. "She's a delicate child, a very delicate child, Mrs Hagart, and we must take great care of her. Meantime, she must keep her bed, and be kept perfectly quiet. She's a little feverish; but if you will oblige me with pen, ink, and paper, we'll prescribe something which will reduce that, I hope."

Mrs Hagart opened her writing-desk, and placed it on the table before the doctor, who sat down and scribbled certain hieroglyphics, and signed his name at the foot, drawing two great dashes under it. "This you will give her every two hours, and I'll call the day after

to-morrow. Meantime, if she should get worse, send for me at once."

"But you don't think it likely that she will get worse?" Mrs Hagart asked, with a little gulp of alarm.

"I don't anticipate she will," said Dr Crooks impressively, and drawing on his gloves; "I really don't think she will, but it's always best to know how to act if anything should happen. She is very delicate, and great care must be taken—care especially of cold. I am sure," and here the clean-shaven doctor smiled blandly, "she is under the charge of the tenderest of nurses."

Under cover of this fire of compliment the doctor retired. Martha let him out; the Hagarts heard the door close, and next moment they saw him pass the window on his way to Greysley, twirling his gold-headed cane, and carrying his clean-shaven chin erect.

Mrs Hagart was not quite satisfied with the result of the doctor's visit. She plucked vague alarms out of his professional commonplaces.

"He says she is feverish ; and then he said if she became worse"——

"But he does not think it likely that she will," said the husband.

"He did not wish to frighten us. Doctors never say exactly what they think. I fear the poor dear is more seriously ill than we suspect. If she is not better to-morrow I'll go into Greysley and see him myself."

"He said he would call the day after to-morrow. Meantime, we will get the prescription and see its effect. There is no use going to see him : he was only to be sent for in the event of her getting worse. Your fears are mother's foolishness."

"You don't feel as I do, Alfred ; indeed you don't. I can't argue with you. I don't know how it is, but I feel that some evil is impending. God grant my feeling may be only mother's foolishness, as you call it."

If Mrs Hagart was filled with melancholy, her husband was not. The doctor's words had dissipated the only cloud that lingered in his mind. Although tired by his walk from Spig-

gleton, he had lain awake half the night, and during the night-watches a great idea had flashed upon him. This idea he turned over and over; he grew more enamoured of it every moment; and now the sun of his prospects was shining as at midsummer. The Spiggleton markets were overstocked; Hoggs and Bloggs and the rest of them were inclined to rest on their oars. The Spiggleton markets were overstocked—but then it was with goods for winter wear, and all the patterns he had taken with him were designed for winter fabrics. Was it astonishing that they did not sell? It was astonishing rather that the manufacturers were good-natured enough to look at them. Hoggs and Bloggs must rest on their oars, of course—they were waiting to see what styles would be fashionable in spring. It was quite natural they should so wait. But who would set the spring fashions? *He* would! He would produce a collection of patterns of such unexampled beauty and elegance, adapted for the spring season, that Hoggs and Bloggs would see that

the moment for action had arrived; that the iron was hot, and must be struck at once: and so, by his own energy, spirit, and genius, Hagart saw his way to revive the Spiggletton trade, to cause the whole town to sing aloud for joy, to make Hoggs and Bloggs millionaires, and to put unknown sums of money in his own pocket. This idea had dawned upon Hagart while tossing upon his pillow about two o'clock in the morning; he thought it would do then; and now, when he had slept over it, and reviewed it with a cool brain, he not only thought it would do—he was sure of it. This grand idea rose-hued his whole world; it made less terrible his butcher's bill, and lent a healthy colour even to poor Katy's cheeks.

Hagart withdrew to the empty room in which the big desk stood; and while endeavouring to realise his brilliant idea, at the very moment, indeed, when he had sketched a sprig of hawthorn with a butterfly perched upon it—for he determined to tickle Hoggs and Bloggs with distinguished novelty, as the

jaded appetite of the epicure is tickled by condiments—Mrs Graves, the naval officer's widow, who lived two doors off, was preparing to pay a visit of condolence to Mrs Hagart.

The ladies were not in any intimate way acquainted, but they had once or twice exchanged formal calls. In truth Mrs Hagart was somewhat stiff and formal towards strangers, and was not in the least disposed to allow man or woman to inscribe his or her name perforce on her list of friends. On meeting strangers she remembered she was a M^cQuarrie, that she had a great-great-great grandfather; and from all unwelcome advances she was wont to shelter herself behind a frigid and ceremonious politeness. Such politeness, however, did not in the least disconcert Mrs Graves. She was a woman of tough moral cuticle, and could not be easily cold-shouldered. She had a charming insensibility to affront. Like the British army, she did not know when she was beaten; and like the British army, through that heroic ignorance she gained many a victory.

When Martha was running into Greysley in

the morning to summon Dr Crooks, she encountered Susan, Mrs Graves's maid-servant, returning from the dairy with the morning's milk. There was a sentimental friendship between these young women, and if their world was contracted compared to the wide and splendid one in which you and I live—why, it was the only world they had, and was as interesting to them as ours is to us. Of course when they met there was a quarter-of-an-hour's chatter, and, quite as much a matter of course, the private affairs of the respective households in which they resided constituted a considerable proportion of it. Susan told Martha that her mistress had got home her new dress, and Martha told Susan that Katy had been taken ill. And when Susan went home she brought with the milk this little morsel of news.

Mrs Graves was a kind-hearted woman enough in her way, and she was experienced in sickness. Her husband, Lieutenant Graves, R.N., had been long ill before he departed this life; she had been weakly herself in youth and early married life. She had had children, but

being of rickety constitution they had all died. When she heard the news of Katy's illness she resolved to call on Mrs Hagart, because she liked to be in the midst of sickness where she could air her experiences, because she liked a little neighbourly gossip, and because the call would give her the opportunity of wearing her new dress, which she flattered herself was of richer material and of more fashionable make than any dress possessed by Mrs Hagart.

That lady was surprised and annoyed when she saw her visitor pace in at the little gate. She was a M'Quarrie, and she did not care to receive visitors—especially such visitors as her immediate neighbours; and at the present time she was in no mood to receive visitors of any kind. But Martha opened the door, and Mrs Graves rustled through the lobby in her silk and was in the parlour in a trice. She caught Mrs Hagart's coldly-extended hand in both her own. "I am so sorry to hear that Miss Katy is ill," she said, "and have not been able to rest all the morning. She is such a pretty child, and I have admired her so often—so

quiet, so gentle, so even-tempered. She reminds me so much of my own lost darlings. Susan wished to come round to inquire, but I said I would come myself. So here I am."

What could Mrs Hagart do? Her icy manner thawed, and she asked her visitor to sit down. If the greatest booby in creation tells me that he is continually reading my books, and that his interesting children have got certain of my poems by heart, I know he is a booby all the same, but I am conscious of a pleasant titillation.

When Mrs Graves was seated, she was duly informed that Katy had been yesterday taken suddenly ill, and that Jack had been frightened out of his wits; also that the children had been taken home in their aunt's carriage.

Mrs Graves was eloquent in sympathy. "A darling girl of mine was taken ill in a similar way, and was taken from me. It was just about this season of the year too. The beginning of winter is a bad time for children's ailments—a very bad time. Dr Macnamara—I and my husband were living in Dublin then—

told me it was the winter that killed my girl. If the illness had but come in spring she would have struggled through it, and been a grown woman now—to comfort me.”

Thereafter there were tears on both sides, and a good deal of sympathetic ejaculation. Mrs Graves had come to condole, and had found herself condoled with, which was pleasant. Mrs Hagart had entirely forgotten by this time that Mrs Graves had no discoverable grandfather.

“My dear Mrs Hagart, I have had my trials. I have endured the loss of husband and children, and yet here I am: and in spite of all I can laugh and chatter pleasantly enough with a friend of an evening over a cup of tea. A heart can stand a great deal before it breaks.”

Here Mrs Hagart interjected a pious sentiment, the purport of which may be divined.

“You are a young mother,” Mrs Graves went on, “and cannot be expected yet to bear illness easily. It’s wonderful how one gets used to it after a while. I am never so happy as when I am in attendance on a sickbed—

having so much experience, you know! If you should ever require me——.” Here Mrs Hagart shook her head. “Well, I’ll not insist, but if you ever should, you know, I am at your service. In illnesses, especially with young mothers, the great thing is to have a good doctor.”

“We have called in a skilful doctor, Dr Crooks. He attended Alfred—my husband,” interjected the lady hastily, “Alfred” striking the M‘Quarrie part of her nature as being too familiar for the occasion—“and he brought him round in a week.”

“Dr Crooks!”

“You have no doubt of Dr Crooks’s skill, I hope?” asked Mrs Hagart, in an alarmed tone.

“I say nothing on the matter. It’s not for me to interfere. Dr Crooks may be a very skilful man, but I know that Mrs Wardell, when confined of her second baby, died under his charge; and that Mrs Jones’s little boy—the draper’s wife in High Street, you know—just about your girl’s age, by the way, he was, and of a similar complexion—wasted away under his care; and to this day Mrs Jones be-

lieves that Dr Crooks never understood the case. But you know I say nothing. Dr Crooks may be a skilful man; only, if I were you, I would call Dr Bowdler."

"Dr Crooks is known to my husband, and he has every confidence in him," said Mrs Hagart, somewhat coldly. "He was here this morning, and thinks that the child is not seriously ill, but that the greatest care must be taken of her."

"Doctors, as a class, don't know much about children's ailments—at least not so much as mothers of experience. How should they? They do not watch and tend them day and night as mothers do. I have buried five darlings, Mrs Hagart, and I ought to know something. Perhaps you would let me see Miss Katy. My experience might suggest"—

"Oh, no, no, no. I really couldn't. She's asleep at present, and the rustle of your dress might waken her."

"Silk," said Mrs Graves, glancing complacently down at her skirts, "especially heavy silk like this—it cost ten shillings the yard,

my dear ; and I'm sure you'll think it cheap at the money ; just try the texture—is not well suited for a sick-room, perhaps. The rustle, as you say, might disturb the darling ; but I'll call in a day or so and see my little friend, in whom I am so much interested. Don't you think it handsome, and very well made?" And Mrs Graves got up from her chair, and turned slowly round.

For a moment there was a spark of comic light in Mrs Hagart's eye. "Very handsome indeed. I suppose you got it made quite recently?"

"It came home only two days ago. The truth is"—here the visitor became much more communicative than she had intended—"this is the first time I have had it on, and I so much wished to know how you would like it."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you for the compliment. But I must be going to Katy now."

"Oh, yes, a patient must have every attention. Don't you think there is something wrong with the fold here? No! I have still

some old prescriptions given me by Dr Macnamara. I keep them in a box with the red sashes and the blue shoes the darlings wore, and I'll send one round if you like. Dr Macnamara was the most famous physician in Dublin in his time, and poor Lionel always insisted on having the most eminent skill. I am certain it will do good."

"Thank you. But we are in the hands of Dr Crooks, and must follow his advice."

"Dr Crooks is to call the day after tomorrow, I think you said. Isn't that a long time to wait?" said Mrs Graves, as she rose, shook hands with Mrs Hagart, and went into the lobby. "Be sure, my dear, that he understands the case. Everything depends upon that. If you have any reason to suspect that he does not, you can send at once for me—or Dr Bowdler."

And so Mrs Graves sailed off, highly pleased with the interview, and leaving Mrs Hagart the most miserable woman in the world.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH MRS HAGART RECEIVES A LETTER.

ON the second day, according to promise, Dr Crooks called, and found his patient much in the same condition, neither appreciably better nor worse. She took little food, slept a good deal, was always patient and sweet-tempered, had always a wan smile for her father, and when her mother came in, her arms were always stretched out for an embrace and her mouth raised for a kiss; and at this Mrs Hagart would pretend to have forgotten something, or to hear Martha calling, and go off to the parlour for a cry, from which in a little while she would return with a hypocritically cheerful face, and with some little delicacy in her hand with which to tempt Katy's appetite. On his second visit the

doctor, as was his wont, did not say much : he felt her pulse, examined her tongue, and then went into the parlour to write out a new prescription.

While drawing on his gloves the mother's anxiety broke out at once.

"O doctor—you must pardon me—but I can't help it. Tell me truly what you think? Aren't you disappointed a little that Katy is not better?"

"I confess," said the doctor, "that I expected to see a greater improvement, but I don't think on the whole that your daughter is worse: no, I don't think she is worse."

"Is her illness serious? You don't think I am likely to lose my darling? O doctor, she's so precious to me,—so precious; and I am so unhappy."

"All illness is serious, more or less, especially with delicate children; but I don't think there is any immediate cause for alarm—I really don't. Keep up your spirits, my dear lady; I expect to see your daughter running about shortly."

"If I could but hope so, doctor! But when I look on the little white, patient face, my heart misgives me sadly. If she would but be querulous and fretful, and show some little spark of quick temper, I would feel easier. Her patience and sweetness frighten me."

"Mothers are always anxious," said the doctor, with a thin smile on his clean-shaven face.

"I suppose they are, and I daresay you think me very foolish; but she is all the world to me. I did not know how dear she was, till I became afraid I should lose her."

And thereat the doctor spoke comfortable words, and said he expected great results from the new prescription. She was not to be over-anxious: he would call in a day or so; and that he had no doubt he would pull the child through. When he was gone, Mrs Hagart sat down and had a good fit of crying, and when it was over the world did seem a good deal brighter. The doctor had said comfortable words, and she was continually going over them and extracting consolation from them.

It was wonderful how much they contrived to yield—how much such words always contrive to yield—provided the rememberer is wretched enough.

A couple of hours after the departure of Dr Crooks—while Hagart was busy with his patterns, creating the new style which was to make rejuvenescent the flagging Spiggleton trade, and Mrs Hagart was sitting in Katy's room—Martha was summoned by a sharp peal of the door-bell. Hastily drying her hands—for she was engaged peeling potatoes for the early dinner—she ran out to the little gate, and was astounded to find a gray-haired serving-man waiting there. An actual serving-man—such a one as she had seen once or twice in her life standing by a carriage at a shop door in the High Street of Greysley—with white gloves, a hat with loop and band, and with silver buttons on his drab greatcoat. There he stood waiting: no dream, but a reality; and Martha went out to him with no little awe.

“Does Mrs Hagart live here?” asked the man.

Martha answered in the affirmative.

"Miss M'Quarrie sends her compliments, and wishes to know how Miss Katy Hagart is."

"'Tweel, then, she's jist much about it," said Martha. "She's neither better nor waur. Dr Crooks has been here the day, an' ordered a change o' medicine. She's verra quate an' patient, puir thing!"

"This letter is for Mrs Hagart," said the man, handing an epistle to Martha; "and you are to give it into Mrs Hagart's own hands."

Martha took the letter, promising to fulfil the message; and as her awe had by this time somewhat abated, she said, "I didna ken that Miss M'Quarrie keepit a man-servant."

"No more she does. She is living just now with my master."

"Leevin' wi' yer measter! Then it was yer measter's coach that Miss M'Quarrie was in the other day, when she picket up Katy an' brocht her hame?"

The man did not know; but Miss M'Quarrie had a day or two since driven into Greysley

in the forenoon, and returned to Hurlford to dinner.

“Hurlford! that’ll be yer measter’s place?”

The man said it was; and again intimating that the letter was to be delivered into Mrs Hagart’s own hands, went away.

“What’s this noo?” said Martha to herself as she re-entered the house. “It’s no’ intendit to be seen by the measter, an’ jist as weel, for he’s no fit for much but pentin’. Miss M’Quarrie’s comin’ nearer an’ nearer, an’ we’ll be seein’ hersel’ some o’ thae days.”

As the letter was to be delivered into the hands of her mistress, Martha thought she would do so at once, as a better opportunity would not likely occur of finding her alone. She accordingly opened the door of the room in which Katy lay, and hearing her mistress’s admonitory “Hush! the child is asleep, Martha!” she contented herself by saying in a low voice, “Mem, wad ye please to speak for a moment?” and contrived to put such mysteriousness into her intonation, that Mrs Hagart was in the kitchen with her at once.

"What is it, Martha?"

"O mem! Miss M'Quarrie sent her servant-man—at least the servant-man o' the gentleman she's staying wi' at Hurlford—to ask for Miss Katy, an' I tell't him she was jist aboot it, neither better nor waur, and that Dr Crooks had been seein' her."

"Miss M'Quarrie! You must be dreaming, girl!"

"Na, na; no dreamin' a bit. Whan the bell rang, there was the man at the door, an' he said, Miss M'Quarrie sent her compliments: an' mair than that," continued Martha, her eyes becoming bigger and rounder, and her voice growing more mysterious than ever, "he gied me this letter, mem, and tell't me to be particular to gie it into naebody's hands but yer ain."

Mrs Hagart saw at a glance that the letter was addressed to her, and that it was in her half-sister's handwriting—once familiar enough, but which she had not seen for long. She felt that the hot blood was mounting to her face, and that her hands were shaking somewhat.

Anxious that Martha should see nothing of her discomposure, she said, in as careless a tone as she could assume, "I don't know what this will be about, but perhaps it will require an immediate answer," and then, uncomfortably conscious that her voice was unsteady, she betook herself to the parlour, and shut the door after her.

When she sat down she let the letter lie in her lap, half afraid to open it. What could be the purport of it? Would it sting her as the last letter had stung her? Was it a signal that the family breach was about to be repaired? From the strange interviews with the children, she expected that Miss M'Quarrie would take action in one form or another; and now, when action had been taken, she was seized by a singular apprehension of evil. All kinds of images hurried through her brain: remembrances of her old home, her father, her early life; and still the letter lay in her lap unopened.

At last with a trembling finger she broke the seal. She saw the letter began "My dear Margaret," and that it occupied more than one

page; and then, with a nervous anxiety to see how it ended, and how her sister subscribed herself, she turned the page and encountered—with a start and a gulp, and a sudden thought of butcher and baker, and no end of nice things for Katy ill in the next room—a twenty-pound note. Lifting the note, she read at the foot of the third page, “your affectionate sister, Kate M‘Quarrie.” So far, then, the letter did not look dangerous, and she began to read it through. So it ran:—

“MY DEAR MARGARET,—You will believe me when I tell you that I feel strangely as I write these words. To go back upon what separated us is no good. Perhaps if the thing were to happen now, I would not act as I did. But at the time I thought I acted rightly, so did your father—and he knows *now*. Rightly or wrongly, I have found so little happiness in my life, that—even although you had acted more wrongly than you did—I can hope you have found more.

“I knew your children when I saw them. I was sorry to find your daughter, *and my name-*

sake, so poorly the other day. I trust she is better now. I thought when I had her in the carriage with me that her dress was rather slight for this cold weather. Perhaps the little bit of paper enclosed—and it is not the last bit I have got either—may be found useful.

“I do not know that I should see you, or that you would in the least care to see me. Perhaps, if you are not *too proud*, we may meet; but not now. I hardly think such a break as ours can be fairly soldered in this world, but I don’t know; and perhaps it may be no use trying. There are things we may forgive, but cannot forget; and there is no ghost so difficult to lay as the ghost of an injury. I don’t think I have more to say. I may perhaps send again to inquire for your daughter. Should you ever think of writing me, I shall at least read your letter.—Your affectionate sister,

“KATE M’QUARRIE.

“*P.S.*—I notice that you have put the *six-pences* I gave the children on chains, and given them to wear as keepsakes. If I had not found out *that*, I would not have written *this*.”

Mrs Hagart did not at all relish this epistle on the first reading: it seemed to her harsh, cold, inexorable, unforgiving. There was no allusion to her husband in it. It was evident that her sister held her old opinion on that matter. Then the mention of the slightness of Katy's apparel struck her as unnecessarily cruel. Altogether it was unsatisfactory, and she felt that if the circumstances had been reversed, *she* would have written with much more warmth, cordiality, and graciousness. But on a re-perusal—and the poor lady, if she read it once, read it a dozen times—it seemed to lose much of its sternness. The hard lines began to relax; and she read and read, until she began to feel that crabbed as were some of the sentences, there was real affection in them. Then the crabbed sentences began to become sorrowful sentences only—sorrowful both ways; sorrowful as regarded the writer, sorrowful also as regarded the reader. "She had to make the first advance," thought Mrs Hagart, as she smoothed out the letter and the twenty-pound note on her knee, "and she did not know how

she would be received. *If you are not too proud, we may yet meet.* She is afraid of my pride, then. *That* will be no very fierce lion in the path of reconciliation. *If I had not found out that, I would not have written this.* But for the sovereigns, she might have thought I hated her. How was she to know that I did not hate her? I think it very generous of her to take the initiative, with all its risks. And as for Katy's dress—well, perhaps it was a little too slight for the season, only she need not have put it so plainly down. But then she wasn't to know that I had her winter dresses nearly finished. How could she know? After all, she is Katy's aunt, and Katy is her namesake, as she says; and of course she can say what she thinks, and of course I need not be ashamed to accept her present. *If you think of writing me, I shall at least read your letter.* That does look a little grumpy; but then she did not read the last letter I sent, and if I write a letter now she is willing to read it,—which is pleasant so far. I think, altogether, the note is very nice." And

then Mrs Hagart began to feel very happy, for now her thoughts could linger pleasantly around her old home, around her sister, and around the grave of her father. "*He knows now;*" and she thought the reconciliation so proffered, was proffered not only by the living, but by the dead. And sitting thinking, with the letter in her lap, the present faded away, and she was again a little girl standing beside a white wall, with a laburnum tree hanging above her, and looking seaward towards dim rocky islands capped with summer clouds; and there was a step on the gravel, and two large hands were clasped over her eyes, and a voice asked who it was that was holding her, and she cried, "Papa!" and she heard her father and sister laugh as the large hands were unclasped, and the summer light and heat came gain full against her face and eyes.

But this reverie was but for a moment. When she came back to the present and its concerns, the question arose—How about her husband? Should she show him the letter and the money? He would know all about it

some day, and she thought it comported best with prudence and wifely duty, as well as with impulse, to lay the matter before him at once. And so thinking, she thrust the letter and the money into her pocket, and opening the door of the room in which Hagart worked, entered.

"Well, Mag!" he said, as his wife came in, "come to see this beauty, eh? Isn't that sweet? Isn't there a kind of, a sort of air, style, about that, eh? 'Pon my word, I never thought I was so clever a fellow. I feel a sort of inspiration, Mag. This lot will astonish the Spiggletonians. Its beauty will draw the money out of the Spiggletonian pockets, as by his flute-playing that Greek fellow, Amphion, used to draw the trees and stones after him."

Mrs Hagart stooped to look at the pattern on which her husband was engaged.

"It's very pretty, Alfred, very pretty indeed." And then, their heads being quite close, she slipped her arm round his neck, and drew his cheek against hers. "I am so happy, so happy, Alfred," she murmured, as she did so.

"Yes, yes, poor dear!" said Hagart. "It's

pleasant to know that Dr Crooks does not think that Katy is seriously ill. I knew you would be happy. And when I once get these things finished, and come home from Spiggletton like "——

"But it's not that," hesitated his wife.

"What then, Mag?" said Hagart, looking up inquiringly.

"Miss M'Quarrie sent a servant to ask for Katy to-day."

"The deuce she did! I suppose the old she-dragon will be making her appearance in person one of these days. I hope she won't catch me, that's all. Has Miss Kate's inquiry made you so happy?"

"It shows that she takes so much interest."

"Better late than never. I can remember the time when she had no interest in either you or the children. As for me, I suppose I am hated like poison, being of a family rich neither in ghosts nor grandfathers."

"Let the ghosts and grandfathers alone," said his wife; "they are not troubling you at present."

"Never saw one of them, good luck! Father and half-sister are enough for me."

"Yes, and half-sister's half-sister, you cross man;" and here his wife patted him on the shoulder. "But, Alfred, Miss M'Quarrie did more than inquire."

"Bother Miss M'Quarrie! What more did she do, then?"

"She sent me this, and this," and his wife laid down the letter and the twenty-pound note on the desk before him.

Hagart took up the note and read it. When he had finished, he turned sharply round.

"And this is what has made you so happy?"

"Yes, Alfred."

"Then you'll be good enough to send back to Miss M'Quarrie her letter and her money—at once, with my compliments. Confound her! what right has she to say that my daughter's dress is too slight for the season? If it should be so, I can provide another for her."

"I don't think you quite understand"——

"I do understand! *Although you had acted even more wrongly.*" And with that, with a

very red face, Hagart tore up the letter, and strewed its fragments on the floor. "This makes you happy, indeed! Even *although you had acted more wrongly*. I'm extremely obliged to her, and to you. *Perhaps we may meet, but not NOW!* If you wore a widow's cap, I daresay the meeting would take place to-morrow. I'm sorry I separate so much mutual affection."

"You are very cruel, Alfred, and I think very selfish. You know she is my only living relative almost—my only sister, at least—and that I am pleased she has made this advance. I am sure you don't understand her letter, and I am also sure that there is no reference to you in it. If she wishes to make friends with me, she knows that the worst plan she could adopt is to speak slightly of you in any way. You ought to know that. It was wrong of you to destroy her letter—it was the only one of hers I had."

"I don't care what you are sure of. And if you wished to preserve a specimen of her correspondence, you should have kept the letter

•

you received from her while in London. Why didn't that one make you happy? As for the money, I insist that it shall be sent back at once."

Whereat Mrs Hagart picked the note from the desk, and said, with her best dignity air, "The money shall not go back, Alfred! I am sorry to disobey you in any way, but this money shall not go back. It has come from my own family, and it would be wrong, foolish, insulting, to send it back. We shall find it very serviceable."

"I suppose I am to be taunted with my poverty next?"

"You know I am too much of a gentlewoman to taunt you, even although I had cause—which Heaven knows I have not. I don't understand your mood at all, and I think you will be sorry for what you have said."

"So happy!" cried Hagart, with his most scornful emphasis. This seemed to have stuck hardest in our friend's throat. But Mrs Hagart took no notice of the exclamation, and retired to the parlour.

Hagart was desperately sulky all day thereafter; and when Martha intimated that dinner was on the table, he growled that he was busy, and would come to tea. Meanwhile Jack had returned from school, and had gone in to chat with Katy. Mrs Hagart hurried tea; and when Hagart came in, and when his wife handed him a cup, he went up and kissed her.

"I am very sorry, Mag," he said.

"So am I, Alfred—that you should have been annoyed; but you will see that I have acted for the best."

"As you always do," said he, taking a slice of buttered toast on his plate.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH ALFRED HAGART IS DEFEATED, AND THE
WEDDERBURN BROTHERS COME TO THE RESCUE.

SEATED once in a circus—after a sylph-like creature, who to slow music had jumped through all manner of hoops, had retired amid plaudits, followed by the clown, who took occasion to throw a summersault as he went—I saw a military-looking gentleman enter the sawdust, and heard him announce that Alfred Powell, the star of European equestrians, would appear as the “Red Rider of the Prairies;” and as he spoke, a fiery steed, bare-backed, and black as Mazeppa’s desert-born, leaped into the ring, and began careering round and round. This was the Red Rider’s horse, and the Red Rider would present himself immediately. One had barely time to settle one’s self comfortably in one’s seat, when the Red Rider, in curious

apparel, with war-whoop, tomahawk, and scalping-knife, bounded over the barriers, vaulted on the flying bare-backed, and amid a thunder of applause threw himself into a graceful attitude, pointed to the rising sun, and—fell. The musicians stopped, the fiery bare-backed stopped, the applause stopped, and the Red Rider lay prone. He had sprained a limb in his fall, the daring, impetuous chief; and four military-looking gentlemen appeared and carried him out. During the whole two hours' performances there was no such round of approbation as that which greeted the splendid entrance; during the two hours' performances there was no such ignominious failure. The Red Rider was carried out, the sawdust raked anew, and a fresh candidate for popular favour presented himself. The Red Rider felt humiliated; and in the fact that he had resolved to take the audience by storm, and had been enjoying, during the whole day, perhaps, the rapturous hand-clappings of pit and galleries before he had earned them, lay, without question, the bitterest sting of that humiliation. I

saw the fallen chief carried away, and thought that I had seen in other places than the sawdust, something of the same kind happen pretty frequently. Many a Red Rider rushes out as did this poor star of European equestrians, *falls* when he is about to achieve success, and has to be carried off.

We read in our history books, that when good, stubborn old George was king only in name, and at war with his late children across the Atlantic, the English ship *Shannon* hovered about Boston Bay, stood in at times showing her colours, and did everything in her power to induce the bigger American *Chesapeake* to come out and try the issue of battle. It is recorded in these books that the Yankee captain resolved at length to accept the English ship's invitation; and so certain was he of victory, that he ordered—and at no very late hour of the day either—a dinner for the benefit of his victorious officers and crew. And so certain were the Bostonians that the *Chesapeake* would return with the *Shannon* in tow, that they left their business and lined the

shores to behold the sight, which could not be to them other than gratifying. Out went the *Chesapeake*, with brilliant colours flying ; “ Yankee Doodle,” or other stirring and appropriate air, hilariously playing, and a hundred hearts beating hopefully ; but somehow matters did not go prosperously with it. English shot smashed through the *Chesapeake’s* hull and rigging, making the cock-pit a sorry sight ; English boarders, in the most unheard-of manner, swarmed over the *Chesapeake’s* decks ; and while the eager cooks were yet perspiring, and before the eyes of the disgusted Bostonians, the stars and stripes sank, the English Union Jack flaunted proudly above, and the confident prize-taker was towed away a prize. I have always pitied the feelings of that brave American captain ! To be defeated is always bitter ; but to be defeated when you have made yourself certain of victory, and made other people certain of it too—when you have lived on the idea, laid yourself upon it as on a down bed, and rested there—is about the very bitterest thing that can befall a man in a mortal

lot in which there are at least ten bitters for every sweet.

And was not Hagart as certain of victory as the brave American captain? Did he not proceed to Spiggleton with his patterns as hopefully as did the *Chesapeake* with shotted guns and sharpened cutlasses to meet the *Shannon*? And when defeated at Spiggleton, foiled, baffled, fairly laid on his back, did he not feel something of the humiliation which pierced the heart of the American when he saw his flag go down, and had to give his sword to Captain Broke? Upon my word I don't think the one deserves our sympathy more than the other. Defeat was a serious matter to both. Yet one bitterness was spared the American: he was carried off by his victors—he had not to appear before the Bostonians, and to eat with what appetite he could the dinner placed before him—dinner which was meant to be masticated in circumstances so different. Hagart went out from his household in hopeful mood,—had he not created the new style? was he not saying to fashion what the Emperor said to the

Grand Army, "Gentlemen, there's the road to Brussels?"—and to his household he had to return, bringing with him the news of his utter defeat. And this bringing home the news of defeat seemed to the poor fellow worse even than the defeat itself.

Of course he had to walk across the moors, and of course it rained, for nature has no mercy on the unfortunate. His heavy heart made the journey long, and it was night before he reached Greysley, penniless, footsore, bringing his collection of patterns with him, which had lost all brilliancy now in his eyes. Hoggs and Bloggs had bad news. The markets were glutted, and into a glutted market it was madness to fling fresh supplies of goods. Hagart intimated that his patterns were intended for the spring season, and expressed his belief that if his novel and tasteful designs were produced they would set the fashion, and the producers would reap a fortune. Hoggs and Bloggs lacked faith, they would not run the risk, and declined making purchases. Hagart tried the lesser houses, but with a like result.

Among the manufacturers there had crept gloom and apprehension. "Business was in a shaky state. They really could not venture." And when Hagart, in his inn, looked over the unfortunate sketches, he was astonished at the change he saw in them. Blight and mildew had fallen on them. The country smiled in the morning, but by evening an army of locusts had passed over it. The splendour had all died out. The novelties on which he had so plumed himself had become deformities. To his own apprehension his patterns had grown common, ugly, absurd. His spirits had fallen to zero, and he was inclined to think that Hoggs and Bloggs had rejected his works, not on account of flagging trade and glutted markets, but because they were deficient in every kind of merit whatsoever.

In seasons of good luck, Hagart's singing spirits soared out of sight, like a skylark: in seasons of bad luck, he humbled himself and slunk into the darkest corner he could find. He was wet to-night, and he was glad of it. His boots were covered with mire, and from

that fact he derived much satisfaction. Bringing such evil tidings, he thought it proper that he should appear tashed and battered. In some curious way he wished to appeal to his wife's pity, and so he rather liked the rain and mud. If somebody would but waylay him and knock him down, he thought he would accept the knocking down with much pleasure. But when he got home he received as warm a welcome as if he had come home laden with gold. His wife opened the door for him, and had only a cheerful smile when in a single sentence he blurted out all his unsucccess. She helped him to take off his coat, and had waiting for him a change of clothing. He encased himself in the dry garments as if they were too good for him; and when he entered the parlour the fire was burning merrily—for the candles had not been brought in—and making all kinds of lights and shadows dance on the furniture. The tea-things were placed on the table in readiness, and on the footstool before the fire his slippers were laid out. As she poured out the tea Mrs Hagart put in a plea-

sant sentence or so, and when he had dined and supped—for on the present occasion the two meals were rolled into one—she brought brewing materials and mixed his punch with her own hands, and sat down beside him, accepting as she did so a tiny glassful of the liquid which he had ladled out for her. Hagart was very silent; he noticed all his wife's little attentions, and thought sincerely at the moment that he was undeserving of them, and that she was heaping coals of fire on his head.

“You must be very tired, dear,” said his wife, laying down the tiny glass.

“Heartsore, Mag! I don't care a bit for the fatigue; a night's rest will put that all right. I really don't know what I shall do!”

He looked low and downhearted enough as he sat before the fire, his mind sorely troubled about the future, and his hands clasped on his knee. His wife looked at him with kindly eyes, nimble thoughts in her brain the while. He had had his way up till now, and now he was dead beat. He himself acknowledged he

was dead beat. Mrs Hagart remembered what an unlucky dog he had been, and the idea grew strong upon her—it had visited her before, indeed, but she had driven it away as if it had been a sin—that an unlucky dog he would remain till the end of the chapter. So thinking, she did not love him one whit the less; loved him all the more, perhaps; and she resolved that, he being bowled out, she would take the innings and make what play she could. All unknowing to Hagart as he sat there with his hands clasped on his knee, the reins of household sovereignty slipped from his grasp. He was no longer at the helm: he was no longer commander-in-chief. Mrs Hagart was a wise woman, and knew instinctively that to possess authority she must not show it; that to be queen of the household it would never do to appear in royal robe and wear crown and sceptre. But she could distinguish substances from shadows, and *having* the sceptre in her possession, she could very easily relinquish the perilous pleasure of wearing it in public. Meantime her duty was to cheer and soothe.

"Everything is as black as thunder. I really don't know to what hand to turn."

"You must not speak in that way, Alfred. You have been fortunate before, and you will be fortunate again. The patterns were very pretty, I am sure; but as trade is dull, you must just rest on your oars, as the Spiggleton people are doing. Trade will revive again."

He knew the twenty-pound note was in his wife's mind; and three days before the bare suspicion of that fact would have put him in a blaze of anger. But he was humble to-night. Disappointment had quenched his pride and self-assertion, as water quenches fire.

"I don't know. I thought the patterns were pretty enough while I was engaged on them; but now they seem the work of a fool. And I think I am a fool and idiot, and have been a fool and idiot all my life."

Alfred would gladly have been knocked down on his way home; he was now doing what he could to perform that little bit of kindness for himself.

"No, Alfred, neither fool nor idiot."

"I thought I had brains once—and so did others. Now I have fallen so low that I cannot tempt fellows like Hoggs and Bloggs to buy my things."

"Hoggs and Bloggs bought your things before, and they will buy them again. Better times will come round."

"I would not care if misfortune fell on myself alone. What will you say if you find out that you have married a fool—a fellow without brains, or knack, or cleverness—who, beaten out of art, can't even paint patterns for manufacturers?"

"But I know that I have not married a fool."

"I absolutely loathe myself," said Hagart, taking himself as it were by the beard and smiting himself. "I think I am the poorest dog in Christendom. I could cut my throat almost. I sometimes wish, Mag, that I had never seen you!"

"Why, Alfred?" asked the wife, who could see no logical connexion between the last sentence and what he had been saying previously.

"It would have been an unhappy thing for me if I had never seen *you*."

"If you had waited you could have got a better husband—not a dunderhead who cannot even paint patterns that people will buy. What right had I to take you out of your proper sphere and bring down your fortune to mine?"

"So long as I don't complain, I see no cause you have to. But don't let us talk nonsense. You are unstrung to-night, and see things in their blackest colours. I wrote my sister yesterday, dear, and told her that her letter gave me much pleasure, and that I was ready to forget all the past and be friends again as if nothing had happened. Now do you know what I have been thinking?"

Hagart remembered the high ground he had taken two or three days previously when Miss Kate's letter had been under discussion, and contented himself with staring gloomily into the fire.

"I know she means to be friendly," his wife went on; "and there was a great deal of friend-

ship in the letter she sent, although you thought it harsh. The money"——

Here Hagart fidgeted in his seat as if the allusion hurt him.

"Now, Alfred, don't be foolish ! The money has been very useful, and I have been able to get some nice things for Katy—poor child, you have not asked for her to-night, although she has been constantly inquiring when papa would be home ;—and I was not ashamed to take it, because, although it came from my sister, it belonged to my father, so that I had a sort of right to it. But I have been thinking that it would be a nice thing if Aunt Kate would take Jack to Hawkhead to live with her."

"Take Jack to Hawkhead ?"

"Yes, dear. He's getting a big fellow, and is a good scholar, so far as he has gone. I should be sorry to part with him, of course, but it would be an excellent thing for him, and we could see him often. He could go to the Hawkhead university for a year or so ; lads as young as he enter there, I believe. And then there are so many openings in a large city for a clever

well-educated young man, and with his aunt's influence he would be sure to get on! What do you think?"

"I really don't know," said Hagart, ruefully; "I don't know what hand to turn to. I wouldn't like to lose the boy, but—have you written to your sister on the matter?"

"No. I have only been thinking that it might be brought about in time—that is, if I and my sister get on as well as I expect and hope."

"But if your sister is inclined to build up the breach, there I am again! She hates me, and I was the original cause of quarrel. You and she will never be friends so long as I live."

"Nonsense, Alfred! But what do you think of my plan?"

"I positively can't say. It will be hard to lose the boy."

"Don't you think it would be the best thing we could do? I suppose you don't wish to bring him up to your own business?" said Mrs Hagart, letting fly an arrow she had kept in reserve.

"Certainly not," said Alfred, hastily; "and it's perhaps best that the rats should forsake the sinking ship. You know it's a sinking ship, and you won't risk your son in it. Perhaps you are right. I also wish I could take out a passage in another craft, but it's too late now."

"What other craft, Alfred?"

"I have wished often that I could get quit of this confounded pattern-drawing, and find employment as a clerk, accountant, secretary, or something of that kind. But then I am so unacquainted with the world's ways. I might be able to get a toll-bar," said he, smiling grimly; "but then I never would be able to give a carter correct change, and my blunders would all be against myself."

"If you were the keeper of a toll-bar you would certainly never be able to change half-a-crown, and would be ruined in a month," returned his wife, laughing. "But cheer up, I don't think you are reduced to a toll-bar yet."

"What an organ of hope you have, Mag! With what a smiling face you front misfortune! I can't understand it."

"I have no great organ of hope, as you call it; but I deal prudently with it."

"How?"

"I use just a little every day. When I have a dozen candles in the house I don't light them all at once."

"And I light my dozen at once, and when they burn down I am in the dark! Is that your meaning? If it is, I daresay there is some truth in it. You mean that you are never entirely in the dark?"

"Exactly. But don't let us bother about our organs of hope to-night, Alfred. If Aunt Kate should ask Jack to go and live with her at Hawkhead,—if she *should*, you know, for I am not at all certain that she will,—you will not set your face against it?"

"If I thought it would be for the boy's benefit"——

"I am glad that you have given your consent so frankly. That's a dear! Of course he won't go unless we think it will be for his benefit. Now let us go to bed, for you must be tired. I'll just slip in and see how Katy is?"

"Poor child!" muttered he, as his wife left him; "*she* won't leave the sinking ship. Aunt Kate won't take *her*. She will always be mine, and mine only."

Hagart was no prophet. She was leaving the sinking ship very fast, and was going farther away than Hawkhead, and with a sterner guide than Aunt Kate.

But although heavily water-logged, the ship was not destined yet to sink. In fact it righted in a surprising manner; and with all sail clapped on, and with a prosperous wind, there was every probability that it might yet make port and remain there for a while. The very next morning, while Hagart and his wife were sitting at breakfast, Martha brought in a note which our friend eyed suspiciously for a moment—perhaps he had some fear of a dun—he then broke the seal and read the contents aloud.

"Messrs Wedderburn Brothers present compliments to Mr Hagart, and will take it kind if he will call at their office, 119 New Street, tomorrow, as early in the day as possible."

"What can this be?" said Hagart, as he tossed the note across the table to his wife. "Wedderburn Brothers is the best house in Greysley for shawls. What can be the meaning of it? The note was written last night, and I suppose I had better go at once."

"I think so, Alfred. I suppose they wish to employ or consult you in one way or another."

And so Hagart swallowed his coffee and sallied into Greysley.

Of Wedderburn Brothers Hagart had no personal knowledge, but he knew the firm was extensive and respectable, and busied itself with the production of the finest and most expensive class of goods. "What can they want with me?" thought he, as he trudged down New Street with a sharp eye for No. 119. "They get all their patterns from Paris, and won't need my services. I really can't guess what they want with me. Hillo, here's No. 119." And he went up-stairs and entered the counting-room with a beating heart.

The Wedderburn Brothers—two gray-haired spectacled men—looked up from their desks

when he opened the door. "I had a note from you this morning, and have come"——

"How do you do, Mr Hagart?" and the Wedderburn Brothers both rose; "will you step this way, please?" And they led Hagart into a room off the counting-house, and motioned him to a seat.

The elder brother then produced a portfolio filled with sketches, and laid it on the table beside Hagart. "We have just received these from Paris," said he, as he turned them slowly over; "what do you think of them?"

They were a cut above him, and Hagart regarded them with the despairing admiration with which a thousand living bards regard Mr Tennyson's poems.

"We can do nothing like that in this country, can we?" said the elder brother; "these French fellows beat us all to sticks."

"They do, indeed. I never saw such beautiful patterns in all my life."

"They are just *too* beautiful; that's the fault we find with them," said the elder brother, smiling. "We can't produce them as they

stand, and no one would buy them if we could."

"It would be difficult to produce such things properly in Greysley."

"Impossible. Now, why we sent for you was simply this. We wish to see if you will undertake the re-casting of these sketches, and—preserving the aroma of style as far as possible—so shaping and altering them that they will be brought within the range of the skill of our workmen. Do you think you will be able to do so?"

"I shall be delighted to do my best."

"We have heard a good report of you, and have no doubt that you are perfectly competent. The job will extend over several weeks or perhaps months, and we are prepared to allow you four guineas per week during the time, and otherwise to make you as comfortable as we can."

Hagart thought he had never heard such music distil from human lips. "When should you wish me to begin?" asked he.

"At once—this very hour. You have not working materials with you?"

"No."

"Then you can send home for them. One of my lads will be at your service. Just drop a line, and he will bring your things with him. Meantime, here is the room we have set apart for you."

Hagart scribbled hastily on a bit of paper—"Glorious news, Mag. Wedderburn Brothers have got a lot of the most lovely French patterns, and I am engaged to *spoil* them at the rate of four guineas a-week. Of course Jack won't go to Hawkhead now. I'll be home for dinner at five. Be sure and kill the fatted calf, and lay in some beer. Give the bearer all my things—paints, paint-saucers, brushes, tracing-paper, compasses, foot-rule, and all the rest. Good-bye till five. Yours ever,—A. H." And this paper he folded up and gave to the messenger. He then devoted himself to the portfolio, that he might familiarise himself with its brilliant contents.

Hagart came home to dinner elate as morning chanticleer that on tip-toe crows defiance to

a dozen sleeping farms. His wife had many questions to ask, and he delighted to be questioned. He stated that Wedderburn Brothers were the most gentlemanly men, and instituted comparison between them and his former employers in Greysley—comparison damaging to the House. He spoke of the nice room he worked in. He was never weary of extolling the beauty of the Parisian designs, frankly admitting that in a certain indefinable air and style they surpassed his own productions, as far as a fine town-bred lady surpasses a country maid. This he acknowledged freely. “But what then?” said he; “if a man can’t be a great original poet, it’s always something to be an excellent translator. I can’t paint like these Frenchmen, but I can bring their admirable designs within the British workman’s capacity of production. I can translate them into the vernacular, so to speak. When I have this job finished, it would be an excellent idea to run over to Paris for a week or so, establish a connexion with the clever fellows there, arrange

to have parcels of patterns delivered to me monthly, and reduce and adapt these patterns for the manufacturers here. The notion is entirely new, and could not fail of success. My field would comprehend Greysley, Spiggletton, Hawkhead, and other manufacturing centres. I'll engage some talented young men to work under my direction, and drive a roaring trade. By Jove, the idea is glorious!" said Hagart, his imagination kindling in its flight like a Roman candle and bursting at last into many-coloured splendours. "And then as I shall be in Paris frequently, at any rate, what is to hinder me from taking you, Mag, and the children over with me and showing you all the palaces, churches, and picture galleries? I'd like to show you a bit of the world. Wouldn't you like it?"

"Yes," said Mrs Hagart, looking up from her sewing, for this talk had taken place after supper, and just before going to bed, at which period Hagart's spirits were usually most boisterous, "I should like very much to see Paris

and all its sights; but don't you think you have lit all your candles again, dear? You have Wedderburn Brothers and four guineas a-week; let us be content with that, and let Paris alone in the meantime."

CHAPTER XI.

WHICH CHRONICLES A GRAVE OCCURRENCE.

WHETHER Hagart's scheme of establishing a connexion with the celebrated Parisian pattern-designers, and of redacting their works to suit the Greysleyan artisans, was likely to succeed, there could be no manner of doubt that employment at the rate of four guineas per week, with no anxiety, with no weary trudges to Spiggleton and back with a sore heart and an empty pocket, was a comfortable thing. So he felt at least, on the first Saturday afternoon after his engagement with the Wedderburn Brothers, as he walked home with that sum in notes and silver safely deposited in his breeches pocket. He felt that he had secured for himself a quiet haven, and he looked back on his past life as the passenger in port looks

back upon his recent tossings on a stormy sea. He hoped that he would not be forced to leave the haven, and go out on the rough water for yet a while. He shuddered at the weary tugging at the hopeless oar; he felicitated himself on present quiet and comfort, and he would have been entirely happy were it not for anxiety on his daughter's account. For Katy was not recovering—in truth, and this he could no longer conceal from himself, she was fast losing strength, and had for the last day or two been appreciably worse. Dr Crooks's prescriptions had failed entirely of effect, and Dr Crooks, he could see, began to consider the crisis a grave one.

The forces of the household being much engaged, as household forces are sure to be in times of sickness, Hagart, before he went out, had undertaken to perform certain little offices in Greysley, and to deliver messages to grocer, butcher, and baker. When he reached home, somewhat late on Saturday afternoon, he found his wife crying, and Jack despatched to summon Dr Crooks. An hour or two previously, Mrs

Hagart, being in attendance at Katy's bedside, had asked a question, and in reply, the child had begun to babble in an incoherent fashion, about the canal banks, and the beautiful birds, that flew about and fed on the scarlet hips and haws in the hedges; about the wonderful bridge across the river, and the red castle against the sky, with birds flying above and over it; and the gray horse, Smiler, and the long passage-boat, and all the other incidents of the wonderful journey. At this patch-work prattle, the uneasy mind playing with vivid images, Mrs Hagart had become seriously alarmed, and sent off Jack to bring Dr Crooks with him at once if he was disengaged, and if engaged to wait for him.

The doctor was out—was in point of fact occupied in bringing a little Greysleyan stranger into the world, but was expected home every minute. So Jack was popped into the library, where he sat and stared at the stucco busts painted a drab colour, which were standing on the top of the bookcase, much considering whom they might represent, and thinking that the

originals must have been extremely ill-favoured; and at the rows on rows of books, and puzzling himself whether the doctor had read through the whole of them, and if he had, where in the world he could stow away all the learning and wisdom; and then all of a sudden, his thoughts would fly off at a tangent to the little face in the little white bed at home, and then something rose in his throat, and the ugly drab busts and the wonderful rows of books would all disappear in a mist, through which they slowly glimmered back in a minute or so. Meanwhile Hagart had come, and had gone in with his wife to see Katy. The child lay on her back, her eyes open, and her fingers twitching at the bed-clothes at intervals. As he entered she turned slightly round, steadied on him her wandering eyes, but in them there was no look of pleased recognition.

"Don't you know papa?" he asked softly, while bending over her.

And then the strangest smile crept into the little peaked face, lighting it up, but if possible, with its unfamiliarness, making it sadder than

before. "Why do you wear that funny bonnet, and that great white tippet? and what a number of rings you have." Then out of the face the smile slowly died, and a sort of cloudy recognition took its place: "And yet you are not like Aunt Kate I saw at the station-house!"

"I am not Aunt Kate," said poor Hagart; "I am your own papa!"

"Papa has gone to Spiggleton, and will have to walk home all the way again. Isn't it hard? Here is the sixpence you gave me on the chain! I wear it always under my dress when I go to school. You kissed me, and said I was your namesake."

"Papa has come back from Spiggleton; he is at your side."

"Don't speak, don't! See the robin! How pretty it is. Don't frighten away the robin." And then recognition came back fully. "Mamma," said Katy, wearily, "where am I? what have I been saying? who has been here?"

"No one, save papa and mamma, darling; and you are in your own bed at home," said the mother, kneeling down by the bedside, and

tenderly putting aside a wisp of auburn hair which had strayed from under the white cap on to her forehead.

"I thought Aunt Kate was here—surely she has been here! You have been crying, mamma! Were you crying because the pretty birds were frightened away? Don't cry! Will there be birds in heaven, mamma?" *

And at the word "heaven," Mrs Hagart pressed her face down upon the bed-clothes.

"I am tired with my long walk, and wish to sleep. Jack will show me the old pit some other Saturday. Kiss me, mamma. Good night!"

And Katy turned wearily round, and fell on slumber, and the bed-clothes were tenderly tucked in around her shoulders, and the twain looked in one another's faces silently.

Dr Crooks came home at length, and found Jack waiting for him. It was Saturday night, and the worthy man would gladly have rested from his week's labour, have had a little supper, a quiet chat with his maiden sister, who kept house for him, or have accompanied her

piano with his flute, or lost all weariness and care for an hour or two in a pleasant book before he went to bed. He had been thinking of these mild pleasures before he came in, and it was with a smothered sigh he beheld the boy. He heard the message, asked one or two questions about Katy, and went into the lobby to procure a heavier stick and a warmer coat, for the late autumn evenings had become chill. He then took Jack's hand in his own, and, chatting at intervals, they proceeded through the streets, which, being Saturday night, were more crowded than usual. Shop windows were in a blaze of light; butter, hams, and eggs, were seen for a moment in the provision merchant's; bonnet-frames, pink and white ribbons, and festoons of many-coloured gloves, in the mercer's. All kinds of humble marketings were going on — housewives with baskets on their arms, and accompanied by their husbands, were laying in weekly stores, and a special luxury for to-morrow's dinner when they returned from church. Now a crowd gathered round a hoarse ballad-singer,

blocking up the way ; now a tipsy operative lurched across the pavement, bringing himself up sharp on the kerbstone—a policeman on the other side of the street eying him suspiciously, not yet finding cause to interfere, but expecting cause every moment. Holding still the doctor's hand, Jack threaded his way through all this, and still chatting, they got out of the lights and bustle of the streets, and pacing along the bank, they heard the dull thunder of the river as it tumbled over the rocks. At last they reached the upper road, which ran along the front of the distilleries—great masses of gloom now against the light gray sky, with a stray light or two twinkling in the windows. By this time, probably from having exhausted all the topics which he fancied would interest a boy, perhaps from immersion in thoughts appertaining to the errand on which he was engaged, the doctor became quite silent ; and so, still held by the hand, Jack trudged on in considerable awe. When they reached the gate and had rung the bell, the doctor turned his back on the house,

inspected the light gray sky, over which the tender light of the moon was spreading, and hummed absently one of the tunes which his sister played on the old-fashioned piano of an evening—when he was disengaged, and in loose coat and slippers—and which he delighted to accompany on the flute. From this conduct on the doctor's part, Jack was drawing his own conclusions—consolatory for the most part as regarded his sister—when Martha opened the door. The doctor immediately dropped his tune, withdrew his eyes from the sky, entered at once without asking a question, opened the door of the room in which the invalid lay, where Hagart and his wife were, and indeed had been all the evening, and closed it softly behind him. Jack went into the kitchen, and sat down on his accustomed seat. Martha's face he noticed was serious; and by her violent absorption in scrubbing, it was evident that she did not care for conversation. For conversation Jack himself had not sufficient spirits, and so he sat before the fire silently, leaning his face on his

hands. Everything was quiet in Katy's room : he would have given worlds to have known what was going on within, but there was no sound ; no one came out ; message of no kind reached the kitchen. He had sat beside the fire for half-an-hour : everything was strangely quiet ; and in the strange quiet of the house he began to fear, and be pained by the monotonous ticking of the clock, which stood at the head of the lobby, at the back of the kitchen door—like a spy or a robber, Jack thought to-night.

An hour passed ; the silence began to be intolerable, and the slow, regular tick of the clock to rule despotically over everything, and to beat like hammers on his excited nerves. From the room in which his sister lay there had come no sound ; once only the door softly opened, and he heard a low murmur of voices, and then it softly closed. He waited and waited, staring into the fire. He would have crept to the door and listened, but he was afraid he would thereby acquire some terrible knowledge ; and perhaps in coming out Dr Crooks would find him playing the eaves-

dropper. At last he thought he would go to bed—perhaps he would be able to sleep—at all events he would escape the horrible tyranny of the clock. He took off his shoes and went quietly. The room was full of warm, brown light from the fire, which had been kindled some time before, and which had burned down now. He curiously noted chair and table; his little white bed, with the clothes partly turned down, and his night-gown on the pillow. He undressed slowly and mechanically, his mind wandering into the strangest places and among the strangest objects—places and objects with which at the moment he had not the slightest concern. He got his clothes off, was dressed in his white night-gown, and was buttoning the wristband, when the door of the room opened. A light came in, and Jack saw his shadow run up the wall, hit the ceiling, and disappear. Then the door closed, his father came forward, put the candle on the little table, and sat down on the chair beside the bed. Jack noticed that his father's face was grave, and that there was a solemnity in his manner which he

had never witnessed before. Hagart drew the boy to his knee, and put his arm tenderly round him.

"You love your sister very much, John?"

"Yes," said Jack.

"You must be very brave. She is going to leave us—you won't go to school with her, or play with her any more."

"What is it? I don't understand you. Say it again!" cried the boy, in whose ears the words had made but a confused ringing and murmuring, like water in the ears of a drowning man.

"She is going away from us. Dr Crooks says there is no hope—she is dying, John."

This time the words delivered their meaning, but not in sharp outlines, only in a bewildering way. Some deadly stupor had got into his brain. He stared at the candle, which his father had brought and laid on the table, and noticed that in the flame a tall pillar of a wick was standing, like a black martyr.

"The doctor says she is dying. She is to be prayed for in the church to-morrow."

Jack, staring still at the candle, noticed that the wick had split in the centre, and was overlapping and hanging over, and that one of the overlapping portions had become red; and then he noticed that the red portion dropped off, and fell down on the tallow at the foot of the flame, and that the melted tallow had begun to run down on a great smear on the candlestick.

"God is going to take her to Himself, and we must be resigned. Pray for her to-night, John, and for yourself, and your mother, and me—that we may all be good, and that when we come to die we may all meet her in heaven."

"Yes," said Jack, taking involuntary note that the fallen portion of the wick had become black, and that the tallow had ceased to melt and run.

"My boy!" cried Hagart, impetuously, and clutching Jack to his breast, "if Katy dies, you are the only thing left to us," and then Jack felt big tears dropping upon his face.

"Go to bed now, John," he said, after a

while, and in a low voice, "go to bed, and don't forget to say your prayers—don't forget to-night, nor any other night."

Jack said he would not forget; and, standing in the same place, he saw his father take out the light with him, and his shadow come across the ceiling and down the wall to him, and then the door closed, and he was standing again in the warm brown light of the sinking fire.

What was it he had heard? The words lingered in his ears; he knew their meaning perfectly, but he was in sore stupor and bewilderment. He was told that Katy was dying, but somehow the knowledge did not frighten him, did not even vex him. He had shrieked out, he remembered, when he saw Katy once cut her finger; and now, when he was told that she was dying, that his only sister and playfellow and closest companion was to be taken away for ever, he was conscious only of unnatural calmness. He could not make it out. It was like being struck, and feeling no pain. He had no sharp sense of sorrow.

He was astonished that he did not break out crying. And, standing in his white night-gown beside the dying fire, he heard the outer door close. That is Dr Crooks going home, he thought.

Then he went to the window and looked out. The night was calm, and right above him, in a great field of blue-gray sky, a crescent moon and star were reposing peacefully, —like celestial ewe and lamb. Underneath, he saw a tree or two, and bulks of darkness, which he knew to be outhouses. The star, and the pure silver of the thin slip of moon, had for him, at the moment, a wonderful fascination; and, thinking of their distance, their silence, their solitude, suddenly, as if some sluice had been opened, some obstruction had been taken away, the pent-up tears and sorrow came at length. "Katy! Katy! don't leave me!" he cried out, wringing his hands, and throwing himself down on the rug before the fire; and then he thought how hard it was that he could not die also, and go with her; it would be so much easier, he thought, to die

with her, than to live without her; and, after a while, his weeping took away the sharp edges of his sorrow, and a calmness came back, like the calmness after the thunder-shower has fallen; and with this serenity there became gradually mixed an inexpressible sweetness and balm, and he fell asleep on the rug; and Katy and he were wandering, hand in hand, along the canal bank, and around them were hopping, and feeding, and singing, a multitude of birds—more beautiful than any that Jack had ever seen before.

Next day was Sunday, and in the morning Dr Crooks called, and found his patient in the same condition; weak, sleepy, uncomplaining, and muttering incoherent sentences at intervals. He spoke what words of comfort he could, but held out no hopes of recovery. Mrs Hagart was in constant attendance; Alfred would not leave her, and consequently, Jack was deputed to represent the family at the afternoon service in church. He walked into Greysley while bells were ringing, and well-dressed people were flocking to their places of

worship: he took his place in the pew; he heard the psalmody, and the prayer, and the sermon, with a mind preoccupied; and when, just before the concluding prayer, the precentor drawled out, "The prayers of this congregation are requested for a child apparently near death," and when the good clergyman prayed that the child's life might be spared, if in accordance with the Divine will; if not, that she might pass into the presence of the Saviour, who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not;" and that the bruised hearts of the parents might be bound up and comforted—when he heard all this, and remembering that it was Katy at home who was thus mentioned,—his sister, his playfellow, his companion,—Jack pressed his face down on the bookboard before him, and sobbed aloud.

Service was over, and Jack had hardly got himself free from the stream of worshippers, when the little schoolmaster, who was walking on the other side of the street, recognised him, and came across to make inquiries. He liked

the boy, and was sincerely sorry when he heard that Katy—of whose prolonged absence from school he was of course cognisant—was seriously ill. The schoolmaster listened to Jack's relation with a serious face. "Poor child," he said, "I am deeply grieved. So young, too, and so gentle. Give my sympathy to your father and mother—although *that* won't do much good. Good-bye, John." And he shook his pupil's hand, thinking of all the boys and girls who had gone silently out of his little flock—of that other school of his that made no sound—of their other schoolmaster. Jack had not left the schoolmaster long, when he was picked up by Mrs Graves on *her* way from church, and in company with that notable lady he was forced to march. To her he had to tell, over again, the whole story of Katy's illness; and her pertinacious questioning—for she was anxious to obtain the best information—was to him sheer pain, like the rough and unskilful handling of bruised limbs. Still, to do the lady justice, her intention was kind, and she was as little rudely inquisitive as it was in

her nature and the circumstances of the case to be. When she reached her own door, she shook hands with him formally, desired to be remembered to his dear mother; wished that Dr Bowdler had been called in, or one of Dr Macnamara's prescriptions had been tried, and regarded him with eyes of authentic concern. Jack went home conscious that both by Mrs Graves and the schoolmaster he had been treated with a respect and consideration of which he had hitherto no experience, and he was at no loss to discover whence that strange new respect and consideration arose.

He got home from church, but there was no change when he entered Katy's room. Mrs Hagart was sitting by the bedside, and Hagart, who was standing with his face to the window, turned round. Jack went up to the bed, the eyes wandered to his face and stayed there, and were then withdrawn. Mr Hagart asked if Katy had been prayed for, and when Jack answered in the affirmative, there was silence, and Hagart turned to the window again. Jack then slipped into the kitchen, where, at Martha's

request, he read aloud those chapters of St John relating to the sisters at Bethany, and how Christ wept at the grave of Lazarus, and brought him—the secret of the other world in his eyes—to them from the grave.

That night in dream the boy's brain wove the strangest fantasies. He had lost Katy; she had gone away from him utterly: she was dead, and yet he felt no sorrow. He knew that she was gone away—separated from him by immeasurable spaces. His voice could not reach hers; between them there could be no message, and no messenger. And then there came upon him supernatural power of volition, and he thought he would go to her. He thought he had himself died, and that he was standing in an immense solitude; in an instant father and mother, school companions, and all the items which had hitherto composed his life, were left behind—distant as by thousands of miles—distant as by hundreds of years. And without fear or any trembling, but filled with a solemn expectancy, filled with the sense of an unimagined and inconceivable

something about to break upon him, he was wandering over a land in which there was no landmark, covered with the twilight of Eternity, opaque, black, formless as a midnight moor. And the land rose up before him to a black level line; and above that black level line there lay a bar of livid dawn, such as we see on earth, when the June midnight has just turned, and before a bird has twittered; and above that black level line of land, underneath that livid bar of dawn, lay the inconceivable secret that might in a moment leap upon him. And he stood gazing straight before him, marvelling into *what* the solemn images would resolve themselves. He knew that Katy was somewhere, and would come—but how? And suddenly, behind him, in that immense solitude, in that land of death, where never was known sound of human voice or fall of human footstep, he heard a stealthy rustling, and out of the darkness he felt that a hand was stretched out over him, and the awe instantly flew into the sharpest terror, and with a cry he awoke——

It was morning, and his father was standing by his bedside. "You have been dreaming, John," he said.

In a moment the dream fell in ruins around him, but he had not yet escaped from its influence. He saw his father standing by. "What is it?" he asked.

"Put on your clothes," said Hagart, in a voice which was almost a whisper, and Jack noticed now that his eyes were strange, "and come into Katy's room—that you may see her once again."

Jack was on the floor in an instant; he dressed hastily and followed. When he entered the room, his mother was sitting by the bedside, with Katy's hand in hers, while Martha was standing back with her apron to her eyes. Hagart led the boy to the bedside.

"Bid her farewell," said he, and Jack went close up.

Katy was yet conscious. She turned her head, and recognised him, life's last sunbeam playing on her lips. "Jack, Jack, poor Jack!" she said, and the sunbeam vanished.

"Oh, Alfred, pray for her, pray for her!"

And with the exception of Mrs Hagart, who still held Katy's hand, they all knelt down, and with a feeling of awe almost as great as the awe in his dream, Jack heard his father pray. Not that it was the first time he had heard him so engaged; but on occasions of family worship—and in the household such occasions occurred every Sunday morning and evening—Hagart was wont to read from a book of prayers prepared by some pious divine, and the matter and manner were, as a consequence, comparatively commonplace. But this morning Hagart prayed from his own heart, and used his own language, and the boy was struck and subdued. The room was still, there was nothing heard but Hagart's voice, and a sob at intervals from Martha.

"Alfred!" cried Mrs Hagart, suddenly, as she rose from her seat, and leaned over her daughter.

They all came forward: a shadow fell over Katy's face, the tiny grasp relaxed in Mrs

Hagart's hand, and the eyes glazed. The sufferer had passed.

"Rin roon to Mrs Graves, an' tell her to come," whispered Martha; "yer mother canna be left to hersel' the noo."

Jack slipped out, but the houses, and the road, and the barge passing along the canal, were strange and foreign-looking. He stared on them, as if to assure himself that he was not walking in a dream. Up till this time he had shed no tear, but before he had reached Mrs Graves's house his sorrow had found its natural outlet.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH A TARDY MESSENGER ARRIVES.

AN unwonted silence settled down on the Hagart household now. In a room, the white curtain of which was always down, Katy lay in her white garments; and the silence of *that* room crept into parlour and kitchen. Mrs Hagart was always low-toned and quiet, but now her step was almost unheard, and her voice hardly rose above a whisper. Martha would sing at her work at times, and go through with it after a somewhat noisy fashion, scrubbing the dresser impetuously in her own proper sphere, making the fire-irons clash in the sitting-room; but now her voice was silent, and her duties were accomplished without any noise. Hagart carried the silence of the dwelling with him into Greysley where he went to labour for the

behoof of the Wedderburn Brothers, and he brought it back with him from the Wedderburn Brothers' in the evening. Jack, usually noisy as a summer beck, became silent as a winter one which frost has locked up. Into the prosaic household Death had come, like an angel beautiful and terrible, making changes; and the changes he had made were yet visible, and the members of the household were still with the remembrance. In the hearts of all there was sharp grief—grief which found plenteous vent in solitude and out-of-the-way corners; but the unwonted silence of the dwelling did not spring so much from grief, as from an obscure sense of sacredness and awe. It issued as from a fountain from the still face in the room in which the blind was constantly down. With *that* in the house there could be no impatience, no sharp retort, no unmeaning speeches, no ungentleness, no pride. Something of a Sabbath-day had flowed over into the week; something of the sacredness of Sabbath psalms, something of the hush that follows Sabbath prayers. And if Death is always

painful, it solemnises even the wildest, and that solemnisation—refined or rude—we all need at times. Were it not for Death we should become hard, self-sufficient, sensual, prosaic. Death makes life dearer by a sense of insecurity. It comes to us immersed in our two-penny ambitions, and in its chilly spiritual radiance we see how poor the wealth is, or the place, or the reputation which we strive after. It takes away from this world and gives to the other, and year by year this world darkens and the other brightens. Death is a greater poet far than Love; and but for Death, Love would lose its beauty, its eternal youthfulness, and that ineffable something which never can be fully known, and become familiar, full-fleshed, pearly, and wear in due time crow's feet about the eyes.

But even with the dearest person dead in the house it would never do to devote one's-self entirely to grief. In a household made suddenly unprosaic, there are a hundred prosaic things to be attended to. Let people grieve ever so much, they must eat, have their boots

brushed, have shaving-water brought them of a morning. Martha had to perform her household duties just the same—and it was better for her, poor girl, that it was so. Mrs Hagart had a black dress to procure: and, smitten to the heart as she was, she could yet, in the mercer's shop in High Street, choose one dark fabric out from a dozen others, think of cost, of becoming trimmings even; and, when the dressmaker came to the house of mourning to work, she was able to assist, to glance with moist eyes in the looking-glass, and to suggest a change here, the addition of a plait there, to make the garment sit all the more becomingly. As for Hagart himself, he was busy enough; he had his Parisian patterns to redact, to make arrangements for the interment, to provide a resting-place for Katy in the cemetery which stood high above the town, and looked out on the great valley, through which the river from Hawkhead flowed—a sheltered place, which the winds would not visit roughly, where trees in summer would fling cool shadows, and keep up a constant murmur, and where the spring

flowers would come earliest and linger latest. Of all the household, Katy's death told most on Jack,—not that he loved her more than the others, but simply because he had nothing to do, that foreign matters did not come betwixt him and the great impression ; and so the strangeness and wonder of it had time to sink deep into his imagination, and to make an abiding home there. At this present writing, Jack has become John Hagart, Esq.—a personage of some importance in his own and others' eyes; he has children around his knees, has lost one or two; but although these losses are, by comparison, recent, he cannot recall the circumstances of their illnesses and deaths—perhaps not even their features—so vividly as he can the circumstances of the illness and death of his little sister thirty years ago. This he has told me himself; and we have talked the whole matter over, in serious mood, twice or thrice by dying autumn fires.

When, on Monday morning, Jack, at Martha's instigation, came crying to Mrs Graves's door, with the request that she should go to his

mother in her extremity, that lady lost no time in sallying forth. The duty before her was one for which she had a liking. Her nature was neither fine nor delicate, but the occasion was one to draw out whatever she possessed of sympathy and womanliness. She was profuse of consolation. She proffered scraps of comfort. So far as her lights went she made herself useful. Left to herself, Mrs Hagart would never have sent for her; but, having come, her presence and companionship did actually soothe in the first bitter rush of feeling. Of the two, Mrs Graves was much the more noisy in grief, much the more plenteous in tears. At first, Mrs Hagart was touched and grateful, but unhappily her visitor did not know when to draw rein. Remembering she was a M'Quarrie, Mrs Hagart did not much care to receive Mrs Graves on the ground of mere acquaintanceship, and when that lady's sympathy became officious, when she intruded herself on the new sorrow, made a sort of common property of it, Mrs Hagart chilled at once. "I have just come to sit with you, to talk to you, and be a comfort to

you," said Mrs Graves, as next day she entered the sitting-room in which Mrs Hagart was sewing.

Mrs Hagart looked up quickly with a troubled face. "Oh, don't! I really don't wish,—you will pardon me, I am sure,—but I would rather be left alone. I appreciate your kindness, but I would rather see no one just at present."

This rebuff was unprecedented in Mrs Graves's experience. It was utterly and entirely unexpected. A whole world of consolation and deathbed experience was trembling on her tongue, but at the hearing, her mouth closed suddenly with a snap—like a miser's purse against the pleading of a poor relation. Mrs Hagart noticed the change.

"I am sure you will understand me," she said. "I am in great distress, and with that a stranger cannot intermeddle. I am really unable to endure company. I don't wish to be rude, but" ——

"And I certainly don't wish in the least to intrude," said the other, in considerable

dudgeon. "My visit, I assure you, was meant in the purest kindness."

"I know that," said Mrs Hagart, placing her hand on the handle of the door, to which her visitor had withdrawn. "I am certain you meant kindly, but I really wish to be left alone," and, after the ordinary parting civilities, the discomfited Mrs Graves sailed off.

It was arranged that as few people as possible should be asked to the funeral. Letters of invitation were sent to Mr Stavert, the elder Wedderburn Brother,—Hagart thought that if there was anything to choose, *he* was the more amiable, and he had a family of his own besides,—Dr Crooks, and the clergyman; and all immediate neighbours were excluded. And this resolution gave rise to much heart-burning and ill-natured remark. In the little clump of suburban houses in which the Hagarts lived, in which every one knew the other, this exclusiveness was taken in bad part. In that clump of houses the Hagarts—Mrs Hagart more especially—were not popular. Her neighbours she seldom or never visited; she had resisted all

temptations to be coaxed out to tea; she gave no quiet parties in the little sitting-room. She was considered proud in consequence; her airs were voted perfectly insulting and unendurable. And this unpopularity was increased by Mrs Graves going the round of the neighbourhood,—with all the families of which she was on intimate terms,—and relating how uncivilly she had that morning been treated by Mrs Hagart. “Just think, my dear Mrs Bounderby! turned out of her door,—actually turned out,—and after I had been sent for, too, on the former day when she was in her distress!” And Mrs Bounderby thought such conduct atrocious, and that Mrs Graves was the worst used woman in the world. “Actually snubbed, Mrs Hislop,” said Mrs Graves in that lady’s sitting-room, and before her grown-up daughters, who opened round eyes of horror at the relation; “told I wasn’t wanted! that I could not intermeddle with her distress,—I who have buried so many darlings!” And Mrs Hislop and the Misses Hislop expressed their decided opinions that Mrs Hagart was the rudest, most hard-hearted,

most inhuman of her sex. In the parlour indignation was expressed, and, as is always the case, the indignation found its way to the kitchen. This indignation burst on Martha when she met Mrs Bounderby's maid-of-all-work, who had a hard time of it with cooking, brushing boots, mending clothes, and washing the faces of a thriving family of six.

"An' so yer gaun to hae a gran' fun'ral," said this Abigail, as she encountered Martha.

"Just a few frien's—frien's o' the fam'ly," said Martha.

"I suppose there's naebody about here guid eneuch to be asked! Yer mistress is a gey prood madam, and we're a' dirt aneath her feet."

At this the faithful Martha fired, as she was clearly in duty bound to do. "If my mistress is prood, she's a guid richt to be. It's mair than"—

"Hoity toity!" cried the other, with a scornful toss of the head. "My maister could buy and sell yours ony day; and we'll maybe hae a fun'ral o' oor ain or lang, and then ye'll see wha'll be asked. We'll be upsides wi' you

then, I'm thinkin'." And with this little combat in behalf of their respective households the Abigails separated. Not in Verona alone, it would seem, do the dependents of Montague and Capulet take the wall, bite thumbs, and draw rapiers on each other!

No black-bordered, black-sealed epistle was sent to Miss M'Quarrie, for the reason that she already knew what had occurred. And her knowledge came about in this wise. Mrs Graves had hardly retired when the front-door bell rang, and on Martha's going out she found the gray-haired serving-man, with whom she had some little conversation on a former occasion, standing at the gate with a small basket in his hand. The girl went up to him with a tremor. "Miss M'Quarrie sends her compliments," he said, "and desires to know how Miss Katy is;" then he put the basket in Martha's hand, saying that it had been sent by Miss M'Quarrie from Hurlford, had been packed by her own hands, and that it contained certain delicacies for the use of the invalid—delicacies

which it was thought would be acceptable and would tempt appetite. Martha took the basket mechanically, stared at the man in a pained bewildered way for a moment or so, and then burst into tears.

"What is the matter?" said the man, unable to comprehend the cause of Martha's sudden emotion.

"Yer ower late, sir. Miss Katy has nae need o' onything noo. She dee'd yesterday mornin'."

"Died!" said the man, looking grave all of a sudden. "Miss M'Quarrie will be very sorry."

"She dee'd yesterday mornin' at nine, an' her mother's like to gang distracted. O man! couldna ye hae come sooner? Couldna Miss M'Quarrie hae thocht—? An' what am I to dae wi' this?" she continued, looking at the basket in a despairing manner. "It's kindly meant, but it'll jist mak' matters waur—jist rip up wounds again. Sendin' jellies and comforts for them that's deid an' streekit! O man, couldna ye hae come sooner, or no come at a'!"

The man looked puzzled. "I was to leave the basket," he said, "and there is no use in taking it back. Miss M'Quarrie told me to leave it here, and she mustn't be disobeyed. Perhaps," continued he after a pause, "you had better take it in, and as I am going back to Hurlford at once, your mistress may like to send a message or letter by me. I would rather the news went in a letter than have to carry it myself.

"What will my mistress say?" cried Martha, ruefully. "It'll clean break her heart! Couldna ye hae come two days sooner? But I'll tak it in. Jist wait there a wee, and I'll see if my mistress has a letter to send, or ony-thing."

Martha went in and the man waited at the gate. He leaned for a while with his back to the railings, his white gloved hands folded before him, thinking of the child who had died so unexpectedly, and of the too tardy basket he had brought. His meditations on this subject were broken by a string of drays laden with

empty barrels passing in to the distilleries. Then he saw a man ride past rapidly, and, following with his eye, he took notes of the nag's condition. Then he whistled right through a tune. Then he wondered what they were about inside. Then he thought waiting was weary work, and began to pine for release. No wonder he pined, he had been waiting for nearly an hour, and had gone through all the postures of which the human frame is capable, and found that, after a time, one was as tiresome as the other.

Had the waiting serving-man been able to have looked into the house he would have seen the two women crying over some oranges, a pot or two of preserves, and a bunch of grapes, Martha telling her story between whiles. The things were carefully put away at last, and then Mrs Hagart went into the still room for a little, and when she came out she sat down to her writing-desk in the parlour, laying a tiny tress of brown hair down on the table beside her. She wrote a note to her sister, plenteous tears falling on

the page as she did so. When done she folded it up and enclosed the tress of hair.

The serving-man was nursing his knee when the door opened, and Mrs Hagart came towards him with the letter in her hand. He gave but one glance at her face and his head was uncovered in a moment.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," said she. "You will give this letter to my sister—to Miss M'Quarrie, I mean. Take care of it—it is very precious."

The man took the letter. "Miss M'Quarrie will be shocked to hear of this," he said respectfully, and still standing uncovered. "I am very sorry myself, ma'am."

Into Mrs Hagart's eyes the tears again started, a stranger's commiseration could even touch her. "It will be sad news for her, indeed. But take care of the letter. Have you children of your own?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And lost any?"

"Ah, yes, ma'am. Two fine boys as ever"——

"Then you will understand, and take care of the letter. It contains a lock of my daughter's hair."

"You may depend on me, ma'am! Good afternoon, ma'am," and, putting his hat on his head, the gray-haired serving-man went on his way.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH THE FUNERAL GUESTS ASSEMBLE, AND
WHICH RECORDS AN IMPORTANT CONVERSATION.

FRIDAY was the day of Katy's funeral, and Friday was now come. Had Hagart been a rich man, and the keeper of a considerable establishment, the ceremony would have been much more imposing. He would have had a hearse and a string of mourning coaches. His wife, in the midst of consoling female friends, would have been weeping in her interior privacies; he would have stood at the door of his dining-room in sable garments and flowing white cravat, receiving his friends, as they passed in, with a silent shake of the hand. And when his friends were seated, and contemplating their hats before them on their knees, a solemn waiter would have gone round the company with a silver salver containing

cake and wine, followed by a second with cards for the near relatives, containing instructions as to the order in which they were to file out of the house, and to arrange themselves round the grave, and by a third bearing bundles of black kid-gloves. As it was, when the couple of mourning coaches at two o'clock drove up and took their stations at the gate, Hagart sat with his wife and Jack in the little sitting-room waiting arrivals. On the table were some bits of cake, a few glasses, and a bottle of sherry of unknown antecedents, supplied by the grocer. The three sat in silence, occupied with their own thoughts. Mrs Hagart, whose heart was in the next room, wiped her eyes at intervals. Hagart was wondering inwardly whether Miss M'Quarrie and the elder Wedderburn Brother would come. He was anxious that his employer should do him that honour—with Miss M'Quarrie's presence he felt he could gladly dispense. Jack was lost in a vague sea of excitement, out of which he occasionally emerged to stare with a sense of wonder, not unmixed with pride, on his black

dress and white cambric cuffs. At five minutes after two o'clock, the bell rang, and by Martha—who was decently attired in a plain black gown and white collar—Mr Stavert was admitted. Hagart rose at once, shook hands, and expressed in a low voice satisfaction at seeing him on such an occasion—especially as he had a considerable distance to come. Stavert pressed the hand in return. “You are one of the family, Hagart, and I would have come a greater distance on an occasion like this.” He then went up to Mrs Hagart, bowed, muttered a sentence or two of sympathy, and sat down in a chair in a corner. The silence which had been scared for a moment, settled down on the company. Hagart wished some one would speak, he was unable to utter a sentence himself, and then he found himself staring at his guest, and marvelling what Miss M'Quarrie would think if she knew that the sable dress he then wore had been slipped into his port-manteau—to be at hand in case of accidents—when he was summoned by his wife and daughter to that indomitable lady's sick-bed.

This thought took curious possession of him, and his sense that it would violate all the proper solemnities made it all the more difficult to restrain a smile. A peal of the bell came to his relief; and then Dr Crooks and the clergyman entered; the doctor brisk, clean-shaved and self-possessed as ever; the clergyman tall, gaunt, kindly-eyed, and seventy, a ragged fringe of silver hair around his temples, and with a didactic or hortatory pitch in his voice that made his simplest sentences impressive. The good man had preached so long, had dwelt so long amongst sacred subjects, that his ordinary speech was coloured by scriptural phraseology, and his simple "Good morning" sounded like a text, or a practical application. Jack, who had never seen the clergyman save in the pulpit, regarded him with much interest as he sat there in his father's house—up till now he had associated a clergyman with gown and bands, as rustics associate kings and queens with robes and crowns, and if the truth must be told he was a little disappointed—the venerable man being

in his opinion a great deal too like ordinary mortals. Again the bell rang, and to Hagart's just pride and gratification the elder Wedderburn Brother came—a big bland man, with thin florid hair and gold spectacles—who shook his hand cordially, saluted Mrs Hagart respectfully, and then sat down beside Jack, patting him on the head as he did so. There was a kindly light in his blue eye, there was a persuasive tone in his voice—evidently a man who would be a prime favourite with children, for the reason amongst others that his pockets would be stuffed with sweetmeats. The elder Wedderburn Brother had no sooner taken his seat than the carriage from Hurlford drove up—to the amazement and disgust of Mrs Graves, the entire Bounderby family, Mrs Hislop and her two grown-up daughters, all of whom had their noses flattened against their respective window-panes at that particular moment—and Miss M'Quarrie came out, supporting herself on her stick, but looking much stronger than when Jack saw her first at the station-house on the canal bank. The arrival of this formidable

lady caused some little stir. Martha's imagination had been excited on the matter, she had heard a great deal about her, she had always maintained that Miss M'Quarrie would appear in person, and here sure enough was Miss M'Quarrie at last. Martha stared, and the sharp falcon-like features, the masterdom of the keen eye, the rich dress with its depth of crape, fairly took away her breath. When the sitting-room door was opened, Miss M'Quarrie made an old-fashioned obeisance or courtesy as she entered, took Hagart's hand carelessly, who rose to receive her, while her eyes went into him like skewers; pressed her lips to Mrs Hagart's cheek—over whom a wave of old remembrance came at the moment, filling her eyes—and sat down on an unoccupied chair by her side. She nodded to Jack, glanced sharply round the room, and then, as if satisfied with her scrutiny, folded her arms in her dress, while Hagart stole a furtive glance at her countenance, and thought to himself that—however much both should wish it—they could never get on.

Mr Stavert sat in a corner; and if one had taken notice they might have seen that gentleman colour slightly, and his eyebrows rise in an arch of pure astonishment when Miss M'Quarrie entered. It was plain that to him at least her appearance was unexpected; plain also that in that room and on that occasion her appearance was far from being a pleasure. He shifted in his seat for a second or so, and then with a tentative smile on his face, a smile in embryo, that might come into complete existence if sufficient encouragement would be given, he rose, came out of his dusk, and stretched out his hand. Miss M'Quarrie rose to meet him.

"I am delighted to see you looking so well and hearty," said the lord of Cuchullin Lodge, with the uneasy smile still on his visage, as he took her hand in both of his, and drew a palm tenderly across her rings. "You are much stronger than when I saw you last— younger-looking by twenty years, in fact."

"Am I?" said Miss Kate, grimly. "Give my love to your wife and daughter, and be sure to tell them how much I have improved."

They will be so glad to hear it, poor dears!"

"Eliza and Flora have thought of calling often," went on Stavert; "but after that painful, that unfortunate misunderstanding, as I may call it, they have a certain delicacy. They have kept themselves to themselves, although they are thinking of you continually; and as you have shown no sign of relenting, they are very unhappy."

Miss Kate dropped her voice to a whisper. "Don't talk stuff, Stavert. This is no place or time for it. I know you—you know me. Go back to your seat now."

Stavert's palm slid off the rings as if they had burned him, and he went back to his corner while Miss Kate resumed her seat. In a little while the ladies left the room—doubtless to have a last look of her who was to be carried away.

Martha came in and handed round wine and cake, then the clergyman prayed, and after the prayer was over, a man came and whispered in Hagart's ear. Hagart then took Jack by the

hand and went out, the others following him. When they took their seats, Miss M'Quairie's carriage moved off and drew up on the side of the road next the canal bank. They then drove away, and the last thing that Jack saw was his mother standing at the window of the sitting-room with a handkerchief at her eyes.

Mrs Hagart stood at the window after the coaches had gone. Miss Kate sat on a chair a little removed ; at last she rose and placed her hand on her sister's shoulder. "Cry your fill, Margaret, it will do you good. I wish I could cry like that."

"O Kate," sobbed the poor mother, "this is a sore hour. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. My prayer is that He will give me grace to say at length, 'Blessed be His name.'"

"He will comfort you," said the other. "But cry your fill now." And the room was silent for a little while.

"Margaret," said Miss Kate, at length, "come and sit down beside me, and let me see you."

And Mrs Hagart sat down beside her sister and took her hand.

And Miss Kate kissed her again on the cheek. "Katy will always be with you. There will always be a child in the house. That seems poor comfort to-day, Margaret; but the thought will gather sweetness year by year. You are much changed, Margaret—changed almost as much as I have been. Do you remember the old times?—the white house above the rocks, with the pine woods behind?—the cottages along the shore, with the herring-nets drying in the wind? Do you remember how we stood at sunset, and saw the red islands rise out of a gold-leaf sea? Do you remember your father?" And as she spoke there was a far-away look in her eyes.

But one word had touched a bitter and long-concealed pang. "Kate," said Mrs Hagart, in a low tremulous voice that shook with apprehension of what it was about to bring on itself, "you were with papa when he died. Did he say hard things of me? Did he forgive me before the close?"

"We both said hard things of you in our blindness. I have forgiven you in this world—he has forgiven you in the other."

"Then he died in anger?"

"He died in anger, Margaret. But I was more wicked than he; I lived in anger for years. That is all over now."

"I knew he had not forgiven me," said the other with a sort of moan, while her head dropped, and she drew herself together. "I knew it. Oh, I have been so unhappy, Kate—so unhappy!"

"Unhappy, Margaret! Has Hagart" ——

At some suspicion as to how the sentence would end, or at some implied blame in the tone, a faint colour came into Mrs Hagart's face. "Sister," she said, and she lifted her head and looked her sister full in the eyes, "I know what you were going to say; at all events I know what is in your mind. We are friends at last, after a long, and, to me, a bitter separation; and this friendship, which I value almost above everything, I did not seek. It came to me as

it was taken away from me. And it can only exist on one condition : there must be no mistrust of my husband. Anything said against him I shall consider as said against myself. He has always been good, gentle, and kind. He never willingly gave me a moment's pain. I love him more entirely to-day than when I married him. But for this—this dreadful sorrow, and the knowledge that I was disowned by my family—I have been happy—happier than most women. You'll try and like Hagart, Kate, for my sake?"

"I said nothing against Hagart, child ; and if I did, there's no necessity for eating me up. I'll try and like him, of course. I don't say that I shall be able quite—but I'll try. In any case, you will never hear me say a word against him. I did not marry him, you know, and cannot be expected to admire him so much as you do."

"We have been poor, we have had hardships—hardships which you never knew anything about. Yet I daresay," and here a smile came

into Mrs Hagart's eyes as she looked up, "we have been happier even than you with all your wealth and absence from care."

"Happier than me!—you might well be! Look at me," cried Miss Kate, almost fiercely. "Have I a happy face? You think no one has known sorrow but you. Girl, I have carried a sorer heart than yours is now for years and years; have gone to bed with it at night, have risen up with it in the morning. It began to ache before you were born. It aches now."

Mrs Hagart looked up at her sister in wonder, and saw a sudden excitation in her face.

"Although you can't remember it, and perhaps won't believe it," Miss Kate went on, "I had once as smooth a cheek and as round a form as yours. The blood that has become cold and bitter once danced over neck and temple to the music of a voice and the sound of a step. My hair was beautiful then, he said, and when he caressed it curled to his touch. My lips were red then, and they returned his kisses. He was a soldier and a

gentleman, Margaret—a man a gentlewoman had no reason to be ashamed of loving—tall, brave, merry-hearted. We were to have been married, but we quarrelled—about some wretched trifle, some hasty word. We were both to blame perhaps—I most of all. I forgave him in my heart, but I was too proud to *say* that I forgave him. It is only lately I have been able to say I could forgive. You have not the same kind of blood in your veins that I have. Your mother's, which was soft as ewe's milk, has mixed with it and sweetened it. That is fifty years ago. He was a young man then. I wonder if he will recognise me when we meet?"

"Where is he now?"

"In heaven, if brave men are there. He fell in an American battle. We parted in anger. There was no reconciliation, although it would have been so easy. I have carried the misery with me ever since, no one knowing it. It has clung closer to me than ever did infant to your breast, Margaret. My pride sent him across the sea to meet the backwoodsman's bullet. But for that he would now have been an old man,

weak, feckless, and frail—but he would have been my own. So much for my happiness.”

Miss Kate stopped here, and her sister looking up saw a strange moisture in her eyes. Noticing the look, which had something of awe in it, Miss Kate brushed the tears hastily away. “You are wondering,” she said, “to see an old woman of seventy crying for a young man of twenty-five. His bones will have turned into dust by this.”

Mrs Hagart remained silent with astonishment and pity. After a little while Miss Kate went on. “You spoke of my money. Well! I have neither been hungry nor thirsty, nor have I been cold for lack of clothing; and that is all money has brought me. When he went out of my life he took all pleasure with him. To bring him back, to have even some portion of him, some shred of his hair, some letter that he had written, I would have thrown all my money in the fire, have worked my hands off, have gone down on my knees and scrubbed cellar-floors and fed on a crust. What good has my money done me? What had I to love?

What had I to care for? What interest had I in life? People professed friendship for me, but I knew their motives. Relations who had hardly a drop of my blood in their veins encumbered me with services. They lied on each other if so be they might creep into my favour—and my will. Their greedy eyes I could see sparkling over my trinkets, hoping they would be theirs when my breath was out. They ate dirt before me. Meekly smiling, they allowed me to storm at and insult them. If I had kicked them, they would have told me they liked to be kicked. I knew they hated me, as much as I hated them. I took pleasure—it was almost the only pleasure I had—in tearing away their hypocrisies, and confronting them with themselves. I knew they grudged every hour I lived, every breath I drew. With all their professed affection, they would have wrangled around my death-bed, and quarrelled outright over my coffin.”

The wistful, far-away, sorrowful expression had died out of the face now, and Miss Kate looked like an angry hawk, its head stretched

out, its plumage ruffled—just as out of the bed-clothes she had flashed on the Staverts when she was ill.

“I was angry with you, Margaret, as you know, and you accepted my anger, perhaps, with a feeling quite as keen. You did not whimper at my feet. You did not drink insult with a seeming relish. You did not flatter me, nor fawn on me. Had you done so—God forgive me—I think I should have actually hated you, and then the whole world would have been mean and rotten. When I saw your children at the station-house, I knew them at once, as I wrote you. I spoke to them, but they did not seem ever to have heard of me, so I was unable to discover whether you hated me or no. Did you never speak to them about me, Margaret?”

“They knew nothing about you from me. When your letter came to me in London, Hagart threw it in the fire, and made me promise that I should never again mention your name; and I never did.”

“Did he?” cried Miss Kate, sharply, and the

ruffled hawk-like look came back for a moment. "Perhaps he was right," she went on, with a slight smile. "That's the best thing I have ever heard of him. It shows spirit at least. At any rate, looking into your children's faces, I resolved that, if possible, I should make up the breach. It is made up now. I wish this had happened earlier. I would have known my little namesake better then, and perhaps I could have cried with you to-day."

Mrs Hagart at this point, if she had yielded to her impulses, would have broken out into tears afresh, and flung her arms around her sister's neck. She was tempted to do so as it was, and she could hardly resist the temptation. But as, with all her tenderness, she had a considerable strain of worldly wisdom in her, she checked the springing tears, and restrained the opening arms. Many thoughts were nimble in her brain. We know what she had been planning for Jack, and as the iron was hot she resolved to strike it. The wind was blowing, and she thought, wisely enough, that it might, as well as waste itself, sit in the sail of her intent,

and carry it on towards fulfilment. She resolved to venture, but, being afraid somewhat, blurted out awkwardly enough—

“Your namesake has been taken from us, but Jack still remains.”

“Yes,” said Miss Kate, absently, as if thinking of something else.

“He is a good boy,” said the mother: “warm-hearted, gentle, obedient”—going over the catalogue of his virtues.

“I don’t care much for goody people, men or women, girls or boys,” said Miss Kate, with a slight spice of contempt. “And gentleness and obedience, if he has nothing else, won’t make him much a favourite of mine. But I like Jack,” she went on, as she noticed disappointment rising in his mother’s face. “When I frightened his sister on the canal bank by thrusting my old face into her bonnet, he flushed all over, and told me to let her alone, that I had no right to touch her. The M’Quarrie look came out on his Hagart face, and I liked him for that. Yes, I like Jack: I think he’ll do.”

"He mustn't be brought up to his father's profession"——

"Upon my soul, I am glad to hear it!" put in Miss Kate, with a sincerity that made the mother's heart jump.

But Mrs Hagart was not to be deterred by bluntness, and she went on: "He has always been attentive to his lessons, and the schools here can do little more for him. He is almost always dux in everything. I should like to send him for a year or two to the High School in Hawkhead; and after that to the University. I am sure he will be clever."

"But what will you make of him?"

"I don't know yet. There is plenty of time"——

"He must be a gentleman, of course! And as he has no fortune of his own, he must adopt some profession. There are only two or three courses open to him. I don't think the Hagarts have ever been much of a warlike race, my dear; and to make him ensign in a marching regiment, is simply to make him get into debt—which I would have to pay—and to run away

with the first pretty face he sees—which I could never forgive. It's hard enough to swallow one runaway marriage in one's life-time, you know. No! I don't think soldiering will do. Then a doctor's life is hard work—routed out of bed at all hours to bring into the world the brats of cheesemongers and tallow-chandlers—and often indifferently paid. A clergyman, again, is the slave of his congregation, and he is liable, moreover, to be asked out to tea by the leading grocer”——

“But the noblest and happiest life a man can lead, Kate, if his heart is in his work.”

“Perhaps. But if you make Jack a clergyman, and if his heart should *not* be in his work, it must surely be the unhappiest life of all. Make him a lawyer, Margaret. It's a gentlemanly profession, and, if a man is clever and secures practice, a lucrative one. Hook and Crook, I know, have got a good deal of my money at times—thanks to my friends.”

“The question of profession may be left open in the meantime. But if he goes to Hawkhead—do you know—I have been thinking—I

should like him to stay with you!" Mrs Hagart got it out at last, and was a good deal astonished at her own temerity when she did so.

"But what if his dinner should disagree with him, my dear? or if he should tear his trousers? or come to me boo-hooing after a fight with the butcher's boy in the street?" said Miss Kate, with a smile, which betokened anything but displeasure at the proposal. "But would you really give him up to me?"

"I think I could," said Mrs Hagart, somewhat scandalised by her sister's levity—the subject under discussion being serious enough in her thinking. "It would be for his benefit; and I would not be so selfish as to allow any fondness of mine to stand in his way. Besides, I know he would be taken care of, and I could see him often, you know."

"But what will Hagart say? Will he give the boy up to me?"

"Oh, never mind Hagart. I'll manage *him*."

"I shall be glad to have Jack under my charge. I thought of proposing something of the kind to you, but did not know how you

would take it. I leave Hurlford in a day or two for Hawkhead, and when I get home I shall write and make arrangements. And now," said Miss Kate, whipping out a curious old-fashioned gold watch which her father had worn, and which for years Mrs Stavert had regarded as her own by right of inheritance, "I must be going. When one lives in other people's houses, one must conform to their rules, I shall just be in time for dinner. Kiss me, Margaret! I have spoken to you to-day as I never before spoke to human being. Don't pine after Katy, she is in the best hands. Happier days are perhaps dawning for all of us, although it is not many that I can expect to see. Perhaps for me, as the Bible says, 'at eventime there will be light.'"

And attended by Mrs Hagart and Martha, Miss Kate went to the gate, and entered her carriage and drove off; Mrs Graves, the entire Bounderby family, with the zealous and much-enduring maid-of-all-work, Mrs Hislop and her two grown-up daughters, watching the departure with much speculation and comment.

Mrs Hagart returned to the sitting-room, which seemed so desolate and empty, but she was not left long alone, for in a few minutes Hagart and Jack came in. "Miss Kate has just gone," she said.

"I know," said Hagart, as he laid down his hat. "We saw her carriage at the door as we came up, and have been walking up and down, and going round the corner till once it drove off. I did not like to come in till once she had gone."

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH MR STAVERT IS INTRODUCED TO JACK,
AND MRS HAGART RECEIVES A LETTER.

THE coffin had been lowered into the grave, Hagart had thanked his friends, and he and Jack were walking along the gravel walk of the cemetery, when Stavert, who had been talking for a little with the clergyman and Dr Crooks, came hurrying after them. "This is your son, sir?" he said, as he came up, and they were passing out of the cemetery gate. "A very fine boy, indeed! I have not been introduced yet. Let me shake hands with you! You are one of the family branches—one of the twigs, perhaps. I should rather say. What is your name?" he asked, while the process of hand-shaking was going on.

"John."

"And a very good name, too. And you are

a very fine fellow. Surely tall for his age, Hagart? How these youngers grow up, to be sure! How old are you?"

"He has just turned twelve," said his father, "and he is tall for his age."

"Exactly co-ages with my fellow Norman, and a shade taller, perhaps. You have never, John, seen your cousin at Cuchullin Lodge, I think?"

John said he never had.

"The members of a family should be known to each other," Stavert went on, "and the next time you are in Hawkhead you must really take a run out to Cuchullin Lodge and see us. You will find a lot of young people there. You really must, John! Mrs Stavert will be delighted to see you, I am sure."

"I have never been in Hawkhead in all my life," said Jack.

"And I don't think there is much chance of his being in Hawkhead soon," said his father, thinking of a certain scheme which his wife had proposed, and resolving that if said scheme again turned up, it would meet with his most

strenuous opposition. He had ideas in his head concerning Jack's future career, and he did not in the least care about sending him to Hawkhead to live with Aunt Kate, although she had money, and rode about in her grand friends' carriages. He had no objections to the carriage itself—in fact he was extremely pleased that the carriage was waiting at his door, and that the elder Wedderburn Brother had seen it as he stepped into the mourning-coach. This was in the highest degree gratifying to him. But that Jack, especially now that the family prospects had so much improved, should reside at Hawkhead with Miss M'Quarrie, was quite foreign to his notions. He had a scheme in his head worth a dozen of that. "Suppose," he had been thinking, "I take him across to Paris and apprentice him to one of the most eminent of the pattern-designers there? Why, in a few years—for he does not want brains—he will be able to produce patterns as novel and tasteful as any of the French fellows. And as, in order to supply Greysley, Spiggletton, and Hawkhead, I shall require large

monthly parcels of the newest Parisian productions, what's to hinder me taking them from my own son? I will naturally take them from him in preference to any one else. I'll make a noble opening for him;" and so, after some such fashion as this, Hagart went on thinking and planning; and with all a father's fondness he mentally pursued Jack's Parisian career, until that young fellow became lost in a golden glory—in a thick radiance of guineas!

Accordingly, Hagart said, with some little emphasis, "I don't think there is much chance of his being in Hawkhead soon."

"Nonsense!" said Stavert, and he slipped his arm confidentially into Hagart's right, while the knowing smile came to his lips, and his eyes—the better to watch the effect on his companion—went into their left-hand corners, his head all the while remaining immovable. "Nonsense! he will be visiting Aunt Kate, won't he? Perhaps he has been there already?"

Our friend was not a little startled by the appearance of the obnoxious idea in this unex-

pected quarter. "He won't visit Aunt Kate—if I can help it," he said, something stiffly.

"Don't drive so fast!" said Stavert, the smile and the eyes still fixtures. "When I saw you on the coach, you remember, you had never seen Aunt Kate—you have seen her now. Then she had never been in your house—she has been in it to-day; has been in it perhaps more than once. She had not then spoken to your wife—she has spoken to your wife now; is perhaps speaking to her at this very moment. What will you give for your chance now, eh? A good deal more than when I saw you last, I daresay! Ah," continued Stavert, tapping with his fingers the arm he held, "you are a deep one! You have been playing your cards well!"

At this Hagart got very angry and red in the face. "I am not deep—at all events," hurriedly correcting himself, as he thought he had gone a little too far—he did not wish to own he was a simpleton—"I am never underhand or tortuous in my dealings. I have played no cards, for the reason that I had none

to play. Miss M'Quarrie was in my house to-day for the reason that you were. My wife has not seen her till to-day; I have not seen her till to-day, and I don't much care although I should never see her again. As for her money and my chance—I really wish you would never speak to me after that fashion again. I am not rich, Heaven knows! but I am independent of every one. I don't wish Miss M'Quarrie's money; I have never seen"—and here a sudden remembrance of Miss Kate's twenty-pound note nearly choked our friend, and brought his eloquence to a stop.

The smile died away from Stavert's mouth, and his eyes came out of their corners, and returned to their normal positions. Whatever his purpose may have been in so moving Hagart, he was satisfied. "My good friend!" he said, "you speak my sentiments exactly. There is no feeling in the world so pleasant as the feeling of being independent, of holding straight on one's course, of being indebted to nobody. I don't think you and Miss Kate would get on, at any rate. You are spirited and high-minded.

She is exacting, bad-tempered, and crotchety. She has treated me and my wife badly, she has treated you and your wife shamefully. You don't know what things she used to say of you."

"And I don't wish to know."

"Do you think I would hurt your feelings by telling you? That would not be the part of a friend. I think, on the whole, you are better quit of her. If you have a proper spirit you will not encourage her visits. She says the cruellest things about people behind their backs."

"I won't encourage her. But she may come and go as it pleases herself. I can't shut my door in her face."

"You can't quite do that, of course. But keep an eye on her." And as by this time they had reached the centre of the town, Stavert came to a stop. "I have some business to do down the street here, and shall say good-bye. Give my love and sympathy to your wife—I know what a trial her daughter's death must be. And so, John, as you are not likely to be in

Hawkhead soon, your cousins won't see you at Cuchullin Lodge?"

"No!"

"Well, then, good-bye too. I am pleased to have made your acquaintance;" and, after shaking hands with Jack in the most friendly manner, Mr Stavert walked off.

Much pondering this conversation, Hagart marched along in silence with Jack at his side, and when they drew near the house, there was Miss M'Quarrie's carriage still waiting. This brought them to a full stop. "We'll just linger about till your aunt goes—your mother and she will have a good deal to say to each other, and we would only disturb them," said Hagart, putting the best face upon it he was able. And so they lingered, walked up and down, and went round the corner till once the coast was clear. Hagart had no desire to encounter Miss Kate again that day.

That evening the Hagart household was quiet and subdued. Katy's name was not mentioned, but she filled the thoughts of each. Hagart did not ask what Miss M'Quarrie talked about,

but his wife gave him to understand that the conversation had been friendly in the highest degree—that, in fact, the family breach had been entirely made up. After the sad interruption, matters went on in the house very much as formerly. The strange stillness died away. Martha began to sing, to scrub the dresser impetuously, and to clash the fire-irons in the sitting-room. Jack returned to school, and learned his lessons in the kitchen in the evenings. Hagart went punctually into Greysley and as punctually returned. Mrs Hagart's old look came back to a certain extent, and but for a certain hurry and excitement when the postman came in sight, no superficial observer would have guessed that she had recently passed through any very severe ordeal of sorrow.

About a week after the funeral, one forenoon the postman rang the bell, and Martha running out received a letter; and Mrs Hagart, who had been standing at the window, went into the lobby and took it from her with a somewhat tremulous hand. As it was, as she had guessed, in her sister's handwriting, she immediately

carried it with her into the sitting-room, and, after shutting the door, broke open the seal. It ran as follows :—

“HAWKHEAD, *Friday*.

“MY DEAR MARGARET,—Here’s been a pretty to-do! When I got home here from Hurlford, tolerably late, I noticed the drawing-room lighted, and entering with my pass-key—which I carry with me always—and hurrying upstairs, I found my two maids entertaining their sweet-hearts very comfortably. Mary, with cherry ribbons in her cap, was pouring out tea; Henrietta, in her Sunday frock, was handing about bread-and-butter. One of the fellows was lolling in my best chair with his legs hanging over the arm, and whistling; the other was beating time to the air with a tea-spoon on a saucer. Extremely comfortable indeed! Of course I sent the fellows out with a flea in their ears, and next morning I packed my crying huzzies off with their trunks and without a character. Ann—the girl who was with me at Hurlford—was loud in abuse against her friends, although

I suspect that if I had left her at home I should have seen her sweetheart there also. I told her so, in fact. I came home unexpectedly and caught them nicely. I always come home unexpectedly. Servants—good ones, I mean—are not to be had now. I suppose we must thank cheap books and cheap schools for that. By the way, that seemed a very nice girl of yours. Keep her ignorant, Margaret, if you would have her not speak back.

“Of course, in the mess I am in, I cannot receive John quite so soon as I hoped. The more I think of John’s coming to live with me, the more I am pleased. I have acted harshly towards you, and what I mean to do for your son will make up for that, I hope, not only in your eyes, but in the eyes of Him who has regarded my conduct as more blameworthy than ever you regarded it. And if in your marriage you have suffered any social declination, *what I mean to do for your son* will make him rise to the old family level, if not higher. So that you see his coming here will make wrong right, and odd even, for all of us.

"I'll write again when I have got settled. Jack can then be sent by the passage-boat, and Ann will be in waiting for him when he arrives.

"Your affectionate sister,

"CATHERINE M'QUARRIE.

"*P.S.*—One of Stavert's maids—who had heard of the stramash—has just been here to see if I would engage her. She says that if I take her, she would be allowed to leave her present place at once. I daresay Mrs S. would like very well to have a SPY in my house. But she *won't succeed.*"

Although there was too much about the maids and too little about Jack in the letter, still, on the whole, Mrs Hagart thought it extremely satisfactory. Her sister had been thinking over the proposed scheme, apparently, and had come to the conclusion that if something could be done for that young fellow, it would be a sort of reparation for all mistakes and wrong-doings on her own part and on the part of others. Mrs Hagart was entirely satisfied with the conclusion arrived at. Her only fear now

was that her husband would prove recalcitrant. He had waxed fat on the Wedderburn Brothers' four guineas a week, and he might kick in consequence. If recalcitrant, she resolved to bend and conquer him. Meantime she kept the letter to herself, saying nothing about it to her husband, against whom she was innocently conspiring.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH MRS HAGART ACHIEVES A VICTORY.

IT happened that at dinner one day, shortly after the receipt of Miss M'Quarrie's letter, Alfred expressed his entire approval of the steak set before him, which was the more remarkable that he was difficult to please in the matter of steaks. He was fond of a steak. He admitted that he had sometimes in London before his marriage eaten a steak worthy of the name, but his provincial experience of steaks, he averred, had been more or less unsatisfactory. He regarded a steak as one of the delights of bachelorhood, and one of the terrors of matrimony.

"It is curious," he said, meditatively surveying a portion stuck on the prong of his fork, "how difficult it is to cook a steak pro-

perly, and yet it seems a simple enough matter. I should say it is as difficult to cook a good steak as it is to write a good song. *This* one is all right. Generally speaking, Martha has no more idea of a steak than a Hottentot. Usually she presents you with a piece of leather floating in a sea of extraneous gravy. *This* one is tender, and it holds the gravy in itself, as an orange holds its juice. The retention of the juice is the great thing," he went on learnedly. "A steak should be, and should not be, like Gideon's fleece. It should not be dry when everything around it is moist; it should be moist when everything around it is dry—as it is to-day, I must tell Martha how pleased I have been."

The artful woman sitting at the other side of the table had been waiting for her opportunity for days. She seized it when it came.

"I suppose," she said, in as careless a tone as she could assume, and as if the matter had been long ago finally concluded, and could admit of no argument now,—“I suppose we

will have to be making arrangements for Jack's going to Hawkhead to stay with Aunt Kate?"

"What puts that in your head, Margaret?" said the husband, laying down his knife and fork. "I have not the slightest intention of placing my son under your sister's charge."

"Alfred, dear!" returned Mrs Hagart, putting on a look of the most innocent astonishment, "you surely forget! You promised, you know, that, if Miss Kate wished it, you would allow Jack to go and live with her. Don't you remember, that last evening you came home from Spiggleton, tired, and wet, and hungry, and with all your sketches unsold?"

Our friend here gave a slight grunt of dissatisfaction. He had no taste for these reminiscences.

"And when you said," his wife went on relentlessly, "that you did not wish Jack to follow your profession, and that you wished you could give it up yourself. You promised me that Miss Kate might have Jack if she liked. Now, I have a letter from her wish-

ing him to come, and saying that she will be ready for him in a few days."

Hagart could not but admit that some such promise had been given, but he urged the unfairness of holding him to it. "I was low that evening, and no wonder. But things have improved since. I have plans of my own with regard to Jack."

"And what may these plans be, Alfred?"

Then Hagart developed the plan he had for some days back been maturing—that he would apprentice Jack to one of the most famous of the pattern-designers in Paris; and proceeded to show that in a few years, when Jack had become an adept in his profession, and when he had himself established his dépôt for Parisian designs on a sure basis, and was in a position to rule the manufacturers of Greysley, Hawkhead, and Spiggleton in matters of taste, he would be able to give Jack constant employment, and explained how they could profitably work into each other's hands; and how, by their united exertions, a handsome fortune could be made as certainly as ever two and four

made six. Mrs Hagart listened patiently till he was done, and then, like a she-falcon, she went at his pet scheme, and tore it into the merest shreds and tatters. Hagart was surprised at her fierceness.

"Well, then," he said, "you have demolished my plan, Mag. May I now ask what great good will accrue from Jack's going to stay with your sister?"

"Well, then, I'll tell you. As Jack is not to follow your profession—we agreed on that before, bear in mind—he must go to Hawkhead at any rate, to attend the High School and the University; and, when he *does* go to Hawkhead, it is surely better for him to live in the house of a relative than in that of an entire stranger. Then, Alfred, my sister has money, and I rather think she means to spend a portion of it on the boy, and that the remainder will come our way in the end—I think this from what she has said to me, and from what she has written. She wishes Jack to come to her, and with his chance it would be foolish in us not to comply with her wishes."

"Chance! that's what Stavert is always talking about. I am not sure about the money. Your sister hates me, and I am told she has said the most shameful things about me."

"Who told you that my sister hates you? that she has said shameful things about you?"

"Stavert told me so when he walked part of the way home with me the other day."

"And don't you see his motive, Alfred?" his wife went on, with a kindling eye. "The days of the Stavert dynasty are over. He does not wish to see me reconciled to my sister. He does not wish to see my sister coming about the house. Depend upon it, he has been trying to poison your mind."

"He did say," said Hagart, stroking his chin thoughtfully, "that I should not encourage Miss Kate's visits. That I was to keep a sharp eye on her."

"I thought so. You see he has his own purposes to serve. I don't think you have a very sharp eye for character, my dear."

"Perhaps not. I certainly did not see Stavert's talk in that light. But, Margaret, I

don't like the idea of giving up the boy, even to your sister."

"But, perhaps, we won't have to give him up for long. We will see him often; and then, of course, he will spend all his holidays with us. Besides, it is not impossible that we may be living in Hawkhead ourselves before many years are over."

"What makes you think that?" asked Hagart, hastily. The idea of going to Hawkhead had a certain mystery and fascination about it. Personally, he could see no probability of such a removal, but his wife could. Meanwhile, the bare suggestion gave ample scope for the exercise of imagination. He was yielding fast to her influence and her ways of thinking.

"Never mind," said Mrs Hagart, smiling and nodding in a knowing manner. "Leave that to me. I'll manage it all very nicely. I have a great head for planning, and I have been planning a good deal of late. You don't know what a treasure you have got in me. Do you know that my sister and I have been

considering what profession would he most suitable for Jack, and we have agreed that he should become a lawyer."

"A lawyer!" said Hagart, with a sort of astonished gasp. He had gone souse over head in a sea of wonder.

"Yes; we must make a gentleman of Jack, and of all the learned professions Miss Kate thinks the law is the most gentlemanly." Mrs Hagart saw that victory was within her reach, and she resolved to make her victory complete. She knew her husband's weakness, and she resolved to play upon it—as good wives have done since the beginning of the world. "The law is certainly a most honourable profession, and it opens a path to all kinds of advancement. Lawyers go into Parliament, they hold high posts in India, and in the colonies. Lord Brougham was once a plain barrister, and Lord Eldon and his pretty wife—it was a runaway match, too, like one we know about—cooked their breakfasts in Lincoln's Inn with their own hands, before practice and reputation came. If Jack gets on, we may live to see

him a sheriff or a judge, perhaps. I don't think that, if you apprenticed him to a pattern-designer in Paris, he would ever come to anything like that."

This was, it must be confessed, an adroit stroke of generalship on the part of Mrs Hagart, and it was completely successful. Hagart's eyes were blinded by the glittering prospect. His objections melted like May hoar-frost before the sun. He consented that Jack should go to Hawkhead at once, consented amply, unreservedly. His excited imagination played prodigious riot with him all the evening. As clearly as Dick Whittington heard Bow-bells ringing, "Turn again, Dick Whittington, thrice Lord Mayor of London," he, leaning back in his chair, heard ringing in the shining future the music of his son's coming greatness. All sorts of wonderful visions crowded upon him. With sonorous voice and eloquent hand aloft, he saw and heard Jack address a jury of his countrymen; in ermined robe and portentous wig, he saw him in solemn procession entering Hawkhead to hold the assize, while bells rang,

and the crowds ran and shouted, "The lords, the lords!" and helmeted dragoons with drawn sabres capered on either side of his carriage. His vivid and excitable imagination conjured up vision after vision of professional success, until at last—perhaps he had some dim notion of Jack on the woolsack, and presiding over the highest council of the nation—he brought his hand down on his thigh with a slap, "He must go to the English bar, Mag! Great legal prizes, like grape bunches, are only to be had in the South. It is England that always crowns genius. I've made up my mind to enter him at the English bar. Westminster, not Edinburgh, must be his field."

"Have you?" said his wife, and there was a slight shade of sadness in her smile. She was victorious; but, like most victors, she was a little remorseful when she thought of the means by which she had obtained victory. "Very well, just as you please. But it will be a long time before he can be called to either bar. We will be getting old people by that time, Alfred!"

"Ah!" said Hagart, with a slight sigh, as he rose up hastily and took a turn or two through the room. "Life's very short when there's anything great to be done in it, or anything great to expect from it. What will be the use of Jack's success, if we are not there to see it?"

And so it was arranged that Jack was to go into Hawkhead and live with Aunt Kate. When Jack was informed of the family decision, he was in a wonderful flutter of spirits. He seemed to have swallowed some astonishing elixir. He trod on air, and no longer on the gross earth. His blood sang through his veins, and made a triumphal drumming in his ears. He would see Hawkhead, and the splendid buildings, and the crowds, and the ships. He was going into the world—into that strange, remote, wonderful world, which he had so often dreamed about, and into which the long white passage-boat carried happy people from Greysley twice in the day. These people he had often envied. He would be carried by the passage-boat himself now. In a single night he had become older, graver, staidier. A single

night took him out of all his companionships. Around the clump of houses he no longer rushed with his fellows in the game of "tig" or "I spy." All that kind of thing seemed, on a sudden, years behind him. He was proof against the importunities of the gamesome lads of his own age. He walked about in the evenings alone, thinking about Hawkhead and the splendid crowded life on which he was to enter. Only one thing vexed him—and that was, that he could not pour out all his excitement, thoughts, plans, hopes, and wishes, into Katy's ear. He should have liked so much to have done that. His whole mind was crowded, brilliant, excited,—like a Roman street in Carnival time,—but if he had Katy to talk to, he would have to a great extent got relief from the oppressive unrest and turmoil. But that was not to be, of course. We miss the dead most at seasons of great grief or of great joy. Young as Jack was, he found out that, or at least some portion of it.

As Jack was going to leave home, there were certain necessary preparations to be made; amongst other things, it was essential

that, in his going forth from the family, he should go forth provided with two suits of clothes. Accordingly, one day Mrs Hagart and Jack walked into Greysley and called on Mr Moss, the tailor and clothier, in High Street, where they sat for half-an-hour inspecting various piles of broadcloth—the reign of tweeds had not begun at the period of which I write, and Galashiels was a quiet village which lived on salmon, and listened to the river babbling ballads as it ran—which that respectable tradesman and his indefatigable assistant brought out of shelves which they reached by means of steps, and laid down before them on the counter. Grave and anxious was the deliberation; Mrs Hagart anxious about price, durability, and texture, and Mr Moss putting in an assuring sentence at intervals. At last the matter was settled, the two suits of clothes were ordered, and were promised to be duly delivered before the close of the week. The day before, Hagart, on his way to Wedderburn Brothers, had dropped in on his friend Mr Moss, paid him a small matter to account, and intimated in a lordly

way that his wife and son would call soon and give him an order; that a great stroke of good fortune had come to his family; that his son had become heir to a rich relative, and was going into Hawkhead to stay with the rich relative, and to pursue his studies in that city. In consequence of this visit, Mr Moss, when his customers were retiring, came round the counter rapidly, accompanied them to the shop door, and, to his mother's confusion, felicitated Jack on his good luck, shook hands with him, and cordially wished him success. And after they were gone, in the shop door Mr Moss remained standing, looking after the retiring figures with a smile on his face, and rubbing his dumpy palms together.

When Jack and his mother had walked down High Street, and were approaching the Saracen's Head, they met the little schoolmaster, who stopped, took off his hat gallantly, and shook hands with both in the most cordial manner. "And so you are going to take away my best scholar, Mrs Hagart!" he said.

"Yes, Mr Blake. John has told you that he

is going to Hawkhead—to the High School and the University. I am sure I am very grateful for the care you have bestowed on—on both my children.”

“The care is not worth speaking about—it was nothing more than my duty. And so you are going to don the scarlet cloak? Going to the University, John?”

“Yes, sir!”

“I remember when I wore it too. Those were the happy days! It’s a grand thing to be a student when one is full of hope, and in love with knowledge. When I see these lads in scarlet cloaks, I look on the rulers of the next age. As the French soldier carries in his knapsack the *bâton* of a marshal, the student, under his red gown, carries a chancellor’s wig, the gown and bands of the Moderator of the General Assembly, or—or the tawse of the dominie. I missed the two former, I got the latter. I hope you’ll have better luck.”

“I hope he will be industrious, and get on well,” said the mother.

“I have no doubt he will. You must make

a name, John, so that, when I am an old man, and when I hear people talking about you, I shall be able to say with pride that you were a scholar of mine. Will you?"

"I'll try, sir."

"I know you will." And then the rusty black figure shook hands with them again, took off its hat, and went along the street.

When they reached home they found a letter from Miss M'Quarrie, to the effect that proper maids had been secured, and that she expected Jack would take up his abode with her on the Saturday following. On that day Ann would be in waiting for the passage-boat when it arrived at the basin at Hawkhead. Although looked for daily, the letter sent a chill into Mrs Hagart's heart. Jack was actually to go at last! The camp had been busy with preparations for some little time, and now the actual order to march had arrived.

Now that matters were fairly settled, Mrs Hagart felt inclined almost to draw back from her covenant with her sister, and to keep Jack at home. She knew that the house would be

doubly lonely when the boy was gone, and all sorts of unreasonable maternal fears crowded upon her. Not very long before, she had boasted of her faculty for "planning," it repented her now that her "planning" on Jack's account had been successful. Her feelings on this matter she kept, of course, to herself; but she was unusually tender to the lad, hung about him continually, grudged every moment he was out of her sight, and slipped into his room, to look on him in his sleep, and perhaps to cry a little in secret, as is the habit of foolish mothers, when their sons are about to leave them. Hagart—when his early feeling of opposition to the scheme was got over—had no qualms of conscience or regret. He expressed delight at the brilliant prospect opening for his son, and looked forward to Saturday with as much eagerness as did Jack himself.

It was arranged originally that on Saturday morning, Jack, with his slender store of luggage, should be taken into Greysley, and deposited in the passage-boat at the canal-basin, and instructed to remain there till Hawkhead

was reached, and Ann had made her appearance. But on Thursday, Hagart, to some little extent, proposed a change in the maternal programme. He thought it but fair that the lad should have some sort of convoy; he would ask the Wedderburn Brothers to allow him a holiday on Saturday; that on the morning of the day of parting, Martha should carry the *impedimenta* to the passage-boat, give it in charge there to the proper authorities; and that he should accompany Jack along the canal-bank to the station-house, and wait there till the boat arrived. By this means Jack would be enabled to depart with some little *éclat*, and he should have an opportunity as they walked, to speak seasonable words of consolation and advice. Naturally enough, on such an occasion, he should like to be with his son as long as possible. To this scheme Mrs Hagart made no objection, and it was accordingly adopted.

END OF VOL. I.