



THE GRANGE FARM.

(Frontispiece.)



# ROUND THE GRANGE FARM:

OR,

Good Old Times.

BY

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"THE SONGSTRESSES OF SCOTLAND."



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TO

Sarah Tyler,

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PLEASURE RECEIVED FROM

HER WRITINGS, AND IN REMEMBRANCE OF

OUR FIRST MEETING ON A

BONNY SUMMER DAY

LANGSYNE.



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**A**S faithful reminiscences of Scottish life were the ground on which the writer advanced a plea to notice in her former volume, "Bygone Days in our Village," and as the sketches there comprised have been not unfavourably received, there is a temptation to count yet on similar indulgence for a further sample from the same store. So far from the fund being exhausted after that first draft upon it, the writer soon came to feel that it had been then handled with a slightness and comparative inexperience, which were but too apt to leave the better part of it behind, unused. Much material lay over for a time, that seemed impossible ever to put into an attractive shape, indeed did not appear likely to fall in with the taste of Publishers, unless so altered as to lose what the writer had most in view. This, she may

now state, was, as it still is, the mere reproduction of incident, and of circumstances, traits, and manners, from a particular locality. The scenes were too familiar to knowledge, as well as too sacred to memory, to allow of the play of fancy, or any attempt at narrative connection except on the thread of personal remembrance. The stories included, like the occurrences of daily life connected with them, were noway otherwise told than as recollection brought them up, with, of course, due heed to considerations of individual reference.

In the view of friends, whose judgment there was reason to trust, a value attached on this very account to the material in question. It was, moreover, thought by them that a special feature of recommendation lay in its embracing so much detail of old country customs, rustic holiday observances, and quaint local usages, with the scraps of ballad poetry or doggerel rhyme belonging to them. "Contributions toward a minor heraldry," as one partial adviser was pleased to express it, "of the ceremonial order which tradition had enjoined on our peasantry for their times of recreation, a thing quite unknown to the mob of an excursion-train."

Be it is, in regard to such things, a little while ago temporary with us—hence apparently trivial, unimportant to see, tedious to hear of—that now they begin to belong to olden times, and are fast passing beyond

the knowledge of the present generation. Before they get to their vanishing point, it may be as well to fix some of them down in memory; and the same may be said but too truly of habits, feelings, associations and beliefs, more important to take note of. Of such, the writer has endeavoured far more anxiously to lay hold; doubtful how, when once lost, they can be replaced amidst the modern haste for change. She would fain, too, have done for her dear little Scottish Border hamlet—at however wide an interval of inferiority in literary skill—what was done for a no less obscure English village by the exquisitely-gifted pen of Miss Mitford. Knowing this hopeless, it can, however, at all events be claimed for the said district, that none exists more characteristic of Scotland; whilst in Scotland there is to be found perhaps a more thoroughly representative form of national character than in most other countries. Hence, doubtless, the sustained favour for all books about its people; a favour that has still extended, till even across the wide waters of the Atlantic a warm corner is discovered in the hearts of our good American cousins for the kindly old vernacular speech. It is evident that many there retain a knowledge of our homely Doric, or else take trouble to acquire such; otherwise it is difficult to conceive why the writer's previous little work should have been reprinted in the



"States." Understanding that a simultaneous issue of the present volume is contemplated there, the author takes this opportunity to express the hope of its not falling at least behind its predecessor in the homelike reception already accorded to her by American readers.





# ROUND THE GRANGE FARM:

OR,

GOOD OLD TIMES.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE MASTER OF THE OLD FARM-HOUSE.

“A kindly man among his kind.”—TENNYSON.

**H**OW dear is the memory of that old farm-house, scarcely removed from the hum of village life, nestling snugly amid trees, and half encircled by the green and silent mountain! Summer and winter it looked the same cheerful spot, its white walls contrasting pleasantly with the dark pines which waved around. The stone fountain, shaded by the hawthorn bush—how pure were its waters, where the cows at evening came with heavy tread, and drank before re-

turning to their stalls, and the ploughman brought his team to be refreshed, while in it too the labourer filled his pitcher as he sat beneath the shade of the tree at his noontide meal. And then, the willow-fringed streamlet which fed that basin, how delicious was the freshness it spread around, where wimpling over beds of matted water-cresses, it sought the meadows beyond, singing ever its ceaseless yet pleasing song—the song which at twilight lulled the children to sleep, who through the hours of the long summer day dabbled and waded in its waters, or plucked the blue forget-me-nots which bloomed on its margin.

Nor was the meadow the least attractive spot. There flourished the sweet wild-mint, white arrow-head, and long pimpernel; not forgetting the purple loose-strife with its gorgeous flowers; and then its grasses, too, how elegant and graceful, waving with the slightest breeze or at the passing swoop of the butterfly's wing.

The garden bounded by its moss-covered wall was no less an object of interest, with its rows of round plump cabbages and curled greens, and its beds of feathery-headed carrots and spearlike onions, while in its borders bloomed luxuriantly white and lily candytuft, purple thyme, red auriculas, and yellow daffodils, not to mention wall-flower, bachelor-buttons, gardeners' garters, jelly-flower, with "the bonny brier bush" in the



centre, the pride and glory of the homely "kail-yard." Nor must the old pear-tree be omitted, nor the eager striving of the children to obtain at early morn its fallen fruit, which the previous night-wind had scattered around. Life was busy within and about that dwelling; stables, cow-houses, fields, abounded with healthy inhabitants; no monotony there, no *ennui*, change of season bringing change of work—in winter, thrashing, ploughing, feeding cattle, and driving grain; in spring, sowing seed; with summer, hay-making and sheep-shearing; and with autumn, cutting down and gathering in the precious fruits of the earth.

But memory recalls most vividly the master who went out and in, dividing and regulating all about the place, with his tall well-proportioned form, dark hair, clear blue eyes and firm expressive mouth, at whose corners lurked ever the benevolent smile; courted by the rich because of his intelligence, combined with many social qualities, and the genial sunshiny temper, which like a summer's day, shed brightness all around. He was especially the poor man's friend.

Sound good sense, and strong judgment, united with great sagacity, constituted the character termed by the Scotch "auld-farrant," which, when joined to a benevolent nature, as it was with him, is of far more value in the world than the sparkling wit or learnedly-studious

book-worm. We admire talent and genius, but we respect and rely upon practical good sense, and prize a friend who possesses it. For then his judgment tells him what at all times is best to be done, and our difficulties vanish in his hands. Or if it be one of the opposite sex who possesses this quality, what innumerable services is she not called upon to perform in journeying through life? Minute unrecorded services which have largely helped to keep in harmony the working machinery of existence. Is it an invalid friend that she visits? then how comfortable do the disordered pillows become to the aching temples, and the nicely-cooked meat relished by the sickly palate; while the old garments in her active hands appear like new, and the unkind speech of the thoughtless one is parried, and its edge blunted.

In short, we know not what benefactors of mankind are these kindly "auld-farrant" folks, making no noise by their works, influencing us for good though we hardly perceive it, and only making us feel when called upon to mourn their loss, that they have left a blank in our paths, which can scarcely be filled. Such was the master of that old farm-house. He carried with him an influence which is felt to this hour, the result of honour and uprightness, united with benevolence so deep and wide, which doubtless, placed in more favour-

able circumstances, might have made him a Howard or a Wilberforce of world-wide fame, instead of living and dying hardly known beyond his own neighbourhood.

"You are too kind, too liberal," said a near relative to him, referring to children he was rearing with his own; "if you are thus generous to others, how can you do justice to your family?"

"My bairns will be provided for," was the reply, "and as for the others, ye ken they need my help, puir things."

"They need my help." This was enough, this was always enough for him. If his assistance was required, then freely, fully, it was given. The strong shoulder was laid to the pole, and the large heart enlisted without any reference to, any perplexity about, the future. Do your duty, and trust in God for the rest, might have been his motto. As it was, thus he always acted, and this kept him from being "troubled amidst the perplexities of life."

Although kind and indulgent to children, there was no undue leniency. He secured their respect as well as love; he was the friend in whom they could confide. His spirit retaining the freshness and simplicity of youth, he could sympathise in all the joys and sorrows of childhood, recalling the description of a modern poet—

"'Twas a blessing on us frae a heart that was warm,  
'Twas a prayer, 'twas a heart without guile, hate, or harm,  
Nae wonder that *bairnhood* to him seemed sae bonny,  
For the heart o' a bairn beat in Auld Vennel-Johnnie."

When one of those adopted ones who formed part of the home circle had left his charge, and years after was dying far away from the land of her childhood, her spirit went back with a weary longing for the kind, patient friend of her early days, and she sighed for the rich pure breezes of the hills to play once more on her brow, exclaiming "I think I should be well were I only back to my old home, and nursed as I used to be when a sickly child by my dear, dear friend." But that wish might not be granted, and she died with her heart's deep yearning unsatisfied.

Then his devotion to woman, how tender it was, how patient, how chivalrous, loving them for their very weakness, but loving them also because of that gentle wife who understood, and appreciated so well the rare and noble qualities of her husband.

Theirs was a union of perfect, uninterrupted harmony, and never a jarring word or unkind look was heard or seen to pass between them. Delicate and fragile that wife had been, and he nursed her tenderly as a mother would a child, cheerfully, unweariedly, through long days and sleepless nights, and when she

died he mourned, but that so quietly, so uncomplainingly, as was very touching to behold. Evincing that strangely peculiar Scottish character which hides the deep spring of passionate feeling under a calm exterior, making the grief more powerful, more enduring, from being pent up and concealed.

Yet his was no selfish sorrow, for when the earthly tie ceased, he seemed more than ever to seek the happiness of others, and his devotion was especially shown towards the relatives of his lost wife. There was a peculiar tenderness which went out in acts of kindness and love where they required his aid. Her father, her mother, her uncle, in turn found a home at the farmhouse, where, in sickness, sorrow, and death, they were watched over as by the most affectionate of sons, his own hand administering the medicine, or applying the soothing liniment.

But not upon man alone was this sympathy poured forth so freely. Every living creature about the farm shared his love, and it might truly be seen from him :

“He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man, and bird, and beast :  
He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small,  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.”

Was it the water-wagtail which had built its nest in the turf of the old bridge? Then did the bright new sixpence bribe the herd-boy to protect the feathered fledglings from the prying eyes and cruel hands of the village children. Or, again, it might be one of his faithful horses he saw about to be yoked into the laden cart, then would the kindly "Drive him canny, puir beast" secure gentle treatment from the thoughtless youth who held the reins.

Business sometimes requiring his presence in a distant part of the country, he was accustomed to set out early, choosing often a bright summer morning, taking near cuts through little frequented-paths, jogging along at an easy pace over hill and plain, resting by some mountain burn to give his horse the good oatmeal bannock, which, with a drink of the brook, refreshed it for its journey.

Upon one occasion, having set out on such a long day's travel, he noticed the faithful animal appearing dull and heavy, and requiring the whip to be applied pretty smartly. This happened once or twice, when suddenly it turned round and looked in its master's face with such a sad expression in its natural brown eye, that he, letting fall the instrument of chastisement and dismounting, discovered it was suffering from illness. Having been with difficulty got home, by great

care and attention it soon recovered, receiving ever after even greater consideration from its kind owner.

Trusting "in the Lord," his upright and benevolent disposition led him also to put confidence in his fellow-men, and this spirit, conspicuous throughout life, was manifested in his dying hours. Turning to his brother, bending over him in his last moments, he said, pointing to his children, so soon to be orphans:

"Willie, ye'll look after my bairns when I'm gane, an' be kind to them, puir things!"

His brother, who was many years his senior, replied: "But I'm an' auld man, John, an', in the course o' nature, canna be lang after ye."

"Oh, then," calmly answered the dying man, without a shadow of doubt or fear disturbing his placid countenance, "I ken your sons winna see ony ill come ower them, an' the Lord will protect them;" adding reverently, "He has given, and He has taken away again, blessed be His name."

Of these brothers it may be said they "were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided," for almost the last entry in the journal of the survivor is this sentence:


"My brother died last night. I can safely say we never had a dispute or quarrel, never an angry word all our lives."

A meagre notice this, any one unacquainted with the writer might think, and yet to those who knew him best, what a meaning it contained! They were both men of deeds and not of words; men who felt deeply, but seldom expressed their feelings.

And yet not confined to relations and home, was this boundless unwearied sympathy, this patient forbearance, this generous outpouring of the heart, which characterised the master of the old farm-house. Over all his fellow-creatures it went forth, until his name became a household word.

"It's lang, lang noo, sin' the *maister* died," said old Jamie Brydon one day to me, while the tears trickled silently down his furrowed cheeks, and he wiped them away with the sleeve of his coat. "Lang, lang, and muckle has come and gane sin' syne. Them that were bairns then, are men and women noo, and yet we have never seen his like, nor ever will again."

"The *maister*!" It's a homely word, and breathed by the Scottish peasant sounds kindly in our ears. Yes, it was many years since Jamie had served at that farm, and other masters had been his; still the old man loved to think and speak of him alone as *the maister*, the best beloved, lingering over the words with a mournful kind of pleasure. His eye brightened as he went on to tell of the happy days spent in his service, of the love and





sympathy between employers and employed; of the anxiety that in harvest the *kirn* should first be won by them, and how, for that purpose, they rose early in the morning to cut the grain, and as the last handful was shorn, how the reapers on the neighbouring farms slacked their speed; when reaching the nearest eminence they filled the air with loud huzzas, which informed the country around that they were first in the race. Then, by the light of the bright full moon, how they led the laden carts from the fields, and stacked the grain, not ceasing their labour until the last sheaf was safely housed.

"His folk wad ha'e dune onything for him," Jamie added, "but nae wonder, he was a kind maister. I ha'e seen him come to us when we were thrashin', and say, 'There's a bonspiel to be played the day, wad ye like to see it, lads? if sae, ye may gang, an' finish that job the morn.' Or, 'Wad ye like to watch the hunt, callants? Then, aff wi' ye, we're no sae thrang that ye need want your enjoyment this afternoon.' An' then, if ony o' us was ill," continued the old man, "how gude he was! I mind o' the time the puir laddie Steenie (that's my sister's son), got his hand crushed in the saw-mill. As ye may guess, we were a' gey sair put about, an' mair sae when the doctor came an' said it maun be cut off. Weel, the maister happened to hear o't, and rode

down as fast as the beast could carry him. It just seems like yesterday sin' I can mind my sister sittin' greetin' when he came in and said, quite cheery, ' Dinna be cast down, maybe things are no sae bad as ye think' Weel, was it no' strange—mony a time we spak' o't after—his words just seemed to put life into us, an' we just thought that noo when he was there, a' would be right. After that, he turned round to the doctor, a stupid kind o' body, wha just at that very moment was getting things ready to take aff the hand, and said, 'If ye'll wait for a day or twa afore ye dae that, an' trust me wi' 't, I think I'll bring him through.' The doctor wasna for yieldin', but the maister insisted, for ye maun understand he had ance lived wi' a friend o' his, a great doctor in Glasgow, an' got a wonderful insight into things; sae at last he carried his point, an' every day for six weeks, he rode down to my sister's, an' sorted the wovnd wi's ain fingers, till it was hale, an' now the hand's servin' Steenie to this day."

"The *maister*," says the old shoemaker's wife who lives in the cottage on the moor, "was a kind man to the puir, an' never spared himsel' when he could do a gude turn to onybody."


Perhaps it was this very characteristic of "never sparing himsel'," which made the maister so much beloved. The rich man scatters a few superfluous coins

among his less fortunate brethren, giving them what demands from him no self-denial, no sacrifice, and of which, after all, he is only a steward, and, therefore, the bounty lightly given is lightly prized. But when one gives his time, talents, energies, endures hardships, and bestows labour to benefit or serve them, then do they recognise a friend, and give him what they can in return; and oh, what a blessed return!—the love of simple and affectionate hearts, a gift in this cold world beyond all price.

“I may *weel* mind him,” says Mary Hislop, the old cripple woman, as she rests by the side of the highway. “Sit down, miss, if ye’re no in a hurry, an’ I’ll tell ye about him. Hech! sirs, but auld times come back to my mind when I think o’ him, an’ I wasna the puir lonely body I’m noo, but a blythe wife an’ mother, an’ the maister gaun out and in wi’ his cheery look, an’ aye the joke an’ laugh ready if we were happy, or the word o’ comfort if we were wae. Oh! but he was a braw gude-like man too, the best dancer ye ever saw, an’ no ane in a’ the parish could come up to him for fun and diversion. He ance rode the broose an’ won it, to ha’e the bride on afore him, for he stuck at naething. And yet wi’t a’, he was sae tender-hearted, and wadna see a living thing ill-guided. The bairns *did* like him weel about the place, and though he tell’t

them to come to his stack-yard an' get as mony peas as they liked to eat, no ane o' them would ha'e touched a thing belonging to him, tho' they were geyan mischivvous on a' the rest o' the farmers round. Nane o' them wad ha'e ta'en an apple, or a pear either, frae *his* garden. He didna need strong locks nor big dowgs like a heap o' the gentry. But what I was gaun to tell ye the noo, miss, was o' him ance riskin' his life to save our house frae bein' brunt.

"It was ae gloamin' when my man was frae hame, that the bairns, when playin' wi' some spunks, set the byre in a lowe, an' afore ever I kent, my cow, puir beast, was brunt, and the flames had ta'en a grip o' the house. I flew out like ane demented to alarm the neighbours, but a' the men were at the fair, an' naebody left about the place but a wheen laddies an' some women. Just at that minute the maister was ridin' past wi' the Laird o' Mossland, an' hearin' o' the disaster, he threw his horse's bridle ower the branch o' a tree an' cam' to our help. The first thing I saw o' him was, he was up on the tap o' the house, an' workin' wi' a' his might, direckin' the callants that gathered round him, proud to dae his biddin'. Weel, to mak' a lang story short, he never stopped till he got out the fire, an' the house was little the waur. But that wasna a', for after he had lain down on his bed



at night, he turned feared that the lowe wad break out again an' burn us when we were sleepin'; sae he rase an' cried up Jock Jackson, an' made him tak the horse an' ride round our house to see if a' was right; nor did his kindness stop there, for in the mornin', when I wauken'd wi' a sair heart thinkin' o' my cow, an' wonderin' how ever we could get another, somebody rapped at the door. I got up an' opened it, an' was surprised to see a lad standin' at the back o't wi' a young quye held by the head.

"'The maister sent me wi' this beast to ye,' he said, 'for he thocht ye wad need the milk for your bairns this mornin'.' Dae ye wonder now, miss, that we a' liked him sae weel?" said Mary, when she had finished her tale.

And thus the villagers speak of him in the long winter evenings, as they sit by the fire talking of the past; and thus they keep alive in the hearts of their children and grand-children, the remembrance of him upon whose grave many winters have shed their snows, and many summer suns have wooed into beauty the wild flowers that bloom on its turf.





## CHAPTER II.

### ST VALENTINE'S DAY.

“ Muse, bid the morn awake,  
Sad winter now declines,  
Each bird doth choose a mate,  
This day's St Valentine's.  
For that good bishop's sake,  
Get up and let us see  
What beauty it shall be  
That fortune us assigns.” DRAYTON.

**T**HE anniversary of St Valentine's day is now little noticed except by the humble class and children, who find amusement in sending anonymous letters to friends or neighbours containing pictures or poetry either sentimental or satirical; but once in our land this day was observed in more earnest fashion, when in all ranks groups of gay young bachelors and blythe maidens met together, and, amidst

gay jests and light laughter, made the choice of their Valentines a work of consideration.

The Valentine literature of those times consisted almost entirely of doggrel verses, the composition of some village poet, of which a few specimens may be given.

“ The rose is red, the violet’s blue,  
Honey’s sweet, and so are you.”

Again—

“ If my heart was made of glass  
Wherein you might behold,  
There you would see your image bright  
In letters of pure gold.  
Art thou not dear unto my heart ?  
Oh search my heart and see,  
And from my bosom tear that part  
Which beats not true to thee.”

Or this—

“ The trees will cease to grow,  
The eagle turn a dove,  
The rivers cease to flow,  
Ere I will cease to love.”

And so my story is of those old times when superstition still lent a charm to St Valentine’s day, and made the young choose it as one favourable to the business of love making.

It has been an early spring, and the crocus and

snowdrop make gay the small garden surrounding the cottage of Fernybrae. The wind has swept the last year's leaves into hollows, and the hooded crow watches the ploughman as he turns up the soil, whirling in circles above his head, ready to alight and seek its food upon the fresh earth.

It is the morn of St Valentine's day, and as Esther Harvey stands by her mirror and smoothes her silken locks of nut-brown hair, she thinks of the gay, dashing Allan Lee, the handsomest and most popular young man in the neighbourhood, her old school-fellow and playmate, and her dancing-school partner, for whom she was the cause of envy to all her companions. Why should thoughts of Allan come into Esther's mind just then? "Am I anything more to him," she asks herself, "than the other girls, with whom he loves to laugh and jest?" and yet she can recall the time when, oh! how often, his eye seemed as if it loved to rest on her, and his voice when speaking to her took a softer tone, but these were in days gone by. Now she can only remember how he had passed her some few evenings ago, scarcely recognising her presence, so engrossed was he with Letta Smith the miller's daughter; and so Esther resolves that if he should come with his offering of verse, the customary tribute of regard given to those most esteemed upon



that day, she would look coldly upon him; and yet if she did so he might think she cared for him. Or rather, she would look indifferent, unconcerned, she knew she would; and then he might go to Letta Smith if he chose; and so, satisfied with this resolution, Esther went down stairs to prepare breakfast for the household.

Fernybrae, the abode of Cooper Harvey (as he was called from his former occupation, as maker and mender of all the wooden barrels and utensils in the neighbourhood), is a small farm at the outskirts of Newton village, not far from the Grange.

The cooper has certainly been a thriving man, for it is only a few years since he exercised his humble craft, but now he is a well-to-do farmer, while his wife and only daughter visit upon equal terms with the better class of families in the district.

Of late, it is true, things have not been so prosperous with Harvey; he has tried one or two speculations, which have proved failures, and there are whisperings abroad, that he owes his laird a larger sum than he is well able to pay, though no one is quite certain how matters stand, for the cooper is a silent, secretive man, and not even to his own family does he make known his business transactions. "One thing is clear," the neighbours say, as they shake their heads piteously,

"he'll get little pity frae Laird Melrose; for, God help the puir man, or woman either, that fa's into his hands." But now their sympathy has begun to give place to feelings of wonder, for not unfrequently may the proprietor of the Lodge be found seated by the parlour fire at Fernybrae, talking familiarly with his tenant.

Laird Melrose, as he was called, had unexpectedly succeeded to large estates upon the death of a distant relative. He was a man of humble origin, and when raised by accident to a higher station, was unfitted, either by education or habits of mind, for his new position. Low, cunning, and miserly, he was disliked by the poor, though the large fortune to which he had fallen, never procured for him flatterers and pretended friends amongst the rich. He was a bachelor, too, and many of the unmarried ladies in the circle of his acquaintance would have overlooked his age and disposition, to become lady of the Lodge. Melrose, however, did not appear to be easily caught, for though he flirted with every pretty young girl he met, it went no further, and so the laird was still sole occupant of his large handsome house, in spite of all the dinners and balls given by housekeeping mammas.

The breakfast at Fernybrae is over now, and the cooper has gone to his work again, leaving Esther and her mother to put things straight within doors; but, as

the bustling, active Mrs Harvey has been sickly of late, her kind daughter coaxes her to take the wheel and leave the more menial business of the household to her hands, to which the busy housewife unwillingly consents; for, like other energetic matrons, Mrs Harvey cannot see how things are to be properly done without her superintendence. However, Esther carries her point, by telling her that the lint must be spun and made into linen for the bright March sun to bleach it into whiteness, and so the mother at last yields, and, placing the wheel by the fire, she leaves her daughter and their maid-of-all-work to sweep and clean, looking up occasionally to direct.

Esther Harvey, even in her stuff-petticoat and white short-gown, is the fairest of village maidens. Her hair, brown and waving, shades a broad pale forehead, beneath which beam liquid blue eyes, fringed by long silken lashes. It mattered not in what menial work she engaged, elegance in every movement, and a daintier little figure, could nowhere have been seen, than the cooper's daughter, as she stands on the morning of St Valentine's day, calling her feathered charge to their breakfast of good substantial oatmeal porridge. Soon the cock, flying from the russet hay stack, the hens from the straw-shed, where they have been "cackling" from an early hour, with ducks and tur-

keys, hasten to the summons; busily engaged watching the eager flock, encouraging some frightened one, or keeping back the impudent and greedy, she hears not a step behind, till a well-known voice exclaims—

“A fine morning, Esther; how fares the world wi’ ye?”

Now, Esther, now’s the time to remember the coolness of Allan Lee, when he passed you laughing and jesting with Letta Smith. Tell him to go and speak to the miller’s sprightly daughter, for you have no leisure to listen, and then walk to the house, without ever bidding him good-bye, even with a friendly nod. To do so would only serve him right. Alas! alas! for the pride of the cooper’s daughter. It had melted as quickly as the snow before the warm beams of the February sun. Truth must be told, the only feeling that Esther experienced was one of pleasure, mixed with a strange sense of bashfulness and reserve. In vain she tried to be natural; but no, she could not still the pulses of her veins that were beating so wildly and quickly, and though she smiled upon the young man, she uttered not a word.

“Why will ye no speak to me, Esther?” asked Allan, mistaking the meaning of her silence, adding, with a moment’s tremor of voice different from his quick independent tone to others, “ye’re no angry wi’ me, are ye?”

"No, no," said the girl hastily, again relapsing into silence, for she felt that the glance of those soft lustrous eyes were upon her, and she was galled and fretted by an overpowering sense of restraint, such as all experience, more or less, in the company of the loved one.

"This is St Valentine's day, Esther," again exclaimed Allan, "and ye see I have chosen you for mine," putting, as he spoke, a paper containing a copy of verses into her hand.

Esther received them with a thrill of pleasure, which caused a blush to mantle upon her fair cheek, expecting them to be in the usual style of poetry suited to that day. Instead of this, however, she read, with unfeigned surprise, the following poem, to which she could attach no meaning. It was entitled—

#### THE POWER OF WEALTH.

"The laird he has houses, the laird he has land,  
An' hands-fu' o' gowd he has aye at command,  
Wi' kye in the meadows and sheep on the hills,  
While wi' wheat, oats, and barley, his barns aye he fills,  
So what wi' his siller and broad acres green,  
The laird's no a man to be slighted I ween.

"He has nae a wife, an' he has nae a wean,  
To work for, or care for, or e'er ca' his ain ;

Yet ilka bit lassie that's bonny and young,  
He tries to win roun' wi' his flatterin' tongue ;  
Aye praisin' her beauty, an' makin' frac'a',  
But the laird's no a man to be slighted ava'.

"Each week in the market he's sure to appear  
(For *he's* no the man that will lose ony gear),  
An' his friends a' crowd round him and think him sae wise,  
An' some quote his sayings, some ask his advice.  
But then he's the laird, an' he canna gang wrang,  
He must ha'e great wisdom whose purse is sae lang.

"I'm certain he's threescore, if he is a day ;  
But they say he's as young an' as cheery as May ;  
His head it is bald, an' his ee it is dim ;  
But they tell him, they see no a change upon him,  
That he might be but thirty, or twenty twice tauld,—  
But, then, he's the laird, an' he canna grow auld.

"There's nae tale o' sorrow can loose his purse strings ;  
He kens nae the bliss that frae kindness aye springs ;  
But he'll gie to the rich to be heard o' again,  
An' the bounty that's published 'ill no want his name.  
But, then, he's the laird, an' nae fauts I maun see ;  
Yet what am I sayin'—nae fauts, sure, has he !"

"What mean ye by gi'en' me this, Allan ?" asked  
Esther, "or what ha'e I to do wi' the laird, for it's  
him ye mean ?"

"Folk say he's mony a time at Fernybrae," he answered; "an they guess what brings him to the cooper's fireside."

"An' what is it, then?" inquired Esther, looking more and more astonished. "Is it, as I have been thinking, that my father owes him what maybe he canna see weel to pay? Oh, dear, I wadna wish it," she continued, sorrowfully, "for Mr Melrose is a hard, harsh man."

"No, no, that's no' it," replied her companion, laughing. "Guess again."

"I cannot, Allan; I cannot; but surely it's naething very bad, or ye wadna think it a laughin' matter."

"I see ye're innocent, onyway," answered the young man, with a happy smile lighting up his handsome face; an' I can tell you, Esther, a heavy load's been lifted off my heart. Weel, it's said," he added, "that your blue eye wiles him here."

"Do they say sae?" replied the maiden, with something of pique in her tone. "Then they say what has no' a shadow o' truth in't. Mr Melrose is no' the man to look at the like o' me. But ye ken, Allan," she said, thoughtfully, "if it's true what's thought about our circumstances, we must be civil to him, for he may work us harm."

"An' ye winna fancy him, then, Esther?" asked

the young man, his voice trembling with emotion. "Ye winna be tempted by his riches or grandeur?"

"I tell ye," said the maiden, now laughing in her turn, "that Mr Melrose would never even himself to me, an' as little would ever I care for him." Then lifting her soft eyes, in which a tear had suddenly gathered, she continued a little reproachfully, "I thought, Allan, ye knew me better."

There was something in that look more telling than words; something which whispered faintly, yet surely, that the young farmer was dearer to the heart of the village maiden than thousands of gold or silver; and an expression of calm repose stole over the manly face of Allan Lee, as he uttered in low, soft tones:

"Ye see, Esther, what's dear, dear to me, I'm feared to lose; an' what on earth was as dear to me as the hope of your love."

"Esther, Esther," just then called Mrs Harvey from the house; and Esther, glad of an excuse, tried to escape, but was held with a firm yet gentle grasp by the young man, who exclaimed—

"I winna let you away until ye promise to see me again."

"Oh, dinna keep me!" she answered, with agitation, "my mother will wonder where I've gane," but he did keep his hold, until Esther promised to re-



ceive him in the light of an accepted lover. Allan Lee stood watching the neat little figure of his beloved until she disappeared within the doorway, then with a light heart and bounding step he left the yard, feeling himself a better and a nobler man, for the certainty of that deep, true affection he had gained—the happy consciousness that there was another life now linked with his own, which it would be his duty and pleasure to cherish and protect.

Quickly the forenoon hours have passed away, and evening finds Esther sitting alone in the old-fashioned kitchen at Fernybrae, tired of plying her needle, and dreaming at the same time pleasant dreams of Allan Lee and a bright, bright future in store for her, gladdened by his love. The place has a cheerful aspect, for the large fire, crackling and blazing on the hearth, gleams upon the store of pewter dishes on the cupboard shelf, and lights up the figure of Esther in her afternoon dress of linsey-woolsey. It is an enchanted land in which she now sits, and as she recalls words and looks, her eye beams with a softer light, and the blush every now and then mantles on her cheek suddenly. This delightful solitude, however, was brought to a close by the sudden appearance of Mr Melrose, who, before she was aware, had entered by the open door and stood before her. Could she have made

her escape, how glad she would have been; for, remembering Allan's words, she felt unwilling to be left alone with him. However, flight was impossible; so rising quickly and pointing to a chair, she said—

“I will tell my father you're here, Mr Melrose. He's in the barn wi' the workers.”

“It's no' your father I want to see,” answered the laird, with something of a smile lighting up his heavy face, “it was yoursel', bonny Esther, and I am fortunate to find you alone.” Esther made no reply to this speech; indeed she knew not what answer to make, being vexed and annoyed by so unwelcome an intrusion. Mr Melrose waited a moment and then proceeded, “Now, my bonny lassie, sit down beside me, for I've something to say to you that doubtless you'll be glad to hear.” But the young girl moved not from her position, and seemed watching an opportunity to escape.

“Ye see,” added the laird, so engrossed with himself, that he never remarked the annoyed look of his listener, “I am lanely up in yon big house, an' I thought I wad just step down on this day—a lucky ane for wooers—an' ask ye to be my wife. I ken there's mony a ane wad be glad to ha'e me, but I somehow like you best; sae gi'e me your hand on't, Esther, and a kiss into the bargain.”

"It canna be, Mr Melrose," cried Esther, drawing back with loathing from the proffered embrace, "it canna be; but ye say there's mony a ane wad be glad to get you, sae look after a leddy to grace the head of your table, an' no think ony mair o' the like o' me."

"I'm better pleased, Esther," answered the old man, mistaking her motives, "that ye think sae little o' yoursel'; but never fear, ye'll look as weel at the head o' my table as the best in the country. Eh! but the cooper and his wife will be pleased when they hear that their daughter will be the leddy o' the lodge."

"No, no, Mr Melrose!" now exclaimed the girl, in tones of desperation, "it canna, canna be, for I love another." As she spoke those words, the colour rose to her cheek and forehead, making her appear still more beautiful in the eyes of the persistent lover.

"Tuts, never mind that," he replied, cheerfully. "Nae doubt he's some puir lad that has only the claes on his back; give him up at once, an' I will dress ye in silks, and satins, and rings, and chains, as mony as ye wad care for—an' thae are the things that tak' wi' you women; sae ye'll no refuse me noo."

"Ah! Mr Melrose," cried Esther feelingly; "true

love never can be bought nor sold; and hear me, laird," she added again, colouring up to the temples, "the ane I like, an' wha I ken likes me, I wuldna gi'e a curl o' his bonny hair for a' the gowd ye could offer me, nor ae glance o' his blue eye either."

"Say ye sae?" replied Mr Melrose, his face getting pale with anger. "But I'm no easy thwarted when I tak' a thing into my head."

"Ye've got my answer, nevertheless," said Esther, turning to leave the house; "I dinna care whether ye're easy thwarted or no, but ye'll no get me to marry ye ony way."

"Ah! we'll see about that," cried the angry man; "do ye no ken I can compel ye? Your father's in my power, and he'll suffer for this."

On hearing these words Esther started, and her face grew pale, though she made no reply.

"I see your pride's been brought down a wee," exclaimed her persecutor exultingly. "Ye didna know, when you were sae high, that I could make ye yield? But dinna be cast down. If ye'll be reasonable, I'll never bring up a thing against ye."

"It's ower true, then," said the poor girl despairingly. "It's just as I feared; an we're in your power; God help us!"

"Yes, Esther," he answered; "ye are in my power,

an' if I please I can send your father across the seas. But dinna be feared; only say you'll marry me, and everything shall be forgotten against him."

"Is there no other way? Oh! can I no' save him by any other means; this day so happy," she added, weeping, "an' now so miserable, so wretched; oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"I'll gi'e ye a week to make up your mind," said the old man, rising to depart. "Meet me this night eight-nights at the witches' tree, by the burn side, as the sun sinks behind Carden; and if ye'll consent then to be my wife, I swear to you I'll never harm a hair o' your father's head. Ye may think I'm cruel, Esther," he continued in gentler tones; "but everything is fair in love and war, an' ye'll no be lang my wife afore ye thank me for no yielding to your foolish fancy."

How Esther spent the days that intervened between this and her final meeting, it were sad to tell. She looked around for help, but no help was found; her father could not save her, neither could her tender mother. Oh! if she durst tell Allan Lee; if she might but lay her weary head on his strong, brave heart, and pour out her tale of sorrow. If she could lean on his true arm—so willing, so able to support her. Alas, it might not be; what could he do for her? He, the younger son of a poor family; besides, she knew he was

vexed and annoyed with her apparent coldness, for since that happy morning she had shunned his presence. She noted it through her ear, felt it in every tone of his voice, every fall of his firm, bold tread; watched it though her heart was breaking. Mrs Harvey saw her daughter pining, but guessed not the cause, for Esther eluded all her questions, and only answered evasively, when asked if she were ill. At last the evening came—the fatal evening—and with trembling steps she sought the place of rendezvous; but not before Allan Lee, who had been watching for her, observed her flight.

“Tell me, Esther,” he exclaimed earnestly, “what have I done to anger you? Oh! if ye knew how I ha’e wearied and longed to see you, and watched day after day for you to look kindly on me, as ye did that morning I last saw you. But what ails you?” he said, starting back aghast. “What has come over you, Esther, my darling, ye maun ha’e been ill; I didna ken o’t.” And well might he exclaim thus, for the rose had left her cheek, and her face was pale and haggard through mental suffering.

“Oh! Allan,” she cried sorrowfully, “dinna ask me ony questions, an’ dinna follow me, as you value my peace.”

“Esther, you’ll drive me mad. Did ye no’ in a manner gi’e me a right to protect, to share your sorrows? Then, what can ha’e changed you?”

"Oh! Allan, Allan, I canna tell ye; but leave me, oh, leave me!" she cried, bursting into tears; "and, Allan, whatever ye hear of me, mind, ye dinna blame me." Then she added despairingly—"God help me! for my brain seems on fire."

Allan Lee could only reply by taking the poor trembling form into his strong arms, and kissing the pale wan cheek. For a moment she let him soothe her as a mother her wearied child; but it was only for a moment, and then, disengaging herself, she sprung past him, and, waving her hand, exclaimed—"Farewell, bonny Allan Lee, and oh! if we never meet again, as we have met, dinna blame me."

Allan, vexed and piqued, sought not to follow; but with a dull, sad sinking of heart, returned to his home, feeling sure that some evil was looming over her he loved, that was beyond his power to aid.

"Ye've been lang o' coming, Esther," said Mr Melrose, as the poor girl approached the trysting place. "Weel, what have ye determined upon?"

"Spare me, oh! spare me," she cried, leaning on the tree for support. "Oh! for the sake o' another true heart suffering like mine, dinna ask me to marry ye. Look at my face, and see what grief has made it."

"Weel, weel, then, Esther, gang hame and look at Fernybrae for the last time, and bid your father fare-

well, for as sure as the sun is in the heavens, he shall not go unscathed."

"God help me, then!" exclaimed the girl, "for man cannot. Let me be the victim rather than my father;" and so saying, she sank down on her knees at his feet, overwhelmed by her great sorrow.

"Ye'll never rue it, Esther, and ye'll soon thank me for this, hard as it now seems," answered the laird joyfully; "an' there's no a lady in the land shall be dressed like you." But Esther heard not the words, so stunned was she by grief; nay, she even suffered him to raise her from her knees, nor did she even shrink from the kiss he pressed on her clay-cold lips.

Greatly astonished were the cooper and his wife when Mr Melrose announced his intended marriage with their daughter; but the mother's keen eye detected Esther's strange, sad look; and though she could not penetrate the mystery, she feared there was something wrong, so thought she must have had some lover's quarrel with Allan Lee, and was marrying the laird to spite him.

Mr Melrose spared no pains to make himself agreeable to his bride. He bought her costly jewels, and dressed her in silks of finest fabric; but from all she turned away with a face of such apathetic sorrow, that any other heart than his would have melted before the look.



It was more than a nine days' wonder when the marriage was made public; but after the ceremony had taken place, and the young wife and mistress had been installed in her new home, no tongue could be raised in envy, so meekly and gently did she bear her honours; and no one could have guessed that she had not been fitted by birth for her position, for there was an innate grace in the cooper's daughter which suited for every sphere.

But what of Allan Lee—the gay, handsome Allan Lee—the light of the old farm-house, and the pride of his mother's heart? Alas, Allan had left his home and his country with only a knapsack on his shoulders, to join the army in Spain; and though he said it not, well did his mother know that somehow or other Esther Harvey was connected with his departure; and yet when she saw her some months after her marriage, lying listlessly back in her carriage, as it rolled past her on the road, and read in the wearied look of her once bright eye that life had lost its charm, she said, on her return to her daughters—"Ah! bairns, bairns, it's no a' gowd that glitters; for, depend upon it, a worm is at the bud of that fair flower, and a young heart is breaking;" and from that hour, though she sorrowed over her wanderer, freely and fully she forgave the one who had injured him.

Again spring has come, and again the crocus and primrose are lifting their heads in the garden of Fernybrae, as well as in the pleasure-grounds of the Lodge. Esther Melrose sits by the window of her elegant drawing-room, sometimes carelessly knitting a silk purse, but oftener looking out on the lawn with that wearied, wistful look in her soft eye, which Mrs Lee had remarked and pitied. People said that Mr Melrose had tired of his fair young wife, but whether it was the case or no, Esther never complained—even her mother sometimes wondered if she either felt joy or sorrow, so calm and apathetic did she seem, so different from the joyous girl who had shed a ray of gladness over the small house of Fernybrae. As Esther sits thus, her attention is suddenly arrested by the entrance of the servant, who placed the newspaper in her hand, telling her, at the same time, that rumours of an engagement had reached the village.

Quickly she opened it, and glanced her eye at the contents, and ere the servant was beyond hearing, she had fallen, with a scream, upon the floor. Mr Melrose came with haste, followed soon after by her mother from Fernybrae, and by the help of restoratives, the young wife was recalled to consciousness. The mystery, if any, was very soon explained; for amongst a list of the slain in battle, Esther had recognised her old lover,

the once bright, joyous Allan Lee, whose name she had never been heard to utter since the fatal hour that severed their young true hearts asunder.

"Tell me, Esther, tell me, my child," cried her mother tenderly, as the poor stricken girl leaned her head wearily on that bosom, her childhood's pillow, and sobbed such deep bitter sobs as if her heart was breaking. "Tell me, did you like Allan Lee?" and, then, for the first time, did Esther pour the tale of her sorrow into her mother's astonished ears.

"Oh! why did I no ken this before," said Mrs Harvey. "Why did you sacrifice yourself, my bairn, my bairn?"

"It's all well now, mother, all well," said Esther, wearily. "I wad ha'e been far owre happy, and then I might have forgotten my God. No, no, mother, dinna grieve for me; but, oh! I have tried to forget the past; tried to make a faithful wife," she continued sadly, "yet after all, I have failed." Then, again, with a fresh burst of tears, she exclaimed, "Oh! mother, yon battle-field, where that young fair head is lying a' drenched wi' gore, an' murdered by me; yes, murdered, as sure as if these hands had done it; him I wad ha'e died for." Mrs Harvey could only soothe her child by gently smoothing down her brown hair, and rocking her softly and tenderly, for she felt that words were all in vain.

After a few minutes, she said again, "It's nice to lie here, mother, just as I used to do lang syne, and tell you all my griefs. An' oh ! dinna mourn for me when I am away, for I have had little, little, pleasure in life since that day I parted wi' Allan Lee. I mind ance, mother," she went on to say, "my father brought a bonny wild lark to me frae the woods, and put it in a cage ; I watched over it, and brought it fresh weeds every day, but it pined and pined till it died, and you said its heart was broken. I wondered then what you meant—I dinna wonder now."

"And has Mr Melrose been kind to my bairn for all he has made her suffer ?" inquired Mrs Harvey, adding—"Oh ! the hard, hard, cruel man !"

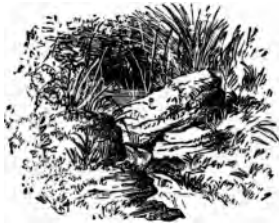
"Mother, mother," said her daughter, hastily placing her hand on her lips, "dinna blame him. Mind, I vowed before God to love and honour him ; an' I couldna do it though I tried—tried, oh ! so hard ; but maybe he might ha'e had mair patience wi' me ; yet, it doesna matter now ; no, naething matters to me now, for a' I can see is yon bluidy field ; weel may his mother curse the murderer o' her son."

Esther survived long enough to view the well-read Bible of the young brave soldier, brought home by a comrade with his dying message to her, to meet him in a land where there would be no more tears, no more

partings ; and so before another St Valentine's day had come again, those two that had loved each other so well, slept in peace, " life's fitful fever past,"—one

" Where southern vines are dressed,  
Amid the noble slain,  
He wrapped his colours round his breast  
On a blood-red field of Spain ;"

and the other in the village churchyard, where the children play in long summer days, and gather gowans and buttercups to weave into coronals.





## CHAPTER III.

### THE MISTRESS OF BALENDEAN.

“ But if I praised the busy town,  
He loved to rail against me still,  
I’ve ‘ground in yonder social mill,  
We rub each other’s angles down,  
And merge,’ he said, ‘in form and glass,  
The picturesque of man and man.”

IN MEMORIAM.

“ **W**E have few *characters* now,” said a friend while talking of the difference between the past and present time; “few who vary in any striking degree from others around them. All with rare exceptions dress alike, speak alike, and even think alike; I am weary of this universal sameness, this tame unmarked state of society. I do wish we saw now and then, to diversify life a little, such a woman as my grandmother.” I felt the justice of my friend’s re-

marks, for character has indeed lost its individuality, men are too much blended together, trained in the same schools, frequently in the same circles, to grow up with any noted difference of thought and sentiment. Truly "ground in yonder social mill, we rub each other's angles down," and shoot up circumscribed in growth, like trees in a crowded plantation.

Formerly, it was not thus, when strong natures, nursed and reared amidst the solitudes of our land, developed their particular characteristics in numberless forms and ways; the freeness of their growth exhibiting irregularities of character, which gave a pleasing and refreshing variety to life, differing as widely from our town-reared specimens of mankind, as do the single trees on the rugged mountain side or velvet lawn, shooting out their graceful branches in this direction and that, from their forest brethren cramped and crushed on all sides by neighbours.

Simple nature uncrushed by art is beautiful everywhere and however displayed—beautiful and invigorating as the breath of the pure free air in some wild highland glen, or the scent of the purple thyme upon a briary bank, over which the butterfly wheels and flutters, and the humble bee flits past with drowsy hum.

The mistress of Balendean (my friend's grandmother),

was indeed no ordinary woman, and her appearing again amongst us would ever excite no little attention, with her grave-coloured, soft gown, and her snowy cap, which met below the firm resolute chin, and set off to advantage the large-featured yet handsome face of the wearer. Homely enough no doubt was this dress, yet it suited well the rich pure Doric of her Scottish tongue, and the simple manner of the times when "the Maister" took the plough-stilts into his own rough, brown hand, and guiding his horses, turned up the red soil to the sun, till called in by times with "Hey, gudeman, the dinner's ready!" or "Maister, come in to your *four-hours*."

At the close of a bright summer's day, the mistress first came a young bride to the farm-house of Balendean, riding by the side of her husband, followed by the heavily-loaded cart of "providing." This providing, the pride and boast of a kind mother, was also in great part the handiwork of the latter, whose thrifty home-made sheets and blankets, and well-bleached "napery," formed a principal item of the store; while above all was tied the never-to-be-omitted wheel and reel, symbols of industry without which in those simple times a young wife never entered her husband's dwelling. Behind the homely cavalcade came the old grey-headed shepherd, who drove carefully the brindled cow and her calf, a



father's gift to a daughter when departing from the home of her childhood.

Had time not been fully occupied, solitary enough might her new abode have been to the girl, for one might sit the "lee-lang day" by the window of the spence, and see nothing save a solitary raven upon the moor, or a rabbit stealing out from amidst the bushes of whin or broom on the brae, and hear nought but the pleasant rush of the burn, varied by the murmur in the pine-wood of that song of the wood-pigeon, old as the days of Adam—

"Curruckity coo, curruckity coo," to which the children added, "You loves I, and I loves you."

Here and there upon the grey hills which hemmed in the glen on all sides might be seen occasional bushes of the mountain ash, in summer white with blossom, and in autumn red with fruit. The bed of the rapid mountain burn, which passed the house, was marked by willows and alder trees, interspersed with an occasional wild cherry or silver birch, while at intervals the clear blue water gleamed out from openings in the trees.

Balendean was a little grey-stone house, with its court and courtyard, which stretched away on one hand towards that same streamlet, on the banks of which the Mistress bleached her linen lily-white on the "gowans" and "king-cups,"—and on the other side


opened into its own corn-fields and stripes of green pasture land, shaded by drooping trees, underneath which the cattle browsed lazily, and cast long dewy shadows on the grass.

Inside the house, from early dawn till eve, all was bustle and activity.

The fresh morning air, entering by open door and uncovered lattice, fanned the cheek of the Mistress, who, awake with the birds, prepared for the family the frugal breakfast of oatmeal porridge, while the serving-maids churned the butter, or made the fine cream cheeses, which lay in rows upon the milk-house shelf. So the hours glided past till noon, when the men returned to dine upon wholesome broth and meat, with milk, and potatoes bursting from their jackets. By three o'clock the kitchen was put to rights, and then might be heard the sound of spinning-wheels mingling with the songs and gossip of happy maidens.

Winter only varied the scene of busy life at Balendean, for when the moon was white, and snow barred up the cottage doors and darkened their windows, cheerily curled the smoke in the clear frosty air, telling of comfort within, and inviting wanderers to the hospitable hearth.

At length a baby voice greeted her ear, making a pleasing variety in the old farm house, and the young



mother gazed wistfully and proudly on the face of the little helpless thing which lay on her bosom, while the father trod softly on the carpetless floor, lest his step might wake it from its gentle slumbers. A little time, a brief space, was this flower lent them to rejoice their hearts, and then one day, the saddest, the darkest day they had ever known, though the sun shone brightly, and the birds sang cheerily on the earth, it died, and left them desolate.

Oh! it was sad, sad for the poor mother to lay the little head in the tiny coffin, and watch the procession wandering down the glen to the churchyard. Sad to awake morning after morning, until time had somewhat taken the sharpness of the sting from the sorrow, and amidst the confusion of memory, at first vague and undefined, remember at last the full bitterness of that crushing, stunning woe; and although after a time other tiny footsteps resounded by the hearth, and rosy faces clustered round the table, still "Benjamin is not" was the unspoken cry of that bereaved woman's heart—a heart which loved deeply and strongly as few ordinary ones can love. Yet no trifling duty was omitted, not one act of kindness left undone, and as the outward existence flowed on calmly, the world guessed not of the deep wide rent which sorrow had made in the affections of that loving mother.


Time wore on unmarked by any stirring event in the history of this family ; children grew up and left to fill spheres in the world, and grandchildren went and came to the little old dwelling to be instructed, trained, loved as their fathers and mothers had been, though never fondled, never indulged, excepting by the kind, gentle grandfather, with whose white locks they delighted to play, as they sat upon his knee and listened to his pleasing songs and tales.

We have spoken of the deep, silent grief for her lost babe which the Mistress continued to cherish amidst the cares and enjoyments of an increasing family, and this was evinced in a singular manner. Her little one had departed on the fifth day of the week, and throughout life she observed every Thursday as a day of strict fasting and seclusion, as far as circumstances would permit, and so tenderly did her husband guard the sacredness of this questionable indulgence, that a confidential servant would often receive some little present with the quiet hint, "See that naebody disturbs your mistress the day ;" and this custom was continued until her death, at a period long past the allotted time of man upon earth.

Hers was a strong self-reliant nature, despising all manner of pleasure-seeking and luxury, which she deemed weak and effeminate, and even in trifles this

peculiarity of her character appeared. Her children at table might use the savoury salt without which food would not be palatable, but spices were strictly forbidden them: they were amongst the dainties which tended to make men spiritless and feeble. Neither durst they seek the softest seats or wrap themselves up from the keen biting blasts; they must endure pain without murmuring, and learn to do good simply for its own sake, and accept the pleasure it brought as a reward, without looking for other compensation.

Strangely sounds this doctrine in our days, when parents try to make as smooth and easy as possible the path over which the feet of their children must tread, removing from it every impediment, every stone which might form a hindrance or be difficult to surmount, hearing them state opinions with all the confidence of age, and listening to their judgments of their teachers, condemning this one and censuring that, humouring their tastes, making "what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed," the most important part of life; and by thus rearing them up in effeminacy, only making the after-course more hard to be pursued, and unfitting them for the battle all must fight from the cradle to the grave—a battle with corruptions within as well as temptation without, feelings of our human nature—and thus making



us fear that never more may we meet those strong, bold, independent characters which formed the pride and glory of Scotland in the past.

Like many in those old times, the Mistress of Balendean spoke little, but that little was generally in the language of Scripture, which heavenly weapon she wielded with wondrous power.

Was it the friend that she wished to reprove, who had brought into the family the Roman Catholic wife : then how quiet yet firm were her words, when laying her hand upon his shoulder, she exclaimed, "Was there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all thy people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines ?"

If from the sacred Scriptures she had a word of reproof, she had also one of comfort and encouragement ; and thus she cheered the heart of the good minister who felt desponding, because he said his words were weak and faltering "when compared with the eloquence of the powerful divines" who had preceded him in the pulpit.

"Say ye sae?" she replied, after listening to his complaint, "then hear what I ha'e to tell ye. The gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim was better than the vintage of Abiezer."

It was in regard to this minister's sermon that, when

one day questioning a little child upon what she remembered, the latter answered, "oh, no' muckle, Mistress; I just mind ae thing he said—Ance in the covenant, aye in the covenant."

"That's plenty, Jeanie," she answered joyfully, "that's plenty: thae twa-or-three words are worth mair to me than mony discourses."

When the mistress of Balendean lay dying upon that bed, where sixty years before was stretched the corpse of her child—the child forever—and as the cool evening shadows lengthened, that were soon to set in night, a son, bending tenderly over her, asked, "Mother, what think ye of Christ?"

"Mair than ever, laddie, mair than ever," was the feeble reply, "an' I'm just grippin' to the hem o' His garment," and so "grippin'" on to the last, she feared not to enter the valley of the shadow of death.

All her children have finished their course, and many lie around her in the burial-ground which surrounds the old church, where in other days they worshipped, and as one by one of this second generation are passing away, we are reminded of the poet's words:

"So the multitude go, like the flower and the weed,  
Which withers away to let others succeed;  
So the multitude come, even those we behold,  
To repeat every tale that hath often been told;

“ ’Tis the twinkling of sight, ’tis the draught of a breath,  
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death ;  
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,  
Oh ! why should the spirit of mortal be proud ? ”







## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FIRST OF APRIL.

“ But love the true, the pure, that springs  
In spite of chill or check,  
Oh ! many give their precious things,  
But *it* keeps nothing back !  
Alas ! for well-springs of the heart  
Poured into dust like rain,  
When world's-wealth could not purchase back  
Half what was spent in vain.” ANON.

**A**NTIQUARIES have long been endeavouring to discover, though as yet without success, the origin of those customs which characterise the first of April, and set it apart as a time for mirth and practical joking according to the old rhyme :

“ Upon the first of April, hunt the gowk another mile.”


Doubtless the sporting usages of this day are of great

antiquity, probably having their rise in the East, where we have traces of them in the mirth and sports which prevail at the Huli festival of the Hindoos. This festival takes place during the period of the vernal Equinox, when in ancient times the new year of Persia began.

The ludicrous custom of hunting the gowk is the only way in which we commemorate the first of April, and this amusement is almost entirely confined to the young, each one seeking to rival the other in the success of the innocent jokes and tricks played upon their unsuspecting companions.

Many years ago, in the village of Newton, the merry voices of the children rang through the clear air, and mingled pleasantly with the sound of the mill-wheel, and the ring of the smith's hammer in the smithy close by.

It was the morning of the first of April, and much fun and laughter was there amongst the happy group, as one after another returned from some foolish errand sent them by some of their companions. But now it was "daft" Sandy Gilray, of whom the bigger boys were beginning to make sport, and as the poor fellow turned in anger to defend himself, their fun was likely to have a more serious termination, for Sandy, when enraged, was not a safe person to be near. Just at that moment little Annie Morton, the schoolmaster's niece, seeing from



the door, where she played with her doll, the state of matters, and pitying the imbecile lad, rushed to the band of boys, and seizing by the arm the ringleader in the sport cried—

“Dinna, Robert! Dinna vex puir Sandy.”

The gentle reproof brought the thoughtless lads to consider the mischief they were doing, and Robert Forrester laughingly turned away, followed by the others, thus leaving Sandy to pursue his way unmolested, but not before he, with that glimmering of wisdom often seen in weak natures, exclaimed :


“Robert Forrester, aye keep in gude company, for friends 'ill either mak' ye or mar ye.”

Mr Forrester the father of Robert, and uncle of Anne Morton, was a simple-minded, loving, childlike old man. Born to a humble position, the highest ambition of his parents had been to see their son a minister of the Kirk of Scotland. Patronage, however, prevailing in those days, the obscure youth had no influential friends to interest themselves in his behalf. Hoping against hope, waiting to be called to labour in the Lord's vineyard, Mr Forrester had lingered on year after year in vain, and when no longer young he was appointed school-master of Newton. He meekly accepted the charge, from thenceforward all the energies of his mind, and all the bent of his will, were directed to the one ob-

ject of feeding the lambs of the flock ; comforting himself with the thought that perhaps his was after all the most important work committed to man upon earth.

A few scattered houses upon the banks of a stream constituted the village of Newton ; a little apart from the others stood the school-house, remarkable for its clean tidy appearance, its flowers, fruits, and bees, all of which were precious in the eyes of the villagers. These people, though not better in many respects than others of the class, would not willingly have harmed the kind old man, who went out and in amongst their homes like a messenger of mercy.

Soon after Mr Forrester was first settled in this place, he had married a respectable and amiable young woman, the daughter of a farmer in the neighbourhood, who only lived to place an infant in his arms, and then died ; and with her died the sunshine of his heart, the light of his eyes. From that hour he was changed, but what that change was, could not be so easily described. Not that he was less intent upon his duties, less interested in his charge, nay, he was even more so, but he was also more patient, more humble, more subdued. He was sadder too, loving the solitude of his home, and shrinking from the company of the gay and frivolous ; his little boy now became all his care, on him were lavished the rich



treasures of the father's love, and the tiny hand of the child could guide the strong man at will.


After the death of Mrs Forrester, his newly-widowed sister, Mrs Morton, came to take charge of his house, and help to train his child, bringing with her a little girl a few months younger than Robert; hence Anne Morton and her cousin were brought up together.

Under his father's care the boy sprang up to be everything that a parent's heart could desire; tall, handsome, and sprightly. His song gladdened many a hearth, while his bright smile made friends of all around; and Anne Morton, now grown into womanhood, was his betrothed. A finer-looking couple than Robert and his cousin were rarely to be seen; and as the old man looked upon them, he promised to himself much happiness from his children, if God spared him in the world.


At the time my story commences, Robert Forrester had been two years engaged in business in a town a few miles distant from his father's house. After his departure, he paid frequent visits to Newton, gladdening the hearts of those who loved him so well, but of late their meetings had been rare, and his manner seemed becoming gradually estranged. Reports, too, were ever and anon reaching the school-house of his irregular habits, but to those rumours

Anne shut her ears, though his father feared their truth; and when he expostulated with his son, received only a sulky reply, different from the frank manner of old times. The truth was, the young man, heedless of his early vow, had engaged himself to the sister of a wealthy farmer of his acquaintance; and to break the news of this engagement he one day sought his cousin, to take back the tokens of his broken troth.

When, without recrimination, without reproof, Anne listened to the tidings, and had silently left the room to seek the gifts received from him in happier days, an onlooker would have observed no sign of emotion on her pale face, but scarcely had the door closed behind her than the cold, proud look passed away, and one of unmistakable misery succeeded. Her firm step, too, became weak and faltering, and she pressed her hand convulsively upon her throbbing temples, muttering to herself, "Will I be sae weak as let him see he has vexed me; no, I will bear up, though I die." Nevertheless, she trembled violently when, drawing forth one by one those silent remembrances of the past, she felt that they must be no more to her than some withered leaf that the autumn wind has blown from the tree; no more,—and yet but a few short hours ago, she would not have given them for



all that the world could bestow. There was the broken sixpence, reminding her of that time when she first promised to be his wife, and was wooed so tenderly, with many a soft caress and low-whispered promise of love. Then that dark curl, there it lay before her, beautiful as the day that she severed it from his temples, every hair of which she felt had been dearer to her than her heart's blood. Next, was the little gold ornament and blue ribbon he had thrown around her neck at their first parting, with the letters which had cheered her in his absence—letters breathing of hope and love. And last of all were the sprigs of withered forget-me-not, at the sight of which, the tears, kept back till now, rushed unbidden down her cheeks, so much did these dead flowers resemble her blighted hopes. "I cannot part with these," she thought, as she laid them gently back again. Then came up before her, as she stood silently weeping, the old oak tree at whose foot she sat, while Robert Forrester playfully wove the sprigs in her hair—the heath tinged by the last golden rays of the setting sun—the evening star shedding its pale light over the peaceful landscape; but not long was the dream cherished, for hastily dashing the tears from her eyes, she stepped back to the room in which sat her cousin, moodily leaning his head upon his hand



Again was her step firm, and her voice calm and steady, as, placing the little gifts before him on the table, she said, "Here are a' the witnesses against your broken faith, Robert." And without waiting for reply, she left him, to weep in secret, where no eye could see her but the eye of her Heavenly Father.

Some weeks had elapsed since Robert Forrester had visited his father's house for the purpose above-mentioned, and still Anne kept the secret of his unkind behaviour from her uncle, knowing how deeply grieved the old man would be with the tale, for again and again he kept repeating, when he heard of his son's foolish doings, "Anne will win him back to right ways," and to this hope he clung as to life. But one evening, as she sat by the fire, the unbidden, though silent tears trickled down her cheeks, and the work with which she was engaged dropped from her trembling fingers.

"Annie, my bairn," said the old schoolmaster tenderly, as he chanced to raise his eyes at the moment from the book on which he was engaged, "you are vexing yourself about that foolish laddie. I pray God he may yet see his errors, and live to make ye happy."

"No, no, that can never be, uncle," said the girl. "Robert is lost to me for ever, though I hope he may live to be a comfort to you."

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"What mean ye, lassie?" inquired her uncle anxiously. "Ha'e ye gi'en him up? do ye think he'll never mend? Weel, I canna blame ye; but, oh, it seems as if his only chance were lost!"

"It wasna *me* gi'ed *him* up," replied Anne, weeping bitterly. "I wad ha'e tell't ye about it afore, only I kent it wad vex ye sair;" and then she related, as well as her sobs would permit, the story of her lover's unfaithfulness. Mr Forrester sat like one stunned during the recital, and even after she had ceased speaking he seemed bewildered; then, starting up, he exclaimed—

"The heartless, the unprincipled — what shall I call him? Oh, Anne, you must forget him, and I will try to do sae also."

"Dinna speak that way, uncle," cried his niece, seizing his hand, which she bathed with her fast-falling tears; "dinna cast him away frae ye; he is your only son, your only child; for his dead mother's sake forgi'e him, mind how gude and kind he was ance, till thae wicked men led him away. And he may repent!"

"Puir bairn, puir bairn," said the old man, passing his hand fondly over her beautiful hair, "you deserved a better fate; oh! he has been cruel, cruel! Surely a curse will follow him;" but Anne stopped his further speech by placing her hand upon his lips, saying, "Dear uncle,

you maun forgi'e him as I ha'e dune, though it has cost me weary days an' sleepless nights."

"I will try, then, I will try," murmured Mr Forrester, "but leave me now, that on my knees I may seek help in this trial;" and Anne rose as she was requested, and stealing quietly from the room, left the old man to his sorrow.

Anne Morton had been a delicate child, and though with years had come health and vigour to her frame, still the hectic flush often seen upon her cheeks made her friends fear lest she might yet fall a victim to the hereditary disease of consumption; but now the blow thus cruelly given seemed more than she was able to bear, and though never murmuring, never complaining, day by day her strength decayed.

"My bairn will not die," the old schoolmaster would say as he anxiously watched her drooping form; "it's only a cough that troubles her, and the summer winds will rescue her." The summer winds did come, bringing with them renewed life to the invalid, and as her light step was again seen passing to and fro amongst the dwellings of the poor, and her heart and hand ready to assist the needy, her uncle looked on joyfully and thankfully, that one child at least had been spared to him. But there were those who loved her also, and knew too well that the disease was only checked, not

removed. They shook their heads gravely when speaking of the chill November blasts which blight so many delicate frames.

Of Robert Forrester they heard but little at the quiet schoolhouse, and that little never failed to give pain to the hearts that still loved him; he was now married, and had been placed by his father-in-law in a farm adjoining his own, and there were whisperings already of sad unseemly quarrels between those who had solemnly vowed to love and cherish one another through life till death. Consequently, an unhappy home was making the young man more reckless, and causing him to resort more frequently to the scenes of vice and folly.

One fine autumn evening, Anne Morton lingered by the window, gazing on the large round moon bathing the landscape in its soft beams; her face was now peaceful and resigned, for the weary feverish look had passed away, but her hand was wan and white, and her cheek sunken.


"Annie," said her uncle, who reclined in his arm-chair by the fire; "ye maunna stay out there now, for the nicht's getting cauld, and if ye're no carefu', the cough may come back."

"I see folk makin' for our door," said Anne, without hearing her uncle's warning, "an' they appear to be bearing a burden."

"Wha can they be?" said Mr Forrester rising, and as he approached the window the strangers entered the path that led to the schoolhouse. On reaching the door, the strangers knocked violently for admittance, which Anne as quickly opened; but what a sight met her eye! Some five or six men, with their faces veiled, bore in their arms a wounded comrade, the blood streaming from a cut in his head. Just then, one of the party stepped forward and said respectfully to the schoolmaster, "We ha'e brought Robert Forrester to his father's house; it was nearer than his ain, puir fellow," he added feelingly. "He'll need your care, for he's sair hurt, if I'm no mista'en." Though Anne's limbs trembled violently, she yet had strength to inquire of the men what dreadful thing had happened.

"It was that rascal loon of a gamekeeper," replied he who seemed the spokesman, "an he'll pay for this day's work yet; but haste ye, miss, an' let us in, for we ha'e nae time to lose; we maun be off till the storm's blawn by, or we may rue it."

"Lay him here, here where his e'en first opened on the light," cried the old father, as with weak and shaking hands he helped to place the unconscious sufferer on his own bed; the hard bad men were softened before the quiet deep grief of the father, and carefully and tenderly they assisted in removing the soiled gar-



ments of their companion, forgetful of the danger they incurred, and not till all was finished did they leave the house and mourners alone to their sorrow.

Endowed with thought for the emergency, Anne hung over the dying man, at times bending her head to his heart to listen if he still breathed, again lifting gently his clustering curls, once her pride, to bathe his temples; ever and anon trying to speak words of comfort to the agonised father, who leaned in speechless grief over his prodigal son.

"Thank God," she would say, "he breathes, and while there is life there is hope; he may yet be spared and be a' the better of this; we canna tell, but we know the Lord reigneth, and this is enough."

"The Lord reigneth," echoed the stricken parent, as if he scarcely heard the words.

"He has a strong constitution, and that's in his favour, and oh! its wonderful what the young may suffer and yet live. I dinna despair o' seein' him able to speak to us soon; listen, he is breathing steadily, we canna tell but he may be well the morn," and the old man could only repeat "well the morn." A neighbour who had seen the men bearing the body to the school-house, having followed them and learned their sad errand, went in quest of a surgeon, but as his residence was a good many miles distant, he could not possibly

be expected before the following morning; therefore Anne felt that much depended upon her own skill and presence of mind, and she lifted up her heart in prayer for strength to perform the duties devolving upon her until help came.

For some hours the young farmer remained apparently stupefied by the blow he had received, but by and by, symptoms of delirium began to appear, and his cousin heard, with feelings it would be vain to describe, her own name called wildly and earnestly, as if he trusted to her in some time of danger. Again she was the school-girl, and he sought for her the nest of the wild bird, or scaled the steep rock for a pretty flower that she fancied, but losing his balance, he was falling from the dizzy height at her feet; often he referred to the saying of the imbecile lad upon that April fool's day when Anne had stopped his sport, and mingling the name of the young girl with that of the boy, implored them to save him from his wicked companions. At other times, his thoughts went back to the days of their early love, but even in that recollection there seemed nothing to soothe his wandering mind, for he fancied Anne was forsaking him, and he upbraided her for falsehood and cruelty.

After a time, the fever having spent its strength, consciousness gradually returned, and the unfortunate

youth opened his eyes and met those of his father and cousin bending sadly over him.

"Where am I?" he feebly asked. "I've had a horrible dream; speak, Anne—father, speak—what has happened to me?"

Anne told him as briefly as possible all that had taken place, as far as she knew, and then inquired gently if he suffered much pain.

"Yes," he answered, endeavouring to cover his face with the bed clothes; "they might ha'e let me die on the moor; I wish they had, for I canna look ye in the face, nor my father either."

"Dinna think on us, Robert," cried his cousin, earnestly; "fully, fully, we forgive ye; turn rather to the God whom ye have offended."

"Yes, Robert, yes, my son," exclaimed his father. "Oh dinna put off, it may be sune ower late; cry unto the Lord while yet in the place of hope, that He will pardon your transgressions, for many they ha'e been, and highly aggravated."

"Ower mony and ower highly aggravated," murmured the young man. "I canna look to be forgiven."

"Whisht, Robert," answered Anne, laying her hand on his arm; "can we limit God's mercy? Think of this verse and see if there be any bounds to it;" and so saying, she repeated solemnly and emphatically, "Though

your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

"Yes, that is true, that is true," he muttered, "and you think there may be hope even for me ? But think how I ha'e sinned ; oh ! against what light, what knowledge !"

"Dinna look at yoursel'," replied his cousin. "Alas ! what wad become o' ony o' us if we saw but oursel's ! Turn your eyes to the cross, just as the dying Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, when they were bitten in the wilderness."

After this followed a slight relapse into unconsciousness, out of which when he recovered, he inquired if his wife knew of his illness ; he was told that she had been sent for, and might be expected in the morning. "I dinna want to see her," he said ; "she has been the curse of my life ; she has ruined me in body, and I fear in soul."

"Robert !" answered his cousin, gently, "and has nane o' the fault been yours ? Ha'e ye fulfilled your duty to that woman ye took frae her hame and promised to love and cherish ? Ha'e ye been patient, tender, considerate ? Look within, and say if you have not rather grieved and provoked her by your wicked ways."

"Anne, I am condemned on a' hands," replied the



youth. "I married her when a' the time I liked you, lured on by the cursed love of gold, and I never tried to deceive her. I gloried in telling her sae; then I heard you were ill, and, as I kent it was a' my doing, it drove me desperate, sae I drank to drown remorse; now ye see the end, and I am cut short in the midst of my days, wi' no ane to blame but myself. Pray for me, Anne, pray for me, father, as ye did when I was a wee thing."

His father knelt, and earnestly commended his dying son to the mercy of God, though his voice was faint and tremulous, and tears almost choked his utterance, after which the sufferer lay quiet for some time, and they thought he slept; but even while they watched, a change began to come over the face, and as Anne bent over him, she heard him say, though in almost inaudible tones, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say to Him, Father, I have sinned——" The sentence was left unfinished, cut off like his own life, and Robert Forrester breathed no more.

Need it be a matter of surprise, that ere a few brief weeks had passed, even before the frosts of winter had withered the latest flowers, Anne Morton slept quietly her last long sleep. Gentle, kind, and good, she had been, and the villagers mourned her loss; they placed over her grave a rude head-stone, bearing her name and

age, and loving hearts desired that on it should be engraved the words "Until the day break and the shadows flee away."

Surely it was better thus. She needed no flaming inscription setting forth her worth; that was recorded in the memories of those who knew her: and as for her sorrows, her broken heart, they were buried with her in the silent grave.

Mr Forrester survived Robert and Anne some years, like the last quivering leaf that clings to the wintry bough, when all its companions are gone; yet his was not a repining old age; you could not have met him by the bed of death, or heard him instructing the young in the paths of peace, without feeling the truth of these words: "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself." And when the summons was heard: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him," it found him ready.

One morning his attendant, thinking he was long in leaving his room, went in and found him dead; he had been reading the Bible, and his finger rested upon the verse, in the forty-eighth chapter of Genesis: "And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there, in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem."



## CHAPTER V.

### THE VILLAGE DRESSMAKER.

"His brow is wet with honest sweat,  
He earns what ere he can,  
And looks the whole world in the face,  
For he owes not any man."

LONGFELLOW.

**I**'M just waitin' till Lizzie comes hame to her tea," said Mrs Harper, in reply to a question asked by a friend, who, with a poor puny infant in her arms, had looked in on passing.

"I wonder ye let her bide wi' thae folk to be sae mistimed," remarked the visitor. "Winnie wanted to learn wi' them tae; but says I to her, ye shanna gang there wi' my will to be slaved."

"Lizzie 'ill no hear a word against them," answered Mrs Harper, as she placed the little teapot she had just filled upon the side of the grate; "an' neither will the

gudeman, tho' I whiles think the lassie ower sair confined."

"I wad be mistress in my ain house, Marian," responded her neighbour; "they a' said when I married that where there was a man, there was a maister; but I sune let Tam ken another story, when he thocht to order me about."

"I wadna' like to tell the tale," said the sensible Mrs Harper. "My Jamie gars us a' attend to him, and so he should, for he's the bread-winner; and, let me tell you, Bell, ye're gaun clean against the Bible when ye dinna obey your man, and reverence him as the head of the house; sae, tak my advice, an' begin noo; better late than never."

And Mrs Harper was right, for woe betide the household in which the husband is not the just and righteous ruler, as well as the kind and tender protector of wife and children. With the marriage in Eden, was this law instituted: "He shall rule over thee;" and so deeply is its God-given principle implanted in a woman's heart, that if man be not strong enough, or wise enough to command obedience, he ceases to be perfectly loved and revered.

"Hech, I'm thankfu' I'm no sic a fule," enjoined Bell, in answer to her friend's remarks. "I think I see me," she added, tossing her head, "submitting to be

gart dae this and dae that, sent here and sent there, by ony man leevin'. Says I to Tam, ye can manage your horses as ye like, but at my ain fireside, says I, I'll dae what I please."

"Aweel, Bell," replied Mrs Harper, with a sigh, "when that's the way ye speak an' act, ye canna expect happiness."

Just then, Lizzie Harper, a pale, interesting-looking girl, entered, and, after acknowledging the presence of the visitor, sat down to partake hastily of the bread and butter upon the table.

"Winnie wants ye to gang out wi' her the night to the horsemanship," said Bell Aitchison; "she's keen to try her luck at the raffles."

"I wad like it fine," replied Lizzie, "but we're very busy the noo."

"Toots, lass, a new day's coming, an' the wark can wait!" exclaimed the neighbour rising quickly, because perceiving from the window James Harper, of whom she had an instinctive fear, approaching his dwelling.

"I see ye ha'e had Bell Aitchison," said Harper, as he entered his cottage, and cast aside his spade. "I wish, wife, ye wadna encourage her to come here. I dinna like her ways; she's aye speakin' ill o' somebody."

"Me encourage her, Jamie!" replied his wife, "deed

I dae nought o' the kind ; but ye canna just shut the door in a neighbour's face, the mair especially as we are auld friends ; she hasna been here for weeks till the night their Winnie sent her to ask Lizzie if she wad gang wi' her to the horsemanship, and I wish Miss Wilson wad let her, for she needs a breath o' fresh air at a time."

"Weel, say to your mistress, Lizzie," said the labourer, turning to his daughter, "that your mother would like if she could spare you the night, an' I'll come down the first chance I get and break their fire-wood. I saw them get a cart o't the day."

Lizzie having now finished her meal, hastened to the cottage, and soon returned, with thanks to her father for his kind and considerate offer, and liberty to attend with her companion the sports on the village green. The house occupied by the Wilsons stood in the centre of the street, and had nothing to distinguish it from the others around, save the sign-board above the door, showing it to be the residence of the village seamstress.

This evening, the two girls who constitute their staff of workers, have followed their companions to the green, leaving the mother and daughter alone in their dwelling. Mrs Wilson is a tall, rather masculine-looking woman, with a countenance upon which care and

sorrow have indented deep lines, though they have neither quenched the fire of her eye nor subdued the energy of her look and step. The daughter resembles her in face and figure, only the expression is softened, and the manner more gentle. Though no longer in the first flush of womanhood, her hair is still black, but the colour has faded from her cheek, which is sallow and thin.

To those unacquainted with her inner life, Lilian Wilson might have seemed a calm, matter-of-fact character, where little that was soft, or even feminine, in her nature sympathised with the world around, and yet the shadows that often stole over her features, or the wistful look in her large hazel eyes, might have convinced those who thus hastily judged her, that a woman's heart beat strongly in her bosom, though some heavy blow seemed to have fallen upon her and dulled for a time the sense of feeling and enjoyment.

The Wilsons never spoke of their affairs—never even told the part of the country to which they originally belonged. They came strangers to the village, and the young woman being expert at her needle, soon secured a flourishing business as dressmaker, though at first the people held aloof, wishing to test their character before admitting them into confidence; for that some mystery was connected with their past life seemed evident, and

yet what that was could never even be conjectured, and the curious soon tired prying into a secret it seemed impossible to discover.

Had these two solitary women been open-handed and generous, there would have been nothing in their conduct to give room for complaint, as all respected them for their blameless lives. But owing to a certain miserliness of disposition, which appeared most largely in their food and clothing, they were condemned by many who fain would have befriended them; though this money-loving spirit, it must be confessed, never influenced their dealings in any little business matters with the trades-people around.

And now Lilian Wilson sits by the open window and listens to the merry tune wafted from the band of music which accompanies the riders in their feats of horsemanship, and even as she listens a tear trickles silently from her eyes. In spite of the hurry and bustle of work, and the quantity of half-made dresses that lie around, she sits idly, seeming to gaze from the window upon the landscape now made beautiful by the parting rays of the sun; but she sees not ought of outward life, heeds not the splendour of upland and lowland, distant mountain and rocky slope, which the soft purple haze softens and subdues; her eyes are with her heart, and that has gone back to other times and far distant scenes.



At last she speaks to her mother, as if the grief that weighs her down must find utterance, and she asks, in a tremulous voice, if she "wadna like to see the bonny wuds o' Darnoch again?"

Mrs Wilson who, busily engaged preparing their frugal supper of oatmeal porridge, had not observed her daughter's unusual attitude, answers, without turning her head, "There's nae use wishin' what I canna get," then putting her face close to the fire she began blowing the coal to make the water boil faster.

"How muckle o' the siller ha'e we still to mak' up?" then inquired Lilian.

"Ye should mind best, for ye counted it yoursel'," was the answer; "but I think we made it out to be £40. It will tak' ye mony a weary stitch yet, puir thing," added the old woman, her voice softening, "but never fear, keep up a gude heart, Lilian, an' if spared health and strength we'll warstle through."

"It's a heap, an unco heap," cried her daughter, sorrowfully, "an' till then we needna think to gang back among our auld friends."

"An' yet the langest day has an end, and the langest lane a turnin'," was the cheerful response.

"But this is a lang, lang day, an' a lang, lang lane," sighed the young woman, "an' I whiles think they'll never come to an end, mother." She added, as if half

thinking aloud, "I mind the last time I heard that tune, I was coming down frae Denburn wi' Philip Maxwell; it wad just be about this very time o' the year tae, for the bonny wild roses were hangin' ower the stanes while Philip climbed up an' got some o' them for me, an' when we were sittin' on the bank puttin' them in my bonnet, Willie Johnston cam' down the road playin' it on the flute; thae were happy, happy days mother," added Lilian; "ower happy to last."

Mrs Wilson looked up from her work as her daughter spoke these words, and fixing her eyes sadly and earnestly upon her, said—

"I thoct an' hoped, Lilian, ye had learnt to forget a' about that langsyne."

And well might her mother feel sad, for it was many a day, nay, even year, since she had heard that name which, twice in the last sentence, the young woman had pronounced in those low lingering tones, such as one only who loves truly can breathe—those words which are the heart's sweetest music—and she trusted that time had, in some measure, healed the wound sorrow had made.

"I ha'e tried, an' tried hard, to forget them," answered Lilian in answer to the last remark, "an' whiles I think I ha'e succeeded, but that tune shows me I ha'ena; it has brought them a' fresh again to my mind.

Oh, mother," she continued, "what wad I no' gi'e for a breath o' the cool sea breeze to play on my brow, just as I used to feel it langsyne, when I wandered ower the rocks, slippery wi' yellow sea-weed, seekin' for the crystal pools where green and purple mosses waved, an' the wee fishes moved in an' out among them; or wade knee-deep again through the heather, smelling sae sweet an' fragrant, listening to the low music of the humming bee as it sailed away past in the gloamin'; or daunder on the muir ahint our auld house, puin' the bonny blue bells that nodded there amang the tufts of lang tangled sea grass!"

"I dinna ken if ye're wise to think on a' thae things, bairn," said Mrs Wilson; "they will dae ye nae gude; they may dae harm, an' we needna fret when we canna help oursel's."

"Oh, it will dae me gude tho'; I find I need it," answered her daughter. "I was gettin' hard an' cauld leevin' only to mak that weary, weary siller; an' noo the very thocht o' that restless sea softens my heart. Dae ye mind it, mother, how grand it sounded in a storm, lashin' amang the coves, an' breakin' wildly on the rocks, or the lang sab o' the ebbing wave, when the tempest was past an' it cam' rushin' up to the shore drawin' the white stones back into it again, an' makin' the fishin' boats anchored in the bay, curtsey and dance sae daintily?"

"Oh, bairn, bairn, let auld times alane; ye're only vexin' yoursel', for neither use nor end," cried Mrs Wilson, for Lilian was now weeping violently. "See," she added, "the wark ye've to dae the nicht yet, if ye wadna disappoint Miss Brodie (an' ye ken how particular ye aye are to keep your promise), sae dry your een, an' dinna think ony mair about days that are gane beyond recall."

These words in a measure brought back Lilian to present duties, and by and by the violence of her grief passed away, though her breast still heaved with long drawn sobs, like the sea of which she had just been speaking when the storm was departing. At last she resumed her work, saying, with a voice still trembling with emotion—

"It's hard, hard to be blamed and misca'ed for being misers, an' it's ill to bide. If folk only kent I carena for siller ony farther than it will mak us able to haud up our heads again in a kind o' way, when a' thae debts are paid."

"It's the cross we maun bear, Lilian, an' ony cross is heavy," was the answer; "but, as I said afore, the langest day comes to an end, and surely some time we will be free o' the burden that bears us down to the ground, if God spares us health and strength. Oh, Lilian, the siller is the least o't; there's a darker.

deeper, fouler stain than that on your father's memory, that we canna help to clear away, though we ken that he's innocent."


"God will clear him, mother, in His ain gude time," murmured Lilian. "Surely, surely He will, though it's no easy seen how that can be, yet aye hope on, trust on, pray on more earnestly."

The next morning Lizzie Harper and her companion returned to their work again, their minds filled with the fun of the previous evening, and giving a minute description of the exhibition, telling of the success of the raffles, and how one had got a watch for a prize, another a tea-tray, and then they had to describe how the horses galloped, and the riders stood throwing off different sorts of apparel, and appearing sometimes in the dress of Swiss peasants, sometimes Irish reapers hanging with rags and patches, which they varied occasionally by the costume of English hay-makers. Then the long leaps they took, always vaulting back again upon their seats, with the witty sayings of the clown, his strange dress and false face, which frightened some of the younger children in their mothers' arms. To all which Lilian listened with a calm unmoved look, making small response, though not appearing uninterested, being loath to check the joy of the girls, and yet any one who had seen her the evening before, could

scarcely have recognised her to be the same person, so thoroughly now had she overcome all feeling of woman's weakness, and returned to the usual calm tenor of her ways. Mr Harper came down, too, as was proposed, and cut their firewood, giving them in addition an hour or two's work of an evening in their little garden, and so life again flowed on in the same monotonous manner to these women—the same dull round of duties—the same daily toils, while the neighbours still talked of them, sometimes openly, sometimes in whispers, which sometimes did and sometimes did not reach their ears; a few, such as Bell Aitchison, continuing to blame them, and say hard things of them, while others, like the Harpers, praised their good qualities, and refrained from making comment upon what they could not understand.

Summer has passed away, and the autumn days are getting short now and cold too, or rather cool, for it is that pleasant coolness which only makes the sportsman step briskly out upon the moor, or hasten home to enjoy the comforts of a blazing fire after his day's fatigue.

It is the evening of the market day at Crosslees, and here and there a solitary traveller or a couple of farmers may be seen jogging along, parting at the turn of the road that leads to each separate dwelling.



Philip Maxwell has been at the town to sell the oats which have been newly thrashed, and learn the news of the market—knowledge essential for a farmer—and is returning to Denburn, of which he sees the smoke already rising in the clear air from the parlour chimney where his mother and sister await his arrival. Sweet and still draws on the long rich twilight of this October evening; in the west linger the hues of sunset, which every moment become fainter, as behind the distant mountains sinks the dazzling orb, causing the shade on the opposite hill to rise with corresponding progress, then, narrowing to a purple line, it tarries for an instant on the highest point before vanishing with a quiver, leaving the sky a uniform blue in which a bright star sparkles and glimmers; now the woods grow black and the mountains indistinct, while the grand full moon gradually appearing above the horizon begins to throw a shimmer of light on the wide open ocean. No sound breaks the silence that reigns around, save the plash of the out-going tide, or the cry of the sea-gull, and whirr of the moorcock.

As the young man rides slowly along he appears somewhat troubled and careworn, though when leaving the shore he struck up a path which led to his home, and met the labourers returning from the potato fields carrying their baskets and hoes. His acknowledg-

ment of their friendly greeting was frank and kind as usual, while the younger women turn and gaze admiringly upon the strong athletic frame and open honest face of their young master with its crown of light brown hair still rich and luxuriant, though a thread of silver now and then gleams amidst its curls. Dandy, his little Scotch terrier, sometimes precedes him, trotting along upon three legs, his custom when particularly pleased, and as brisk as if he had newly set out upon his journey instead of being at its close, and sometimes falling behind to snuff a bush of rushes or plant of ragweed on the path, and again chasing a hare or rabbit with furious barking into the pasture fields around. As Philip draws near the house, Katie Maxwell, who has been watching for his appearance, conveys the glad tidings to the home-circle, and where, after a few minutes, he takes his place in the comfortable arm-chair by the fire, a large dish of ham and eggs cooked by his mother's own hand smokes upon the tea table at which she now presides.

"Ha'e ye had a gude market the day, Philip?" she inquires, for her quick eye detects a thoughtful look upon her son's face.

"Very, mother," he replied; "I solded the corn dearer than I expected, an' got the price o't in my hand; its already in the bank to help wi' the rent."



"An' ha'e ye brought me the blue ribbon ye promised me to tie up my hair, Philip?" asked his youngest and favourite sister, the blythe Katie Maxwell. "An' did ye see onybody spearin' for me the day? And was Mary's man at Crosslees? An' how are a' the bairns?"

"What question do ye intend me to answer first, Katie?" replied her brother, smiling; "but as I hear ye're maist taen up about the ribbon I maun tell ye I didna forget," at the same time producing it from his pocket; "and the red ane is for Ellen; I thought that colour wad dae best for her."

After the young women had expressed their pleasure at the gifts, and thanked him for his kindness, Philip continued—"I saw a lot o' folk askin' for you the day, but ane in particular seemed anxious to hear about you; ye can guess if ye like wha that wad be. Mary's man wasna in the market; his neighbour Otterlaw brought me word that he couldna win for some o' his crap was still out. Now, ha'e I answered a' your questions, Katie?"

"A' that I mind the noo, I dare say," said the merry girl. "Maybe, after ye ha'e gotten your tea I will ha'e some mair."

"Katie's been wearyin' for ye to come hame, Philip," rejoined his sister Nelly; "she wants to sing ye a

sang she's learned the day frae Willie Johnston the wanderin' piper."

"Has Willie Johnston been here?" asked Philip, only noticing the last part of the sentence. "And is he away again an' I h'aena seen him."

"Troth at weel he's no away," answered Mrs Maxwell, familiarly known as the gudewife o' Denburn. "Willie's never in sic a hurry to leave; he'll stay as lang as ye'll keep him. I gart Jenny mak' him a bed in the corner o' the calves' house, an' he'll sleep like a tap I'll warrant ye, for he's come twenty miles the day he says."

As the strolling minstrel was a great favourite at Denburn, especially with its master, Philip Maxwell had to see for himself that he was made comfortable, and a large cog full of brose provided for his supper, and he had even to sit down and chat with him in the kitchen before returning to the parlour.

"Now then, Katie," said her brother, as he took his seat once more in the easy chair, underneath which Dandy was ensconced, dreaming doubtless of some of his hunts, for he occasionally barked and whined, and when called by name, only wagged his tail, half opened his eyes before going over to sleep again.

"Now for your sang, Katie; but first, what is't about? Is't love or war?"

"It's about love," answered Katie, laughing, "an' should please you better on that account if ye were like ony other o' the young men in the neighbourhood. Ken ye what Miss Plumer said o' ye the other day?" she continued, with an arch smile on her comely face; "she said ye were a puir snooled crater, an' durstna look the gate a lass was on for your mother an' sisters; sae its time ye showed her the contrary."

"I think ye wadna want me to dae ought o' the kind, Katie," replied Philip, "unless ye've thoughts o' gaun farther down the country; but what wad become o' my mother an' Ellen, though?"

"Ye maunna plague your brother, bairns," said Mrs Maxwell, "mind he's wearied the night an' canna be bothered wi' your nonsense; sae sing your sang, Katie, an' be done wi't."

"Ye'll maybe no like it though, Philip," said Katie by way of preface; "Willie Johnston heard it some far away place where he was this summer, and I'm blythe to get onything new in that line;" and so saying, the young woman sang very sweetly the following ballad:

" A Scottish king to Hunter gae,  
Thy lands, Polmood, withouten fee,  
Save only bow an' arrow broad,  
When he gaed to the forest free.

- " An' aye sin syne a Hunter's ta'en  
His place 'mang them o' high degree,  
An' sae the foremost o' the land,  
Has sported ower the Logan Lea.
- " But tho', Polmood, thy wuds be green,  
An' ha's aft ring wi revelrie,  
I wadna gie for a' your lands,  
An acre o' the Logan Lea.
- " For oh ! Mossfennan hills are high,  
An' oh ! it's wa's are fair to see,  
An' bonny is the laverock's sang,  
Upon the thorn on Logan Lea.
- " Mossfennan haughs are spreadin' wide,  
And when the mornin' sun shines hie,  
It glistens on Tweed's silver stream,  
That wimples past the Logan Lea.
- " Some say I love young Polmood,  
An' some say that he lo'es na me ;  
But I think I'm a match for the best o' his bluid,  
Tho' I hadna a ewe on the Logan Lea.
- " There's mony a ane that seeks my love,  
Wha's better far, Polmood, than thee ;  
Sae dinna think ye'll break my heart,  
Or gar the tears fa' frae my e'e.
- " For lovers I've had stalwart men,  
Booted and spur'd as ye may see,

A' lichten at Mossfennan yett,  
A little below the Logan Lea.

" Three o' them cam' frae the west ;  
High up in Ettrick supposed to be ;  
An' wi' their hawks and hunters gude,  
They lichted at the Logan Lee.

" Three cam' east, an' three cam' south,  
An' three cam' frae the north countrie ;  
The rest a' cam' frae Moffat side,  
To try their luck for the Logan Lea.

" The first that cam' they ca'ed him Ned,  
An' he was laird o' Linnhope Lea ;  
An' o' his doughty deeds an' brave,  
It's he did brag right lustily.

" An' syne there cam' frae Home's Water head,  
John Paterson to visit me ;  
An' he cam' in by the cleugh head,  
Wi' his spotted hounds, an' spaniels three.

" I'll keep my gowd, I'll keep my gear,  
I'll keep mine ain right heartilie ;  
For never a ane that ere I saw,  
Will gar me tine the Logan Lea.

" Graham o' Slipperfield, on his grey mare,  
Charlie an' his pistols clear,  
Young Polmood an' his hounds three,  
Will never heir a ewe on the Logan Lea."

"Dae ye like the sang, Philip?" inquired Katie, after she had finished it.

"I like the tune, at onyrate," he answered; "an the words are weel eneuch; but its clear, though the leddie pretended she was na' carin' for young Polmood, she was gey ta'en up about him; it was sour grapes, Katie; what think ye?"

"I daur say ye're right," was the reply. "Ye see, she maybe thocht he was na' heedin' her, an' she was wantin' to show him she could get plenty forbye."

With similar jokes and songs, and friendly chats, the evening passed away, until the hour approached when the young women left the parlour, Katie to assist the sole servant in milking the cows, and her elder sister to make in the kitchen the porridge for supper, leaving Philip alone with his mother, who sat spinning on her wheel by the light of the wood fire, pondering the while upon her son's assumed gaiety, which, though unobserved by his sisters, her eye had not failed to detect. For a few seconds the mother and son remained silent when thus left together, until Mrs Maxwell said—

"Ye ha'e heard bad news the day, Philip, or met wi' some misfortune, I can see by your face."

"I ha'ena heard bad news, mother," was the answer. "Ca' them rather gude anes; but I ha'e heard this day

what has brought back auld, sad times." He then went on to say, "Did ye aye think it was Adam Brydon that took my father's life?"

Mrs Maxwell started, and a shade of sorrow passed over her countenance at the question, but she replied to it firmly and decisively :

"Wha else could it be, Philip? Did he no owe him siller, an' wasna he the last seen wi' him on the muir after they had quarrelled at Crosslees; an' it mattered na to me though the law couldna prove him guilty, I never doubted; ay, an' dae ye think if his wife an' daughter hadna thought it tae, they wad ha'e left the country after his death as they did? But what gars ye ask that question the noo?"


"Weel, mother, I for ane never for a moment believed it," replied her son, not attending to her last question. "Adam Brydon wasna the man to gang afore his Maker wi' a lie in his mouth; fulish he might whiles be when he gied himsel' up to drink, but never either cruel or revengeful, an' nane ever doubted his word till that business happened, which sent him broken-hearted to his grave; and, now," he added, lowering his voice, and speaking in solemn distinct tone, "God has brought the guilty to licht, an' cleared the innocent!"

"What mean ye by thae words, Philip?" eagerly inquired his mother, letting her lint thread drop from

her fingers, and gazing anxiously into the face of her son. "What strange news ha'e ye heard the day? I kent, whenever I saw you, that ye had something on your mind."

Maxwell answered not, but, taking from his pocket a newspaper, began to read the confession of Maccarthy, a murderer, who had expiated his crime upon the scaffold a few days previous; and, in it, he also owned to the guilt of having put to death the farmer of Denburn, some years before. It seems Maccarthy was an Irish labourer, whom Maxwell had been in the habit of occasionally employing, and who, one day happening to meet him returning from the market town, whither he expected he had gone for money, fell upon him with his spade, and never quitted his victim till life was extinct.

While Philip, with quivering lip and tear-dimmed eye, was reading the horrible tale which recalled so vividly to mind the sorrow of that time, his mother sat rocking her body to and fro as one in agony, every now and then exclaiming—"Oh, the villain! oh! your puir, puir, father!" but when finished, and her son asked—"Mother, are ye satisfied noo?" she answered, "Yes, Philip, perfectly satisfied, although it has been a mysterious thing that the memory o' Brydon should ha'e for sae lang suffered reproach; but what can we





say, my son, only it's the Lord? My husband, my puir husband!" she continued sorrowfully, "it was a rough passage ye got out o' life."

"Mother," again said her son, solemnly, "an' could you welcome Lilian Brydon noo, if I brought her here as my wife?"

"Lilian Brydon," answered Mrs Maxwell, surprise for a moment overmastering grief; "an' what ken ye o' her? or what certainty ha'e ye that she's livin' to this time?"

"I ha'e heard about her this very nicht," replied her son. "Dae ye think," he continued fondly, "she wad ha'e been in Scotland an' I wadna ha'e found her out. Its lang sin' Willie Johnston traced her and her mother to a far away place, even though they had changed their names, but as he never lets himsel' be seen by them, they ken nought about it, an' he comes here noo and then to tell me about her; sae, mother, ye maun gi'e me your blessin', and say 'God speed ye,' afore I gang to tell Lilian that what was between us has been removed, an' ask her to come back again."

Mrs Maxwell could not at first reply to her son's words, so much was she astonished at the intelligence now received, neither could she conquer all at once her long-rooted dislike to the family of Brydon, so she turned things over in her mind, taking time to consider

and though unwilling to oppose the wish, yet reluctant to give consent.


"Ye dinna answer me, mother" said Philip, after a minute's silence.

"I am sae surprised an' agitated at what ye ha'e telt me, bairn" was the reply drawn from her at last. "Oh! your father, your puir father,—an' to think on thae Brydons bein' heard o' again; weel, truly, as the Psalmist says, 'God's ways are past findin' out.'"

"But about Lilian, mother," persisted her son, "ye didna disapprove o' our marriage, and ye canna noo when the only thing that stood in the way has been cleared away."

"I dinna ken that, Philip; circumstances are changed since then," replied Mrs Maxwell, now facing the subject she could no longer avoid. "Can ye no look after Miss Plumer, wha your sisters say wadna refuse ye, an' she's baith rich an' fair eneuch to see?"

"But we ha'e nae need o' riches, mother," was the answer, "we can aye mak ends meet, an' rather better, an' what mair wad ye ha'e? I never see either that wealth brings happiness. Just look round on ony o' our friends that are rich, an' see how little comfort it gives them, an' how little they will ever dae to help ony puir crater; a' they seem to concern theirsels about is, to mak' folk believe they're ill off, for fear ought's expected frae them.



Na, na, mother, I dinna want gear wi' my wife; an' as for beauty," he continued, earnestly, "the face is aye the fairest that we like the best."

And surely Philip Maxwell in arguing thus, argued wisely, although the money-loving world now may differ from him; at least so thought Agur (but then he was old-fashioned in his ideas); when he asked not poverty, that we can understand, but not to seek riches seems incomprehensible to most, and to be content with food convenient for him would seem to many to be a proof that he was poor and spiritless; then as for loving beauty simply because it is so, the whole history of the human heart proves that notion to be false. What first attaches us to a face we know not, but if we love it, we love it in spite of its plainness or peculiarities, nay, it may be even better for them, and have learned to individualise it, to set it apart out of all the rest in the world as the only one that can please or charm.

"But how do ye ken that she's true to you, Philip?" said his mother, in answer to the last words of her son. "How do ye ken that she hasna ta'en up wi' mony a ane sin syne, an' may no tak' ye, though ye were to ask her? That's to say, she may be married, or gaun to be."

"I maun try my fortune," was the reply, "an' if she liked me as well as I did her, she will never ha'e forgotten me, sae gi'e me your blessin' mother, I canna

gang without it. I never could when I was a bairn, an' I wadna noo. So just say—God bless and prosper ye, an' I'll be content."

Philip drew near his mother, he took her hand and laid his head upon her knee, and the good woman was melted as she said softly but sorrowfully, "ye like her then, Philip?"

"*Like* her!" he exclaimed earnestly, "O mother, I canna tell ye the heart-hunger I ha'e had this mony a lang year to see her face, to hear her voice, but I kent it wad only vex us baith, for she wad never come amang us again wi' the stain o' bluid on her father's name; the last time we met I'll never, never forget it. It was the day afore they left, tho' I didna ken o't, an' I begged as if I had been beggin' for my life that she would fulfil the vows she so solemnly had made to be my wife, an' if we couldna stay here, there were other countries where we might gang an' be happy; but she wadna hear me speak; she said she wad never, never bring disgrace on a decent house, but she also said if she didna marry me, she wad never marry another. An' I dare say it was fear o' my persistin' that drove her frae the place. I ken she thought it right she was doin', though it cost her nae little grief."

Mrs Maxwell now fairly softened by an attachment cherished so long and so deeply, could only say, while

the tears trickled down her cheeks upon the sunny head that lay in her lap :

"The God of your fathers bless ye, my bairn, my precious son, an' may He prosper you in a' your ways, an' gi'e ye the desire of your heart."

"An' ye'll be kind to her, then, mother?" he said, springing up and kissing the soft matronly cheek of the mistress of Denburn; "an' ye'll never let her think she's come amang us again without bein' welcome?"

"Dae ye doubt me, Philip?" answered Mrs Maxwell with a tone of reproach. "I think ye might ha'e kent me better. Bring her when ye like, an' bring her how ye like, an' I'll receive her as I wad a bairn o' my ain. Puir thing," she added, kindly, "she has suffered lang and sair, an' even though her father had been guilty, she was innocent."

"An' ye winna tell my sisters?" the young man went on to say, "for I dinna ken how things may turn out, an' I couldna stand to be plagued by them about this; an' she may ha'e forgotten me, wha kens sae, mother? Ye can just say to them that business taks me frae hame, an' I'll start the morn to the place where she bides. Willie Johnston is gaun part o' the road wi' me."

Maxwell was a good pedestrian; nevertheless, it was not until the evening of the second day that he reached the neat little village of Newton amongst the hills, where

the Brydons, *alias* Wilsons, had been located ever since grief and shame had driven them from their homes.

As the young man passed down the street footsore and weary, Bell Aitchison, who stood at her door chatting to some of her neighbours, having noticed a stranger, pointed him out to a friend, wondering at the same time who he could be, and what could bring him to the place.

"He's no' a packman, as he's better dressed than thae folk are; neither can he be a fisher, for he wants a basket and rod. Wha can he be?"

Still more, however, was she astonished when the traveller, stepping aside, drew near them, and asked for the house of Mrs Wilson.

"It's there," she said, pointing with her finger to the low door with the humble signboard; "there, where that bairn is passin';" adding, "ye'll be a friend o' theirs, like?" but the last part of the sentence Maxwell either did not or would not hear, so, without further parley, he passed on.

"Wad ye no' like to ken what he can be wantin' wi' the Wilsons?" remarked the woman, looking after him. "For a' the time they ha'e been here, I never saw onybody askin' after them afore; dae ye think, Nelly, he can be a son o' the auld woman's?"

"Troth he's no that; ony ane may see that wi' ae e'e,

He's fair, that man, and has blue een, an' a gude colour on his cheek ; now, they're dark and sallow."

"He's no' frae this part either," said one, "for his tongue is a strange ane."

"No' unlike the Wilsons, though," rejoined another ; while a third proposed that Mrs Aitchison should send Winnie an errand to the house, to see if she could find out his business, or who he was.

Maxwell, unconscious of the sensation his appearance had created among the village gossips, had now reached the door, with its unpretending signboard pointed out to him by Mrs Aitchison ; but the hope which had buoyed him up on his journey seemed to have in a great measure forsaken him.

"What if, after a'," he said to himself, "Willie Johnston may have been deceived, and the Wilsons and the Brydons be different folk ; or, if they are the same, what if Lilian has forgotten me."

Not long, however, was he kept in suspense as to the first cause of dread, for as Mrs Wilson, whom we shall now call by her right name of Brydon, opened the door in answer to his timid, hesitating knock, she started back with a surprised cry.

"Is this a' the welcome ye ha'e to gi'e an auld friend ?" asked the young man, sorrowfully.

"Come in, oh ! come in," she at last said, speaking

hurriedly ; and, showing him into a small unoccupied room, she bade him be seated until she went to break the news of his arrival to her daughter, which she did, after dismissing the girls.

With an agitated step and pale face, Lilian entered the room where Maxwell was, and could only murmur, " Oh, Philip, this is cruel, cruel to us baith," before sinking upon a chair, unable even to bid him welcome.

" It's no' cruel, Lilian," replied Philip, drawing near and taking her hand ; " it's no' cruel, but it wad ha'e been sae if I hadna come to tell you what concerns you even mair than me ;" then sinking his voice almost to a whisper, he added—" The innocent has been cleared, an' the guilty brought to light."

" What say ye ?" she said, looking wildly up in his face, " what say ye, Philip Maxwell ? Surely ye canna be sae cruel as mock me ? or do I understand your words ?"

" Mock ye, Lilian !" answered her lover, " an' can ye think as little o' me ? Ha'e ye forgotten what I was ance ? Oh ! Lilian, Lilian," he added, sadly, " this is ill to bide frae you !"

" God forgi'e me, Philip, an' do you !" replied the poor young woman, " for I dinna ken what I am sayin' ; or am I sure I understand you. My father—"

" His memory is cleared o' the foul, foul stain, an'



the murderer has confessed his guilt," said the young man.

"Mother, mother!" exclaimed Lilian, "come and hear what Philip has to tell us;" then fairly overcome with joy and astonishment, she burst into a flood of tears. No less did her mother rejoice in the news, though she received them more calmly, only saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!"

"An' ye'll no' bid me leave ye noo, Lilian, as ye did yon dreary nicht langsyne?" asked Maxwell, when she had somewhat recovered from the shock of joy and surprise. "An' ye'll no' tell me there's a wide, wide gulf between us that can never, never be crossed? And, Lilian," he went on to say, "if ye only kent hoo cauld and dismal a place the world has been to me since syne, an' how I wearied to see you again—how my very heart and soul craved for a look, a word, a touch of your hand—ye wad pity me."

"But your mother?" was all she could mutter.

"She bade me come for you, Lilian, an' said she wad welcome ye as a bairn o' her ain. Ha'e ye ony mair objections to offer?"

Poor Lilian could speak no more for joy, but she looked up into that manly face, read the smile of hope and contentment in those eyes so kind and loving, and in that look all the long years of agony and suspense,

all the aching want for the breast, at once strong and tender, upon which to lean, the firm hand to which she might cling to, were forgotten or remembered only as a dream, and Philip understanding, comprehending all, clasped her close to his heart forever; and thus her strong, deep truth was at last rewarded, for, through all these long years of separation she had remained true to her love, though it was love without hope.

If the mother and daughter had been deeply affected by the tidings Maxwell brought them, he was scarcely less so when he heard of the weary struggles they had so nobly made to clear off the debts of the husband and father, and the obloquy they had suffered upon that account.

"We had hoped to gang back in spring and pay what we owed," said Mrs Brydon, "an' we never doubted but we would find ye a douce married man, if God had spared you."

"Ye will come back, and it will be afore spring, I hope," answered Maxwell, smiling; "but as for being a douce married man then, that maun depend on some other body forbye mysel'."

And truly Maxwell waited not for spring before he returned to claim Lilian, nor did his mother fail in her promise, for never could young and fair bride receive a more cordial welcome than did the plain, poor dress-

maker of Newton from the "gudewife" of Denburn and her kindhearted daughters. Neither did the neighbours fail in their duty, for the noble conduct of these poor women was rightly appreciated by their old friends, when the tale of their struggles and hardships became known. And Lilian had her wish fulfilled, that deep longing she had expressed when so far from her old home; for she trod again the grand, wild shore, and listened to the waves dashing on the beach, and waded amongst the heather on the hills behind Darnoch to pull the blue bells that waved there in beauty; but she listened and wandered not alone, for her husband was by her side, and as she turned her full dark eyes upon him, she would say—

"It was a dark, dark day, Philip, but it cam' to an end; an' a lang, lang lane, but it had a turnin'."





## CHAPTER VI.

### "DAUID" THE PEDLAR.

"I, wha stand here in this bare shabby coat,  
Was ance a packman, worth mony a groat ;  
I've carried packs as big as your ha' table,  
I've scrapit pats and sleepit in a stable ;  
Six pounds I wadna for my pack ance ta'en,  
And I would boldly brag it was a' iny ain.  
Aye, thae were days indeed that gar'd me hope  
Aiblins, through time, to warsell up a shop."

#### THE LOSS O' THE PACK.

**B**EFORE our land was crossed and interlaced by these iron highways, over which the mighty engine pants and puffs, before even the days of the mail-coach, with its scarlet-coated guard and talkative, intelligent driver, did the race of travelling merchants exist and flourish, contributing greatly to the comfort and happiness of its rural inhabitants.

Almost every conceivable commodity was then hawked about the country, from the horn spoon of the gipsy, to the silver ladle of the caravan owner; or from the dress of homely drugget, to the robe of richest silk or velvet. And every individual, from the peer to the peasant alike, welcomed and encouraged the pedlar, whether to castle or cottage.

The circumstances of the country, and the state of the roads between the towns and remote districts, rendered the packman a necessary institution; and experience taught them to be accommodating and polite to their different customers. No business depended more for success upon courteous manners than did the travelling merchant's; there was a "knack" necessary, neither to be too pressing nor too careless about selling, never to look disappointed nor annoyed if unable to obtain purchasers, and never to fail in good humour, however tried and harassed.

Often a slightly deformed or lame youth, one unfit for farm labour, took up a trade which neither required much learning nor capital.

If the stock consisted of hardware goods, a box with leather strap was procured and filled with *five bawbee* knives, needles, pins of all sizes, from the small "mini-kin" to the large Willie Cossar; thimbles, scissors, bone combs, "specks," also ballads, such as "Gill

Morice," and "Sir James the Rose," or four and eight page pamphlets, comprehending generally amongst the number "John Cheap the Chapman," "The King and the Cobbler," and "Ali-Baba or the Forty Thieves."


As his money and custom increased, the box was increased also, and tea-spoons, table-knives, &c., introduced.

If soft ware articles were to be the stock in trade, a roll of linen supplied the place of the box, and held within its folds pieces of cotton, drugget for petticoats, and short-gowns, shawls, cut pieces, to all which, more valuable goods were added as the packman's circumstances improved.

Sometimes a basket was substituted for the box or roll of linen, but this was especially in use amongst female hawkers, and contained a variety of articles, such as woollen garters, striped night-caps, ribbons, thread, tea-caddies, painted in bright colours, bearing, it maybe, this verse—

" Choose me, choose me, lady fair,  
For to keep your Hyson rare,  
You will find me strong and sure,  
Hinges good, and lock secure."

Rings, gay with green and red flowers, lettered "a present for a good girl," toys for children, including



gingerbread men, and other things too numerous to be named.

The trade in "besoms," spoons, and all kinds of tin goods, from "pingle pans" to large milk pitchers, was generally confined to the gipsy race, called "tinklers," who never seemed to get richer, or aspire higher, hence, when others rose, if industrious, step by step, from the pack to the caravan, and from the caravan to the shop and wareroom, the gipsy was content to end as he began, hawking his home-manufactured goods from house to house, as his fathers had done.

Each had his "rounds," traversed twice, or it might be many times a year, usually contriving at night-fall to reach some friendly farm-house, where the cog of porridge and bed of straw was cheerfully bestowed in return for his budget of news, or small parcel of tea and sugar, bespoken on his last visit, and willingly carried from the nearest town to the kind and hospitable "mistress."

In those unsettled and often lawless times, the trade of the travelling merchant was a difficult, not unfrequently, a dangerous one; besides the risk of being murdered for the contents of his pack, he was exposed to suffering from cold, hunger, and the fury of the elements, when wandering across wild glens and lonely mountain paths; and many a spot is still shown where

an unfortunate pedlar perished while attempting to ford a swollen stream, or sunk exhausted amongst the drifting snow, or, more pitiful still, fell by the hand of a brother man, lured by the love of money to the deed of blood.

Burnfoot (such was the name of Peter Hunter's cottage), stood a mile or so from Newton village, at the entrance to a romantic glen, down which glided a small stream of clear, brown water, its margin waving with graceful ferns and ivy wreathes, interspersed among its grass and clover flowers, and its banks shaded by feathered larches, or thickets of thorn and bramble.

Beautiful was this glen in spring, when over the bare and naked landscape appeared a covering of delicate brown and crimson tinted verdure, amidst which the blackbird and thrush poured forth their first sweet notes. Beautiful, too, was it when the gorgeousness of summer past, autumnal frosts had lent the bracken its brilliant colouring of gold; a number of the forest trees were gay in crimson and orange, made brighter by contrast with the sombre dress of the pine and hawthorn; while down in its depths still blossomed the crimson foxglove, and simple yellow gowan. Nor less beautiful was it in winter, beneath its snowy covering, when every tree, rock, and spray, was garnished with pendant icicles.



Now, this glen was a favourite haunt of Mysie Hunter, the thrifty helpmate of "douce Patie," or Pate the customer weaver; was it spring time, then would she seek amidst the tender grass, white with gowans, for the sweet yellow cowslip glittering with morning dew, to gather its flowers for her far-famed wine, or as an important ingredient in her beauty preserving ointment.

In summer she would fill her apron with the blossoms of the lovely pink, mallow, or broad green leaves of the colts-foot, searching for them by the still places of the stream, amongst the waving branches of the meadow-sweet.

And when the cool autumn night dews restored the sun-burnt pastures to something akin to their spring verdure, then did the wild agrimony, with its spike of yellow blossoms, or pretty sweet sickle, become a valuable addition to her stock of salves and simples.

David, the hero of our tale, was the son of this worthy couple's old age, and his mother's companion in her visits to the glen, his active young limbs enabling her to obtain plants otherwise beyond her reach. He was shrewd and observant in the common concerns of life. He could tell that "when the corbie croups on the auld thorn, there's sure to be snaw or rain, ere

morn." And could remind the farmer that "new moon mist never died o' thirst."


He knew, too, the habits of birds, with all the rhymes in the country concerning them—told that,

"The cuckoo comes in the middle of March,  
And sings in the middle of April,  
And passes away at the Lammas tide,  
When the corn begins to fill ;"

and though he had little "book lair," his mother's lessons had not been lost upon him, for he was skilled in the art of turning a penny almost from infancy, as the following anecdotes will show. The minister happening to call one day at Peter Hunter's when David was alone in the house, and knowing well his worth and diligence, used the opportunity of inculcating upon him how much he was indebted to her, saying, "You do not know how much you owe to your mother, little man."

"I'm no awin' my mother onything," was the rather indignant reply, "but she's awin' me."

"Oh! David," answered the minister, shocked with the boy's response; "you should not speak in that manner. Consider all her kindness to you; indeed, you will never be able to get out of her debt, though you lived an hundred years."



"But I tell you, you're mista'en," persisted the now angry boy. "I'm no awin' my mother a fardin', but she's awin' me; I gi'ed her tippence for meal last Saturday, an' she hasna paid me yet:" and so saying, David seated himself by the window, and would hold no further converse with the minister, who sought in vain to make him aware of his filial obligations.

"Here's my mother comin' noo," exclaimed the boy, abruptly, interrupting the homily; 'an' if ye winna believe me, ye'll maybe believe hersel'." Then, rushing to the door, where he met Mysie, he cried out, at the same time seizing her dress, "Mother, aren't ye awin' me tippence?"

"Deed am I, Dauvid, my man."

"Weel, here's the minister, and he says I am awin' you rather," said the child, casting a suspicious look to the guest. Then, with a look of triumph, he continued, "He wad insist on't, but he'll surely believe noo."

Though his spiritual adviser tried to make friends with the boy, his efforts were all in vain, until he offered him a penny, if he would repeat the 103d psalm. Two or three bounds then brought the little fellow to his side, where, standing upright, he started off in a high-pitched voice, and in a credibly short space, without the slightest variation in tone, ran over the whole psalm; and when finished, exclaimed with a happy face—

"Noo, I've said it without a mistake;" at the same time holding out his hand for the penny, which was readily given, and confidence forthwith restored. David immediately proceeded to his purse to drop in the penny amongst his other treasures, when, just as he was unloosing the "*thrumb*" which bound it, he turned suddenly round, and interrupted the good man in his conversation with his mother, saying—"If ye'll gi'e me another penny, I'll say the whole o' the first four psalms to you."

"Ye greedy crater," cried his mother, seizing him angrily by the arm, "say them this moment to the minister without askin' siller, or I'll gar ye gi'e him back the penny he gi'ed you."

To this admonition David tremblingly complied, the fear of losing the copper before earned causing his voice to waver a little; but, once started, he gained courage, although from his irreverent haste, he was told to stop at the end of the second psalm.

In the fine summer weather Mysie wandered over the hills and "sheep-gangs," gathering the wool from the bushes of heather, accompanied as usual by Davie, to whom she promised, as an inducement to diligence in his work, wages—which the boy thought very good—threepence at New-year's day, and threepence at the fairs.

The pence thus earned, were regularly and faithfully paid, and as regularly inclosed in the homely purse, from which they were seldom withdrawn, except to be counted over, for even at the fair David seldom saw anything "bonnier" than his coppers.

From the great quantity of wool gathered by Mysie and her son, Peter wove cloth which the eident wife sold to great advantage amongst her neighbours, and in the nearest market town; and so well did she succeed that she often bought webs of worsted from travelling merchants to resell amongst her connections.

On Mysie's return from her journey, she detailed at great length her various schemes and successes to David, who listened with wonder and admiration to his mother's story, thinking, and truly too, that she was a wonderfully clever saleswoman.

Thus did he early learn the art of selling in all its intricacies of "priggin" and "fleechin'," from the fawning, canny way, to the indignant stamp of the foot, for Mysie acted her story; and so the philosophy of bargaining, and "waste not, want not," were drilled into him from his earliest recollections.

When David was about sixteen years of age, a little circumstance showed his continued "narrowness," as parsimony is generally called in Scotland. Having been while at school "*evened*" with a bonnie lassie (that is

to say, joked about as a fit match for her), he chanced to meet her at a fair, where she was standing amongst some companions. To test his generosity, one of the party told David that he would need to give Jeanie her fairing. At this he started; then looked down, evidently balancing the propriety of being liberal, with an unwillingness to pay away money. At last, slowly pushing his hand into his inner pocket, kept searching there for some time; and then, slowly withdrawing it, he held an apple at half an arm's length to Jeanie, saying:

"Here, lassie, take a bite." Of course a hearty laugh rung through the group, while poor David reddened with anger, as Tam Russell clutched the apple from his hand, and sent it spinning into the water. This "wastefulness" so roused the lad, that he left the fair, and was only pacified by his mother's abuse of Tam, calling him a "neer-dae-weel braggart, no worth mindin'." Peter Hunter died when David was eighteen. He had been "*lang silly*;" but Mysie's careful nursing, under Providence, tended to prolong his days, though it would not altogether ward off the grim messenger; and so the shadow of death in the household sobered the already canny David. As the youth hated the loom, he by his mother's advice, and in her company, began *packmanship*, in which, after a few lessons, she declared him to

be a first-rate hand, saying—"Dauvit could sell her round and round, for he was aye *ceevil*, it matter't na what unreasonable folk said to him, an' could aye keep his temper." And thus by his civility and tact the young man soon obtained plenty of custom, and was able before long to purchase a house for his mother and himself. Death, however, again entered the dwelling, and Mysie followed Peter to the grave, leaving David alone in the world. When speaking of his mother's death, her son would thus describe it: "Ye maun understand her faither (that's ma gran'faither) had been ance a sodger, an' my mother was aye unco loyal; so when King George cam' to Edinburgh, naething wad serve her but she maun gang in, just to countenance him on his land-in'. I offered to tak' a cart, but she wadna hear o't; sae we travelled a' the road on fit. We had some cakes and cheese in our pocket, an' bought a pennyworth o' kirk milk noo and then. My mither didna see the king the first day, though she was sae keen, and jumpit on ahint ane o' the yeomen, that was keeping the way clear, but the beast threw her aff. The second day he passed she was mair fortunate, an' got a special bow frae his Majesty, when she cried out—' Hurrah for our King, that my faither focht for!' Next morning we started for home; but after being six miles out o' the town it cam' a perfect thunder-plump, and drookit us

like craws. My mother was not the better o' that trip, but dwined awa for a month or sae. She wadna hear o' the doctor at first; but at last I sent for him in spite o' her, an' when he cam' he said it was a bad case. After he was awa' she tell'd me where a' her siller was; and hoo muckle she had, chargin' me to tak' gude care o't. I said I wad do that, and left her, biddin' her to lie quiet, and I wad see her about ten o'clock, but at ten o'clock she was deid." After this David got an uncle and aunt to live in the kitchen end of his house, retaining the "spare" for his own use; and although often joked about a wife, and *courted* by some, he never married. One "unco bonny weel-faured lassie," as David used to call her, took his fancy. She kept a baker's shop in the small town whither he went for goods, and the enamoured packman, in order to hear the music of her voice and get a peep at her sweet face, used to watch when she was alone, and go in for perhaps the change of a sixpence, or such like; but our friend David's blateness lost him the day, for a *young impudent* fellow from a distance, chancing to come to the town, saw his fair one, woo'd and won her, and so induced her to change her name instead of David's sixpences.

When I remember David he was creeping into the vale of years, and was a middle-sized, broad-shouldered man, with a keen pawky eye, and a very sleek worldly



face; he was always clad in a blue coat like a large surtout, with big metal buttons, homespun grey vest and trousers, while his head was surmounted by a huge broad bonnet with a red top; round his neck he wore a green and yellow Indian neckerchief which encircled his unbleached shirt collar. The lappels of his coat and vest pockets were the only fanciful part of his dress; his pack was tied in a linen table-cover and slung over his shoulders, it would generally weigh from sixty to eighty pounds, but "Dauvit" strode on as if he felt no burden, planting his staff firmly on the ground, and keeping a sharp eye on business.

Our packman had always a suitable remark to append to his rustic bow as he entered a kitchen or house. "Uncommon fine wather, mistress," was his stock of salutations, varying the "fine," with "coarse," or "cauld," or "dry," or "wat," or "changeable." Then followed some complimentary remark, such as—"I needna ask if ye're weel the day, for ye're the very picture o' health;" or some decidedly pleasant observation, especially to the young lasses, as, "fair fa' your bonny face, I haena seen your match in a' the borders;" or, "Eh, now! but a sight of you's a gude thing; I wonder if I ha'e ony nice ribbon in my pack for you the day," with it might be, "Ye're a comely lassie. I wish he saw you, the noo, that likes ye best." Of

course, after such flattering speeches "Dauvit" was asked to lay down his pack and give them his news, and then he, nothing loath, opened up his budget of information, told the mistress when he last saw her married daughter, and how she was looking; delivered the message to Jenny the kitchenmaid, received from some far away brother; or told the master all about the different "craps" upon the different farms he passed through, generally ending with—"I ha'e seen nae pasture to compare wi' your ain," or, "Ye've braw corn, maister, in the park down there."

He was generally asked to join the family of the small farmers at meals; but he was a very moderate eater and well bred in his own fashion, handing all the plates of bread to the company at table till told again and again "that he was eatin' nane his sel' but only watchin' other folk."

When the meal was over David would rise, and, turning to the gudewife, say, "Mistress, ye ken gude claith when ye see't. I'll gi'e ye a look at a gown I'm takin' for a bride up the water," then opening his pack, would produce the piece, "thumbing it," stroking it down, throwing a ply of it over his arm, then approaching the light, and holding his head at a considerable angle, would carefully note the effect—shut one eye—utter a few scarcely audible words, then putting it into

the gudewife's hands, exclaim, "See at that! there's some stuff—is it no' beautiful? It's like leather for solidness and velvet for saftness."


Then he would produce pieces of different colours and textures, always dwelling on what was most likely to suit, and of which he had a wonderful conception. The pack contained a variety of goods, gaudy prints with fine woollen and even sometimes (generally for special order) silk dresses, shawls, and handkerchiefs. The display of vest-pieces was very numerous, but the colours would now be thought a *little* too gay; notwithstanding David sold, and generally sold well.

He learned about all the marriages likely to take place, and throwing himself in the way of the bridegroom or bride, would make them a present of a ribbon or neckerchief; then, after a joke and an encomium on the absent one, expressing his certainty that two such "weel doin' industrious young folk couldna but be happy," informed them that he "was aye at hame frae the last Monday o' the a'e month to the first Monday o' the other; or, if they wad either write what they wanted, or come owre, he wad gi'e them some grand bargains," adding "that he wad tak' the siller as they could gi'e him it." But Geordie Johnston o' the Shaw remarked, after doing, as he termed it, a "gude stroke wi' Dauvit," that "he wasna sae accommodatin' as he made believe."

There was always a good deal of "priggin'" going on, and David generally started at a high figure, at which he said he could *fend*, but "bargled" away downwards till he came to his price; then, conclusively declaring that he wadna take a halfpenny less; from this point, he would throw a ribbon into the bargain, saying, when all was over, that it was far owre cheap, but he liked to turn the penny, an' as he had some stuff o' the same kind lying at the carrier's quarters (for he often sent part of his goods on before him), he would just try to sell it better.

With a *hard* customer, David was short and quick. Peggy Greenshields used to say, "I never argue wi' ye about a thing, Dauvit, ye ken, for if I want it, and it's gude, and I canna get it as cheap frae ony other body, I never gang past you, but just buy it at ance, and leave the luck-penny to yersel', tho', to be honest wi' ye, your luck-pennies are a' unco like the new fashioned umbrellas" (parasols).

When business was over, if he could reach another farm-town before dark, he would roll up the pack, and wishing them all "a gude afternoon," speed on his way; but if it was near nightfall, he remained and spent the evening, sitting with the assembled household round the fire, retailing his news, or it might be slyly, but faithfully, delivering a message or letter to some lad



or lass amongst the company from an absent *sweet-heart*.

The *fore supper* was the best time for gossip, and this, during winter, was from *lowsin'* time, about five o'clock, until eight, when the cows were milked and the horses *suppered*. All eagerly listened to David's summary of news, as well they might, for his budget was varied, extending from Parliamentary discussion to domestic cookery; the *bairns* listening so intently and so quietly, that they generally fell asleep on their stools, while the older part of the audience, unwilling to break the thread of his narrative, scarcely interrupted him with a single question.

Exactly as the clock struck eight, the servants adjourned to their duties in stable or byre, having first hooked upon the fire the large pot full of potatoes; but, when all out-of-door work was over, and they appeared again in the kitchen, two or three basins of milk, with a quantity of horn-spoons, were placed upon the table near the fire, and the pot set upon the hearth full of ragged mealy potatoes, from which the steam glided up the roomy chimney.

"Noo, sirs, fa' a' to and eat," said the gudeman, after having said grace; adding, as he handed over a a choice potato, "Here, Dauvit, here's a grand ane for you."

Often this simple fare was supplemented with a skim-milk cheese, of which each received a *whang*, and on some occasions a little salt butter.

To supply the place of candles, a bit of *parrot*, or as it was called, *licht coal*, was thrown on the fire, which crackled and spurted as it shed quite a gleam of light around. The evening meal was not hurried over at the farm-house, for all work was now at an end, and the servants having been ruminating David's talk in the *fore supper*, began to discuss the knotty points, and find parallel instances to subjects before mentioned, so that the packman had only to listen and answer occasional questions.

At the first yawn of the master, the *Book* was produced, and, after family worship, all hurried off to bed.

David was chary about producing his purse (an old stocking-foot); in doubtful company tying it round his waist. Nor did he relish night travelling, being of a timid nature, and living much in fear of being "*rubbit*." Our hero used to tell that he never knew until the day of his mother's death, that her hoard of money was within the eight-day clock; but to no one excepting the "Banker," and that was once when very ill, would he reveal the amount of his wealth; though, upon recovery, his mind was ill at ease at thus having made known his secret; consequently, when he saw

him afterwards, he generally saluted him with, "mind, never say a word to onybody about *yon*," or "never breath what I ance tell'd ye."

David was a stanch Seceder, well-read in the Scriptures, and a great enemy to all *innovations*. Repeating tunes were his abhorrence, and he left the church whenever they were sung, testifying his displeasure by slamming the door behind him. The ceasing to read the line also moved him to wrath, while the use of the gown and bands was "ringing the bell for Popery to come in."

His memory was full of the Erskines, and Ralph's Gospel sonnets having succeeded the rhymes that pleased his boyhood, often would he detail, for the edification of his auditors, some of those quaint verses, varying them with what he heard auld John Brown or young John Brown say at Brigend sacrament, Mr Comrie's action-sermon, or Mr Home o' Braehead's fencin' o' the tables. His liberality took the channel of the Church, when it did flow, but it never overflowed. "Ance," said he, "I was completely dumfounded, when auld Eben Brown, o' Inverleithen, was beggin' for the missionaries; I emptied my pocket into the ladle, and wished I had had mair, it was sae grand to hear him; in fact, I was wearyin' to get quit o't for the first time in my life!"


But, as David the *packman* is my theme, and not David the *Seceder*, I must hasten to a close. He jogged on regularly for nearly forty years, selling, priggig, and cracking; he grew rich and stiff, and reduced his visits to half-yearly ones; and, so avoiding the cold wintry weather, at last he retired from travelling. He then set up in a draper's shop his cousin's child, whom he had adopted, still himself "keepin' passin' aboot, though doing very little at the sellin'," he would say, "exceptin' to some country folk, the thing he had the real turn for." All the buying, however, he still did, visiting the old merchants in Edinburgh, and bargaining even more keenly than he was wont for himself, saying that "it was to gi'e the laddie as gude a start as possible, and they maun allow him an extra discount."

David's young relation had much "humming and hawing" before he would tell his uncle he was going to be married; and, when he at last got it communicated, the old man sat for nearly ten minutes without response, then said, "Wha wi', John?"

"Her name's Marget Alexander, and her faither's a carrier at Elston, and he's an elder in the Meetin' House."

"That's gude sae far," replied David; "but has she ony—ony—are they *bein folk*?"

"Weel, they're weel eneuch aff; but really I didna ask her tocher."





"I dare say no'; but did ye no' get onybody to do it for ye?"

"No," said John, "I didna."

"Oh, laddie," replied his uncle, "when I was travellin' I had mony a thing o' that kind to seek oot, and I aye made something o't."

Next morning David was off, no one knew where, but he said he would be away for a while. He went to Elston, asked about the carrier, and soon learned that Maggie was the daughter of his old sweetheart of the baker's shop. Taking staff in hand, he then walked straight to the carrier's, and just at the gate of the little garden saw a lassie watering a bed of camomile. The memories of twenty-five years bygone returned with full force. She was the very picture of his old joe. For the first time since his mother's death tears filled his eyes, but by a strong effort checking the emotion, he said politely to the girl, "It's a fine day," and asked her if she would *oblige* him with a mouthful of water.

"Oh yes, sir," she replied, kindly smiling upon David; "but come into the house and tak' a drink o' milk."

"Oh, ye're ower kind," then continued the wily body; "ye'll be mistress here, now?"

"Oh no," she said, "my mother's leevin', but no very stout, and the camomile does her gude; and although we're very busy, I just ran oot for a minute to water it."

The pawky crack of David need not further be related, for Mrs Alexander never knew he had "*liket*" her, and Maggie did not know that he was her Johnnie's uncle. Sufficient to say that the gudewife then told David what a very well-doing lad was looking after Maggie, and how much she thought of him, for he aye spoke sae kindly o' an auld friend that had done a heap for him, and was such a worthy, clever man."


David left, and when a mile "doun the burn," on his road home, took a "gude lang greet," and another, and yet another.

"I didna expect ye sae sune," said John, when the auld man entered his dwelling, "but I'm glad to see ye, for I was feared my marryin' had angered ye."

David intended to play the *hero*, but his heart was *softened*, his fine speech could not be uttered, and he could only say—

"Oh Johnnie, Johnnie, be quick and bring her hame, an' I'll gi'e ye a' I ha'e."

The last time I saw David (it is years ago now), a bonny wee lassie of three years old sat upon his knee and drew her little dimpled fingers through his grey hair, while a blythe sturdy laddie of five years was playing with the *auld stocking-foot*—the discarded purse—and making a whip of its thrumbs.





## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CARTER'S PLAY.

"Come, Johnnie lad, let us be stepping,  
Or else we'll be late for the play,  
Sae dinna be waitin' for Robie,  
We maunna be hinder'd the day.  
See there's your blue bonnet, my laddie,  
An' tak' now your whip in your hand,  
An' there, wi' a rose in your waistcoat,  
Ye may gang wi' the best in the land."

**A**S the trade of our village increased, and we could boast of two bakers, two butchers, and even a candlemaker, not to mention the flourishing grocery store, with the more obscure dealers in tea and tobacco, then did a benevolent individual bethink him that by instituting a sick and funeral society he could benefit the poorer part of the community. This was accordingly done, and the annual return of its comme-

moration was celebrated by what was termed the Carter's Play, a festival originated by the Earl of Winton, whose estates were forfeited in 1715. This unfortunate nobleman presided at the first of these meetings, and personated "My Lord." As the play was anxiously anticipated by those in whose busy life holidays were few, and times of enjoyment rare and uncertain, money was hoarded up for months previous to buy "braws," which then appeared in the shape of new gowns and bonnets, and this with the cleaning, scrubbing, and white washing of houses, the weeding and dressing of little garden plots, and the tending and nursing of flowers, so much used at that time, combined to make the fourth of July a memorable day in our village.

The society was supported by each of its members paying a yearly contribution, from which grants were made in case of sickness or death, and although it was called the Carter's Club, its members were not confined to that body, many of the richer inhabitants joining in it to benefit the company, though these rarely, if ever, walked in the procession, which was mostly formed of farm servants and carters.

It was a lovely summer morning when we youngsters set out to witness, for the first time, the celebration of the Carter's Play.

Never before had the walls of the village houses



appeared so white, as glimmering through the foliage of the trees, they let the needed light into the picture, while their small window panes flashed back the rays of the morning sun ; and their thatched roofs, where moss and stone-crop flourished in profusion, formed a blaze of living gold.

By the wayside bloomed various flowers, gay and beautiful, though the dust powdered their rich petals, dimming the lustre of their emerald leaves. How sweet, then, looked the dainty eye-bright springing up by the side of the golden agrimony, or airy blue-bells, which we called "tailor's thimbles," blooming beside yellow butter-cups and gowans !

Before we reached the village, small groups of people were already assembled, beguiling the time by lively gossip, waiting patiently until the procession was formed and orders given to march.

As a prize was awarded for the "best-buskit" horse, the young men of the different farm-houses had been early astir at decorating their steeds, and happy was the maiden who could most largely supply her lover with "breast-knots," and "gum-flowers," to assist in the work ; nor were her fingers idle, for, more accustomed to the mystery of bow-making and ribbon-plaiting, she aided most effectually in the business of ornamentation, notwithstanding the talking, laughing, and innocent

firtation not unfrequently carried on during the time. The tails and manes of the horses were gay with ribbons; white, crimson, and blue, being the favourite colours. Streamers flowed from each side of the bridle, and scarlet ear-gloves, with white tassels, crowned their heads, while round or diamond-shaped little mirrors dangled here and there upon the harness.

"Eh! but Rosie was never as grand a' her life afore," said the "byre-woman" of Todslaw, after she had put the last knot upon the "brecham" or collar; while her neighbour, who had been assisting the "halfin' (or half-lang) callant," to adorn the pony he used in the harrows, exclaimed, with unfeigned delight, "Dick 'ill never be kent the day! I dinna believe there will be a horse at the play sae weel buskit!" And Mrs Brownlee, the kind motherly farmer's wife, coming to the door to view the party, cried out as she saw them helping the boy to mount the restive Dick—

"Oh! Jamie my man, tak' gude care o' yoursel', and see that ye keep out o' harm's way;" adding, as she returned to the kitchen to resume her baking, "I am never happy in thae play-days; I wish the laddie was safe home again; I wonder what mak's folk sae fond o' fun and nonsense?" To which remark, the honest Sandy Brownlee replies, "Wife, wife! bairns will be bairns, an' young anes maun ha'e diversion. Ye forget we liket it

oursel's langsyne." Good, true-hearted Sandy, it was thus he always spoke, sympathising with youth, and excusing the exuberance of spirits which sought vent upon such joyful occasions; and yet the worthy farmer did not always utter smooth things, for when the young scapegrace, his laird's son, remarked one day to him in a penitential mood, which Sandy knew would not be of long duration—

"What would I give, Brownlee, to have as good a character as you?"

"Ye needna ask what ye would gi'e," was the blunt reply; "rather how lang wad ye keep it if ye had it?"

But to return to my tale: Jamie, quite proud of the honour of forming part of the procession, and proud, too, of the large peony rose ornamenting a button-hole of his new jacket, trotted off at a brisk pace, heedless of the injunctions of his mistress, and singing as he went—

"Wi' plough and harrow we win our bread,  
Wi' plough and harrow the bairn's fed,  
Then success to the cause of the whipmen gay,  
And a hearty success to their merry play.  
Hurra! hurra! for the carter lads,  
The blythe, the true, the carter lads,  
We'll off this day to the whipman's play,  
And march alang wi' the carter lads."

Presently the boy was joined by Will Smith the candlemaker's man, mounted upon Charlie, as the long-

legged, rawboned animal was called; these two proceeded in company to the house of "My Lord," where the procession was already forming.

"My Lord," the president of the Carter's or Whipman's Society, was this year douce Bob Gemmel, the butcher at the top of the High Street. Bob was a man of few ideas, and as is often the case with such people, very tenacious of his own opinions. It was he who courted the baker's daughter, and when standing up to be married, suddenly recollected that he had made no inquiry regarding the fortune of his bride; so, tapping the minister on the arm, he exclaimed, "Bide a wee, sir, till I ken about the tocher."

"Let me go on just now, and find that out afterwards," answered the minister, annoyed, as he well might be, at the ill-judged interruption.

"Na, na," cried the butcher; "I'm no to be cheated in this way; let me first ken about the siller ere ye say another word." But the bride, indignant at her mercenary lover, refused to allow the marriage to proceed, even though her father consented to satisfy the bridegroom upon this important point. Bob is about to be married again, however, and he has taken good care this time to inquire the amount of the *tocher* to be received, before he engaged the services of the minister; and though Joan Souter is a heartless, frivolous crea-



ture, Bob thinks he has been a fortunate man, and he boasts of the accomplishments of his betrothed to his neighbours, while they sit over their toddy in Luckie Prider's tavern.

The committee having breakfasted with "My Lord," the band arrived in due time, with streaming colours and rolling drum. The report of the year's proceedings was then read, the state of the funds and claims of applicants investigated, after which a glass and bottle of whisky being produced, success to the Society was pledged in a "morning" or "tastin'."

And now the signal to form the procession was given by "My Lord" calling to his groom "to fetch out Nannie." With one foot in the stirrup, the other on the ground, Bob glanced up to the window of his betrothed, expecting to see the blooming face of Joan watching him with a proud pleased look, thus highly honoured above his fellows ; but the bride, though there, heeds him not. Alas for the future happiness of the butcher ! his faithless sweetheart stretches her neck and gazes intently amidst the crowd to discover, if possible, her old lover, Will, the candlemaker's man, whom she has jilted for the more wealthy Bob Gemmel. But if Bob is disappointed by the lack of interest in Joan, he has not time to dwell upon it ; so, calling to Jock Dawson, the "*offisher*," he bids him move on, and so Jock rides off


upon his rough-footed stead, bearing before him the saddle and bridle, the prizes to be given at the races.

After Jock marched the band playing, "Up and waur them a', Willie;" followed by the piper with consequential air, and soon as the band ceased, he sounded out Highland pibrochs to which the company kept time; next in order came the farriers, with large fur caps—"hairy oobits" the children called them—their green and gold sashes glittering in the sunshine, and large peony roses in their breasts; after them walked the masons and carpenters; then the treasurer and secretary, the other members following in behind them.

The flag-bearers having won the honour by competition in the evening of the previous play-day, took their places in the procession, proud of the distinction they had purchased so dearly, for scarcely ever could a flag be obtained under one pound or one pound ten.

The first one carried by the smith bore the favourite device, "Speed the Plough," with a representation of Burns, whom the genius of poetry was crowning with flowers; the next, borne by the carrier of the village, exhibited a full length Tam o' Shanter; a third a labourer sowing wheat; and a fourth two carters.

Old Andrew Easton had mounted "Brown Bess," and rode by the side of Wat Cooper the maltsman. Andrew



was quite a character in the village. His occupation consisted in drawing peats from the surrounding morass to supply fuel to many of the inhabitants, as coals in the locality were too rare and expensive a luxury for the poor. "Brown Bess," his faithful coadjutor in this work, was not swift of foot, and Andrew habitually used all manner of opprobrious epithets to hurry her on, threatening her at the same time with no end of fearful punishments if she did not obey, and yet so tender was he of his old favourite that he seldom used the whip, and thus it became a bye-word, "your bark, like Andrew Easton's, is waur than your bite." There was no lack of women at the carter's play, and amongst the most regular attenders might be seen our old friend Jenny Forbes o' the Braehead. Jenny was a hard-working honest woman, and a great favourite at our home, where she was much employed as an out-worker in the fields. We children had a warm side to her also, for she indulged us more than the other workers were in the habit of doing, and often winked at our delinquencies if found playing in forbidden places; at the same time, her ideas of things in general, not being the most liberal or enlightened, were often a source of amusement and surprise to our youthful understandings.

"What has vexed you to-day, Jenny?" exclaimed my mother, who chanced on one occasion to find her trudging

ing along with a load of firewood on her shoulders, and weeping bitterly the while.

"Ha'e ye no heard, mistress?" was the answer. "Has naeboddy telt ye what's gaun to happen our laddie?"

"No," was the reply; "I hope he has not been getting tipsy again."

"Far waur than that, mem, far waur than that," replied Jenny, leaning her burden on the dyke while she stopped to talk.

"Has he been stealing, then? I always thought he was honest, like his mother," was the next remark.

"Far waur than that, far waur," still insisted the poor woman, as if unable to vary her mode of expression, or tell further of her sorrow.

"Then he must be going to be hanged, for I know not what else to think," answered my mother, fairly at sea as to the cause of Jenny's despair.

"Hanging wad be naething to this, mistress; oh! hanging wad be naething till't."

"I can guess no more then, Jenny, so you must just tell me, if you wish my sympathy."

"Alack! alack! hoo can I speak it? oh dear! oh dear! he's gaun to marry ane o' the glaiket English lasses up at the Castle. My puir bairn, the hizzie's bewitched him!"

The first inclination of her kind mistress was to ex-



claim, with a feeling of relief, "Is this all?" but seeing how genuine was the mother's grief, she desisted, and tried to comfort her, saying it might turn out better than she thought, and though Jenny persisted "that it wadna turn out onything but ill, for what gude could come o' takin' up wi' foreigners?" it surely has been better than hanging, for her son is looking quite happy as he rides along, and Jenny in her glee nudges her neighbour, and says, "See at my laddie, hoo braw he is!" and as she makes no allusion to the English wife, it is to be hoped that she has begun to think after all it has not turned out so ill.

And so the procession moved on, making sundry halts for drams at little roadside inns, and much mirth pervaded with rough jokes and banter, while the horses capered and plunged, though it must be allowed seldom a man lost his seat, a rather marvellous thing when the excited state of both riders and horses was taken into account.

The villagers turned out as the procession moved past, and rent the air with cheers and expressions of delight, and then, after a circuit of six or seven miles, all halted about two in the afternoon at the race-ground—the old disused coach-road.

The starting-point on this occasion was from a heap of broken stones, upon which Jamie Simpson, or

"Pulie" as he was called, mounted and cried aloud, "Any horses that are going for to rin for the saddle, come to me!"

Pulie, dressed in "split or brand new" corduroys, is a little man with a slight impediment in his speech. He holds in one hand a penny passbook, while with the other he grasps a half-worn pencil, and as the horses are brought forward, he, wetting the pencil in his mouth school-boy fashion, and moving his head in unison with its strokes, writes in most illegible letters—to say nothing of the spelling—the name and ownership of each horse, asking if it had gone the "round" of the procession. Being satisfied upon this point, he then reads the conditions of the race, the most remarkable of which was "that nae horse was to rin that had ony bluid in't," meaning high breeding.

"There's no a drap o' bluid in mine, Pulie," exclaimed the "giant," so named because of his small stature.

"Nor in mine either," cried his rival, Dan Dobson; "she's pure Clydesdale, is ma beast." "Nor mine," "nor mine," called out all the candidates.

"Start then, lads, when I say thrice," said Pulie. "Ance!—a' ready?—twice!—thrice and away!" Then began the thundering tramp of perhaps six or eight cart horses. Generally one or two of the number *reisted*, *i.e.*, gave in before running half-way; the rest went on

"devouring the road"—as Homer has it—the sparks of fire every now and then flying from their iron-shod hoofs; whip and spur are applied vigorously, the gazers watching and stretching their necks as John Gilray's Jess or Peter Cochrane's Bess comes in victorious.

While this race is going on, our friend Pulie is again at work, pencil in hand, taking down a list of competitors for the bridle and blinders, and a little coaxing is sometimes required before he can secure enough of candidates.


"Let your pownie rin, Geordie Dickson. I've been thirty years a member o' this society, Geordie, thirty years a respectable gude member, and I never saw a better match than between thae twa pownies," pointing first to one he had just enrolled, then to Black Tib whom the carter held by the bridle. Seeing, however, that his words made no impression upon her master, he continued, "I'll bet ye a gill they'll be within a whip-length o' ane anither a' the way, Geordie." Geordie still hesitates, and shakes his head as he weighs the chances of Black Tib against her neighbour.

"I'll tell you, lad," Pulie goes on, "I'll bet you half-a-mutchkin it's a drawn race, and I'll pay it the nicht if yours comes aff at the loss." This gained the point; the ponies ran, and Black Tib lost, but its master gained the "half-mutchkin."

After the races were over, the procession began to move off again, but not in regular order. However, in process of time they all reached the village, and, tying the poor hungry horses to any neighbouring paling or branch of a tree in their way, the men proceeded to the inn barn, where benches had been placed, and soon the business of eating commenced in good earnest—the baker having prepared twenty or thirty enormous pies, and several cooked legs of lamb, with rolls or *baps* in abundance.

About seven o'clock they all issue from the barn, and prepare for the foot-race—many of them, alas! too much intoxicated to walk steadily along, or to speak distinctly. One important competition was the catching of the duck-in-the-water, which often made those who went in, begrimed and dirty, come out improved in appearance. In the meantime the shows and merry-go-rounds, which had been provided for the amusement of the children, were largely frequented, while the ginger-bread stalls and barrows were emptied of the tempting treasures.

The proceedings were at this time rather interrupted by a fight between two of the competitors—the dispute having arisen about the merits of their respective horses; happily, by the timely aid of the special constables, aided by some of the orderly villagers, the combatants were speedily separated, and locked up in





the vaults of the old churchyard till they became sober, and fit to be trusted amongst the crowd again.

The "roupin'" of the flags was the last event of this important day, and the scene which then took place baffles all description. Some men had their mouths closed by the extended palms of their wives lest they should offer too much, and then how the captives wriggled and twisted to set themselves free to make their voices heard! but often all was in vain, their better halves would not be balked, but held on with determined pertinacity, and the half-uttered "bode" was not unfrequently driven back again, while the flag was borne off by some more fortunate bidder. The law of the society, that not more than six should speak at once, being seldom adhered to, it would take the pen of a Sir Walter Scott to portray the scene, which Pulie Simpson declared emphatically was "waur than Shirra-muir, for aften there were mair broken banes." But not to all the inhabitants of "our village" had the return of this play-day brought feelings of joy. Poor Phemy Sanderson could not exclude the noise of the shouting and revelry without, but she darkened her cottage window that she might mourn in silence for him who would never more mingle in its sports, or compete for its honours. And yet what time had a poor widow, toiling for her bread and that of her orphan

babes, for the luxury of tears ? And so it was only as the night drew on, and the labours of the day were almost over, when she nursed her infant to sleep, that she indulged her sorrow, and rocked to and fro with low sad mournings as she looked into the dark future of a life whose light was gone. But one short year since, and her Wat had been the foremost in the sports, and had borne aloft a flag of which he had been so proud, and for which she had given him bitter, cruel words. Oh ! could she but recall them—could he but, return again, how different she would be ! and while she sits in gloom and sorrow, her father lifts the latch of her door and stands before her, with pity in his eyes, hard-working, rough carter though he be.

“Phemy, my doo,” he says, kindly, “I thought ye wad be remindin’ last year, and missin’ Wat, puir fallow ; sae I promised your mother to look in on ye afore I gaed hame.”

Phemy strove to speak, but could not at first for tears. At last she replied, in a choked voice, “I’m no aye this way, father ; it’s this day that brings Wat back to my mind ;” and then, as she convoyed him on his departure to the gate of her little garden, and saw the neglected flowers, once *his* pleasure and pride, she cried out again in sorrowful tones, “There’s mair missin’ him than me, my puir Wat ; the very bits o’ roses show that the

strong willing arm 's noo cauld that ance tended them  
an' me."

The annual celebration of this society is still held,  
but it is now a tame affair, barely serving to remind the  
older inhabitants of the exciting scenes of their early  
days; and though the flowers of the peony-roses still  
bloom in cottage gardens, they are no longer tended  
and nursed as a badge of the "Whip-man's Play."





## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PENNY WEDDING.

“ Hey, the bonnie, ho, the bonnie,  
Hey, the bonnie breast-knots ;  
Blythe and merry were they a',  
When they put on the breast-knots.  
There was a bridal in this town,  
And till't the lassies a' were boun' ;  
Wi' maunkey-facings on their gowns,  
And some o' them had breast-knots.”

OLD SONG.

**I**N our times of polish and refinement, the vigorous, though often rude, manners of the past are quickly disappearing, civilisation smoothing down their rugged outlines, while increase of knowledge is banishing the superstitions which formed one of their marked features ; and now we, who are wiser than our fathers, can afford to smile at their simple

tastes and recreations, though it is doubtful whether we have secured more real pleasure by this change. We have become more worldly, more superficial; and what has been gained in elegance, we may have lost in deep, true feeling, with the homely enjoyments which linger around the domestic hearth.

Those old forms and customs, if wild and rugged, were also picturesque and characteristic of the age and people; and before their memory disappears from our land, I would fain reveal a few of their simple, home-bred pleasures, that future generations may know how their fathers spent their leisure hours in those primitive times.

One of those sources of enjoyment arose from attendance upon penny weddings, which, as we noticed in a former volume, were generally held in the barn of the old inn at the end of our village; and though those merry meetings were not always conducted with strict propriety, they were first instituted with the friendly intention of enabling the young couple to begin house keeping free of debt, by each of the guests contributing a small sum upon the occasion.

Of one of those weddings I have a vivid recollection, though it occurred in the days of my childhood. The invitation to attend being the first letter we children ever received, the almost illegible scrawl, written upon coarse

paper, and sealed with a thimble, was welcomed by us with joy ; nor had we any inclination to discover faults, although ask was spelt "ax," and hope was minus an "e," and eagerly did we watch my mother's face to see if we could read there any prospect of our being allowed to accept "the bidding."

Leave being obtained without much difficulty, because of the respectability of the young couple, upon the afternoon of that long wished for day we were sent away in the farm cart (being too numerous a party for any other conveyance) with Robin for our charioteer, to whom instructions were given that he should drive leisurely and carefully, the roads over which he must pass being none of the best.

It was one of those calm, rather melancholy days in autumn, when the faintest sound is heard ; the flight of a bird from its covert ; scarcely stirring leaves which fall heavily again ; or the pleasant, though distant hum of several voices from cornfields lying at the base of the low green hills amongst which we passed,—fields picturesque with various colours, where the shirt-sleeves of the reapers made here and there little spots of white, contrasting delightfully with striped, blue, or red jackets, and the grey petticoats of the gleaners amidst the golden grain. And then, as we left the lowland, with the cool shadow of its woods, and the deep verdure of

its hedge-rows, and ascended the steep hill-path opening up into the moor, gay with patches of heather; how sweet and still was all around, the silence unbroken save by the liquid trickling of some unseen burn, or the cry of the curlew from its mossy bed. Far above head, the light gauzy clouds we were watching seemed to melt away into the blue of the sky, while over the landscape hung a soft vapoury mist, making everything look dreamy and sombre, and toning down the brilliant autumnal colouring of the forest.

At the end of an hour's drive we reached the place of our destination, a pretty, whitewashed cottage in the outskirts of a clean village. The garden through which we entered had, besides its "long-kail" and leeks, bushes of lilies, sweet-william, wall-flower, snap-dragons, and carnations, all enclosed by the dry-stone dyke, around and over which the bramble hung its struggling shoots covered with gay white flowers.

At the door we were met by the bridegroom's mother, a respectable matron, dressed in a cotton gown, overspread with large red and yellow roses, a cap ornamented with blue ribbons, and a shawl pinned tightly round her shoulders. The customary greetings interchanged, we were then shown into a room, where we laid aside our wrappings before appearing amongst the guests already assembled, and who, while patiently awaiting the

arrival of the bridal party, discoursed in a friendly manner upon the various topics of the day.

Mr Tait, the minister, formed one of the company, but ever cheerful and courteous, his presence caused no constraint on the innocent mirth of the visitors, while his frank demeanour and happy jests added greatly to their enjoyment.

Nor did the parish schoolmaster appear a less distinguished guest; at least, he astonished the listeners by a far greater display of learning, his numerous Latin quotations exciting wonder and awe.

Neither did our hostess fail in her duty; she told long tales, branching off into divisions and subdivisions, in which "says I," and "says he," were the words most frequently in use, while we sat bashful and ill at ease amidst a company few of whom we knew or heard of before.

"I kenn'd Jock Thamson wad win the broose," said a countryman near us, in a broad-skirted blue coat, with brass buttons; "he's a clever chap, Jock, an' fleet o' fit. The Thamson's were a' that, though; naebody could beat them langsyne at puttin' an' jumping'; he tak's it o' kind," offering at the same time a large horn snuff-box to the minister.

"He is certainly the swiftest runner in the parish," was the answer of the reverend gentleman, at the same



time tapping the box and drawing from it a pinch of snuff.

"I dinna ken but Tam Dempster wad beat him, though," rejoined another, turning the quid of tobacco in his mouth, which he afterwards spat upon the floor, making Betty Deans draw up the skirts of her white dress, and shrug her shoulders with an annoyed look.

Betty Deans was a comely maiden, though the curl-papers of the evening before had not improved her soft brown hair, nor did the large head-dress of "gum flowers" at all become her—flowers of which Johnnie Smith, the butcher's man, in speaking of them afterwards to a friend, exclaimed, "They wad ha'e gane far to fodder a cow;" no, for far prettier did Betty seem in her striped pink short-gown, and blue petticoat, with the small "setty" suncap, which sat so jauntily on her head, than thus dressed out. Poor Betty, she was very bashful in her finery, and very foolish too she looked when the minister, turning round, asked her how long it would be before she required his services on a like occasion? a question applicable to another in the room besides herself, if we might judge from the eyes that were turned upon Rob Addis, the young ploughman, by some of his companions. However, Rob stood the shot thus unconsciously fired by the minister better than

Betty, notwithstanding a few nudges in the side from a neighbour.

"They should be makin' their appearance sune noo," exclaimed the hostess; adding "it's mair than half an hour sin' Jock Thamson was here; look out, Willie, like a gude laddie," addressing a curly-headed boy, "and see if they're no comin' in sight."

Willie did as he was told, and soon returned saying, "They're crossin' the brig the noo, an' will be forrit in twa or three minutes."

As the bride, an interesting-looking young woman, stepped across the threshold, her mother-in-law broke over her head a large cake of short-bread, when a struggle ensued among the bystanders for a portion of it, upon which they might dream; the minister and the rest of the friends assembled, then crowded around the newly-wedded pair to wish them joy, and shake them by the hand, after which we proceeded to take our places round the table, and be ready to partake of the good cheer upon the conclusion of the blessing. And now all was bustle and activity; large kettles filled with tea being introduced; the most alert of the youths present, poured off their contents into cups of all sizes, shapes, and patterns, and handed them to the company. Amazing was the quantity of bread, butter, cheese, and ham which soon disappeared, though the hostess kept in

good faith, saying to all around "Ye're eatin' naethin'; noo, fa' a' to, an' mak' a gude tea;" with such-like expressions of old-fashioned hospitality.

When all were satisfied, the minister withdrew to his home; and the bride, escorted by the best-man, proceeded to the barn to lead down the first country-dance. Thither we followed, I resisting sundry invitations made me by more than one young farmer present to join the performers. The truth was, that frightened and bewildered by so much that was new and strange, I wished rather to see than to be seen, rather to view the actors than take any part myself.

The barn had been carefully swept and put to rights for the occasion, and even some attempts at ornament had been displayed, for the dusty "couples" were well concealed by branches of evergreen, a few of which being likewise so disposed as to cover the marks of mould and damp upon the walls. Placed upon cross-beams, suspended from the roof, were a number of candles, which ever as the door opened, and that was pretty frequently, they blurted and spluttered, dripping down grease upon any luckless wight who might chance to pass below at the moment.

In a corner behind an oak table sat the smith as master of ceremonies, filling wine-glasses from a large bowl of toddy, which his apprentice, a raw youth, who

had outgrown the Sabbath suit worn upon the occasion, distributed among the company. Around the smith sat some middle-aged men, who talked over the times they had seen, and other weddings at which they had been guests; and once or twice they seemed grave amidst the noise and confusion, as they recalled some incident connected with those bygone years, the principal actors in which now slept quietly in the village churchyard; and again by the peals of laughter that at times convulsed them, we knew that the subject had changed from grave to gay; and, turning to Bridget, I whispered that I would rather listen to these old men's tales than join my sister and cousins in the dance, where they now footed away merrily.

As we drew near the group of respectable-looking men, many of whom seemed to be tradesmen and mechanics in the neighbourhood, the smith struck the table a few raps with a hammer to command silence, which being enforced, he rose up and proposed that the health of the newly-married pair should be given. The speech he made was short, but I can remember it was pithy; and one sentence of it has never passed away from my recollection. In pleading that he was a plain man, and unaccustomed to public speaking, he turned slyly round to a group of young maidens, who, gathered together, were whispering and laughing, not

unwilling to attract the attention of some half-dozen young men, who stood near, and said, he "would refer to thae lasses, if they didna whiles like plain things best; for wha' o' you," he added, "wadna rather ha'e a plain gowd ring than the brawest ye could get set wi' jewels?" This joke was received with loud applause and hearty guffaws, especially from the male part of the audience, some of them calling out, "Weel dune, smith! Oh! but you're a fine speaker!"

The toast of the evening having been drunk, dancing was resumed brisker than ever, and the old men returned to the conversation which the speech had interrupted. Joseph Armstrong, the mason, was the first to speak, as, turning to the smith, he inquired—

"If he minded the braw blude-horse that the maister"—then seeing me, he added, "Miss Rose's father there—ance had, that he bought at a Skirlin' fair, frae Durward, the horse-couper. They ca'd him Trump, if I mind right?"

"Atweel I do that," was the reply; "for mony's the time I ha'e shod him. He was a prime ane; an' if it hadna' been for a weakness in the far hind-leg, there wasna' his marrow in the country."

"Weel," resumed the first speaker, "do ye mind, then, o' Peg Hislop's daughter bein' married to the carter? An' sic a wedding as we had!"

"Tell us about it, Joseph," said one of the party, "for I ha'e heard you wasna the soberest amang them that nicht."

"Hout, tout, Tam!" exclaimed Joseph, "ye shouldna rake up thae auld stories against ane. Weel, I'm glad times are changed for the better, there's no' the half o' the drinkin' noo that was then. At that weddin', after payin' a' the expenses, there was only a crown ower for the young gudewife."

"But what were ye gaun to tell us about Trump?" inquired the smith.

"Oh!" answered his friend, "I was mindin' the trick the maister played Dick Torrance. Dick, puir chiel (he's in his grave noo) was aye an empty braggin' kind o' lad, though no an ill cr'ater in the main. Weel, he asked the len' o' Trump, to ride the broose, sayin' he wad let us a' see how he wad beat. Accordingly, Dick got him, but a' the whippin' an' spurrin' wadna gar him gang a fit afore Rab Taylor's horse. Ye maun ken, that in the cavalry, the maister was ane o' the rear rank; sae the beast, as he had been trained, keepit aye close to the heels o' his neighbour. It was ower a saft moorland road they had to ride; an' when they got to the bride's house, he was sae bespattered wi' dirt—his very hair was like a divot; an' the first thing they did was to take an' scrape him. Hech, how!" continued

the man; "I mind that as weel as if it had only happened yesterday, an' I dare say it's twenty years sin' syne. I can tell ye, Torrance bragged nae mair that nicht, an' never tried to ride another broose."

"Eh, but that was like some o' the maister's jokes!" said another, "for he couldna but ken what the horse wad do."

"Ay, fine he kenn'd that," replied Will, "for he said to me" (I was building the new shed for him at the time) "Dick 'll no brag ony the morn, Will."

Here an old man with a laugh broke in: "I can tell ye, that same beast ance ga'e me a braw red face amang the gentry. He had a stiff head on him. I asked the len' o' him too," he continued, "but no to ride a broose like Dick. I only wanted him to bring ower some woo' frae Hartup for my wife to spin. An' as the maister at that time was laid up wi' an ill cauld—ye mind a'e year he was ill, Joseph?"

"Ay, it was the year o' the ill har'st; I'll no sune forget it," said Joseph.

"Weel, to gang on wi' my story, though," continued the first speaker; "but I dinna mind where I was."

"Ye were wantin' the len' o' the horse," exclaimed one.

"The maister had a bad cauld," cried another.

"Oh! ay, lads," answered the old man; "I ken noo.

I got the beast for a word, an' he did fine until we drew near the town, when, as ill luck wad ha'e it, the cavalry horn sounded, an' aff he flew like a bird wi' me an' the woo' an' a' on his back, nor did he ever stop till he was in his auld place in the ranks. Eh! how the gentlemen did laugh, for a heap o' them kenn'd me, an' on a' hands I heard, "Weel dune, Adam; we look business-like;" or "Ye'll ha'e to quit the woo' trade when ye come to fecht, Adam." I was sair affronted, an' wished the grund wad open an' swallow me up, woo' an' a'."

Then another person asked if they remembered Peg Hislop's cuddie, as they had been speaking before about Peg.

"A-weel-a-wat I do," said a friend, "an' muckle she thought o't; 'deed we a' wondered if Peg was as honest as she should be, for let times be ever sae bad the cuddie never wanted its meat."

"When the minister cam' first among us," the man went on to say, "an' he wasna as ye may think very weel acquainted wi' our ways, he met Peg a'e day, and asked if they were a' weel at hame. 'A' but Davie,' she said; (now the minister didna ken wha Davie was, but took it to be, as was natural to suppose, for her man); sae he tel'd her he wad come and see him sune. He couldna win that length, however, at the time, but meeting Peg



again a while after, he said that though he hadna been able to get to see Davie as he ettled, he had prayed for him in the kirk !”

“ ‘ Preserve us a’ ,’ cried Peg in amazement, ‘ did ye pray for the cuddie, sir ? I thocht ye kent Davie was the cuddie !”

“ Ay ! Peg was a queer ane,” was the remark, “ an’ thocht a hantle mair o’ her cuddie than o’ her man, the puir feckless body that he was.”

Listening to these and similar stories, the time passed quickly away, when again a rap upon the table announced to the dancers that another speech was to be made. After which one of the company was asked to sing a simple ditty known as “ his song,” and to this the old man complied after a little pressing, many of the audience joining in the chorus, and beating time with their feet. The song, which I never heard but that once, I will give verbatim :

“ I was young and hearty,  
I was young and gay,  
I was young and hearty  
Mony a lang day.

“ Sair failed, hinney,  
Sair failed noo.  
Sair failed, hinney,  
Sin’ I kenn’d you !

"When I was young and hearty  
I could jump a dyke,  
Now at five-and-sixty  
I canna do the like.

"Sair failed, hinney, etc.

"Then said the auld man  
To the aik tree,  
Sair failed am I  
Sin' I kenn'd thee.

"Sair failed, hinney, etc."

After this song was sung and applauded, Betty Deans followed with, "There's nae luck about the hoose," and then the schoolmaster, being impatient to mix amongst the lasses, called aloud to the blind fiddler in the loft to strike up "Strowan Robertson's rant," and approaching the best-maid, with one of his grandest bows, asked if she would be his partner in the reel.

"Jeemes, Jeemes," cried his prim maiden sister from the seat she occupied amongst the elderly women who sat enjoying a gossip while they sipped their glass of punch, "It's no' for a man come to your time o' life to be sae fulish."

"To *my* time o' life ? atweel ! Nell !" was the indignant reply ; "I'm no sae auld as *you* by a gude wheen years, an' just look at hame, lass, an' dinna encourage widowers

about the house!" To which taunt the laugh being turned against her, Nell only answered by tossing her head.

The schoolmaster, who prided himself on his dancing powers, did the "double and treble shuffle," with the "heel and toe," and sundry other steps, much to his own satisfaction and the entertainment of some dirty children who stood stretching their necks in at the half-open door, elbowing one another as they exclaimed with delight, "See to the maister, Jock, eh! how weel he can dance," or "Isna the maister a grand dancer, Adie, he'll surely no gi'e's ony palmies the morn, when he's in sic a gude key the nicht;" while the "maister," quite pleased with himself and his performance, set to his blooming partner, and she set to him, holding her dress on each side between her finger and her thumb, and then, as the music changed, and time became quicker, off they flew round the reel, he raising his hands above his heads, snapping his fingers, and "*whooping*" occasionally to keep up the spirit of the dance.

Just then, a merry youth approached Nell, where she still sat declaiming against her brother, and after sundry tuggings and pullings brought her upon the floor, but when about to begin the dance he suddenly turned round and gave her a hearty kiss, for which he was rewarded by a blow upon the cheek. This last scene showed us that it was time to leave the company, for

mirth was getting boisterous, and amidst the kicking and capering of iron-shod shoes upon the earthen floor the noise had become intolerable, and Bridget exclaimed, as we took our seats in the cart, "I think ye've had eneuch o' a penny weddin'."





## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SUPERSTITIONS OF OUR VILLAGE.

“ Each glen was sought for tales of old,  
Of luckless love of warrior bold,  
Of sheeted ghost that had reveal’d  
Dark deeds of guilt from man conceal’d,  
Of boding dreams, of wandering sprite,  
Of dead-lights glimmering through the night.”

Hogg.

**I**N the spells and charms resorted to upon Hallow-  
e’en we obtain a glimpse of some of the more  
pleasing forms of Scottish superstition ; while the  
darker phase of it may be seen in the belief of ghosts  
and wraiths, including, above all, the faith in witchcraft,  
giving rise to deeds of ignorance and cruelty which have  
blotted the pages of our country’s history.

Nevertheless, we must admit that where a people had

few sources of knowledge and still fewer of refined enjoyment, there flowed from that very faith in the unseen, an influence at once elevating and solemnising, because speaking in a distinct tone of an invisible world ; better the earnest cry for protection from spirits of evil addressed by the fearful timid heart to the Omnipotent one, than the stolid indifference of the infidel. Better the terror of visionary forms and the dread of unearthly voices, when these, stronger than the arm of the law, proved a hinderance to crime, than the coarse and sluggish apathy, over which the imaginative faculty has no control, either to deter from deeds of vice, or inspire to acts of nobility and virtue.

The wild hills and lonely vales of our country formed in bygone days a fit rendezvous for all mysterious powers of darkness, where, the world in a measure shut out, the people lived in retirement, reciting to each other plaintive melodies or mournful ditties, varied with tales of dread and wonder, of love and war.

This poetic and traditionary education must have had a strange power over minds subjected from childhood to its influence. Can we wonder, then, that such often diverged into the gloomy and fanatical, finding a sympathy with those objects of terror and dread that their imaginations conjured up. Fairies, Brownies,

Kelpies, Ghosts, and Wraiths, were amongst the common forms of the spirit world; but of these, the Fairies or Elves seem to have been the greatest favourites with our race, who termed them Good Neighbours, Men of Peace, etc. And yet those Good Neighbours were not always free from a mixture of fiendish malignity, shown in their love for kidnapping children; nay, occasionally spiriting away youths and maidens to the "Joyless bowers of Fairyland." Being compelled by the master fiend to pay "kain"—*i.e.*, to yield up one of their number to his service—they chose rather to procure a member of the human family for this sacrifice. Their land was situate somewhere under-ground, and there the King and Queen held their court and maintained regal sway, like our earthly potentates; attended by

"Hop, and Mop, and Drop, so clear,  
Fip, and Trip, and Skip, that were  
To Mab, their mighty Sovereign dear,  
All special maids of honour."

With

"Fib, and Tip, and Pink, and Pin,  
Trick, and Twick, and Gill, and Gin,  
Tit, and Pit, and Wap, and Win—  
The train that wait upon her."

The fairies are described as bearing a beautiful minia-

ture resemblance to the human race; and their dress, generally of dazzling emerald-green, was rich beyond conception. When flitting in gay procession over the verdant glades, or through the woods of earth, they rode upon milk-white steeds, with silver bells hanging from the bridle-reins, and kept time to music more melodious than were the strains of Orpheus. At such times, mortals cared not for encountering those Elfin bands, and shunned the spots they were known to frequent.

“Up the airy mountain,  
Down the rushy glen,  
We daren't go a hunting,  
For fear of little men—  
Wee folk, good folk,  
Trooping all together;  
Green jacket, red cap,  
And white owl's feather.”

Neither did any one deem it wise to thwart or provoke them, because, in some way or other, the little spirits would seek revenge.

“By the craggy hill-side,  
Through the mosses bare,  
They have planted thorn-trees  
For pleasure, here and there.  
Is any man so daring  
As dig up one in spite?”



He shall find the thornies  
In his bed at night."

In their palaces all was magnificence and splendour, though this was only shadowy; for, upon nearer inspection, their gorgeous halls became damp, dark caverns, and their treasures of gold and silver vanished.

The fairies were supposed to be lovers of cleanliness and order, rewarding the mortal who excelled in these qualities with some proof of their favour.

"If ye will with Mab find grace,  
Set each platter in its place,  
Rake the fire up, and get  
Water in, ere sun be set.  
Wash your pails, and cleanse your dairies.  
Sluts are loathsome to the fairies.  
Sweep your house. Who doth not so,  
Mab will pinch her by the toe."

Next in order were Brownies, who, though occasionally spiteful, were, upon the whole, if humoured, not only friendly, but very helpful to man.

The Brownie was a sort of domestic fairy, without whose countenance and assistance it was at one time supposed no farm-house could prosper. He was often represented as a strong-built, dwarfish spirit, with a grey jacket and long-pointed red cap; he sought no

wages for the menial work he performed, and little food sufficed him; but he was easily offended; and if old clothes were offered to him, he generally took it as a dismissal, and never more returned to the household, who sorely missed his willing services.

In Hogg's beautiful tale of the "Brownie of Bodsbeck," this superstition was made available for the protection of one suffering for the cause of Christ, who, adopting the dress and habits of this spirit, was rewarded with reverence, and his wants liberally supplied.

The wandering poet Nicolson has likewise immortalised those useful drudges in his wild and exquisitely beautiful ballad of Aiken Drum, the Brownie of Blednoch, of which some verses may be quoted.

He begins by describing the first appearance of this spirit in the house of a moorland farmer.

"There cam' a strange wight to our town en',  
An' the fient a body did him ken;  
He tirl'd nae lang, but glided ben  
Wi' a dreary, dreary hum.

"His face did glow like the glow o' the west,  
When the drumlie cloud has it half ower-cast;  
Or the struggling moon, when she's sair distrest.  
Oh! sirs, it was Aiken Drum.

"I trow the bauldest stood a back,  
Wi' a gape an' a glower, till their lugs did crack,

As the shapeless phantom mumblin' spak',  
'Ha'e ye wark for Aiken Drum ?'

" His matted head on his breast did rest ;  
A lang blue beard wandered down like a vest ;  
But the glare o' his e'e hath nae bard exprest,  
Nor the schemes o' Aiken Drum.

" Roun' his hairy form there was naething seen  
But a philibeg o' the rushes green ;  
An' his knotted knees played aye knoit between—  
What a sight was Aiken Drum !

" ' I lived in a land where we saw nae sky,  
I dwalt in a spot where nae burn ran by ;  
But I'll dwell now wi' you, if ye like to try  
An' gi'e wark to Aiken Drum.

" ' I'll shiel a' your sheep in the mornin' sune,  
I'll bury your trap by the light o' the moon,  
An' ba' the bairns wi' an unkenn'd tune,  
If ye'll keep puir Aiken Drum.

" ' I'll loup the linn when ye canna wade,  
I'll kirn the kirn, an' I'll turn the bread,  
An' the wildest fillie that e'er saw ride  
I'll tame't, quoth Aiken Drum.

" ' To wear the tod frae the flock on the fell,  
To gather the dew frae the heather-bell,  
An' to look at my face in your clear, crystal well,  
Might gi'e pleasure to Aiken Drum.

“ ‘ I’ll seek nae goods, gear, money nor merk,  
I use nae bedding, shoon, nor sark,  
But a cogfu’ o’ brose ‘tween the light and the dark  
Is the wage o’ Aiken Drum.’

“ Roun’ a’ that side what work was dune  
By the streamers’ gleam, or the glare o’ the moon !  
A word an’ a wish, an’ the brownie cam’ sune,  
Sae helpfu’ was Aiken Drum.

“ But he slade aye awa’ ere the sun was up,  
He ne’er could look straught on Macmillan’s cup ;  
They watched, but nane saw him his brose e’er sup,  
Nor a spoon sought Aiken Drum.”

However, that strange, unearthly servant being offended by a “freak” of a “new-made wife,” who offered him some cast-off clothing of her husband’s, he took his departure from the house that sheltered him, and was never more seen, though “sair missed was Aiken Drum.”

The water-kelpie, on the other hand, seems to have been a cruel, cunning spirit, springing out from behind some sedgy bank upon the unwary passer-by, whom it had drawn to the river’s brink by imitating the cry of a child in distress ; and then strangling his unfortunate victim without mercy or remorse. Or, again, in human shape, winning the love of some unsuspecting maiden, whom he afterwards lured to destruction.

"The kelpie dwells in a wondrous hall  
Beneath the shimmering stream,  
His song is the song of the waterfall,  
And his light its rainbow gleam

*Chorus.*

"The rowans stoop, and the long ferns droop  
Their feathery heads in the spray,  
Where the foam-flakes are falling, falling, falling, falling,  
Falling for ever and aye.

"The fair maid came through the greenwood shade  
To the dark pool's quivering brim,  
When the craigs above were with sunset red,  
But the forests depths were dim.  
The moonbeams pale, through the arching stream  
In the deep cave dream'ly play ;  
There the kelpie, for love of her golden hair,  
The maid to his home bore away.  
The rowans stoop, etc.

"The calm stars gaze on the troubled wave,  
From the midnight heaven above,  
But they see not there in her dwelling dim,  
The face of the maid they love.  
And the larches weep, and the birches steep  
Their tresses long in the spray,  
Where the foam-flakes are falling, falling, falling, falling,  
Falling for ever and aye.

*Chorus.*

"The rowans stoop, and the long ferns droop  
Their feathery heads in the spray,

Where the foam-flakes are falling, falling, falling, falling,  
Falling for ever and aye."

Yet the kelpie, when fairly overpowered, could be made serviceable to man, and on more than one almost inaccessible height in Scotland, ruins are still shown as the remains of buildings, the stones of which were carried thither by an unfortunate kelpie reduced to a state of slavery; a cow's branks fastened upon its head, served for a bridle, and often might its mournful song be heard—

"Sair back and sair banes  
Liftin' up the laird's stanes."

Next may be mentioned the ghost who revisited the earth, where, as mortal, it had acted a part either as oppressor or oppressed, and whose crimes or misfortunes kept it from quietly remaining in its grave, till laid to rest, by the deed of guilt being revealed and revenged, or by the prayers of some godly divine.

I have before me a curious little book, giving an account of several conferences and meetings that passed betwixt the Rev. Mr Ogilvie, late minister of the Gospel, Innerwick, in East Lothian, and the ghost of Mr Maxwell, late Laird Pool, as it was found in Mr Ogilvie's closet after his death. The pamphlet is interesting, showing the sort of literature that was

carried by pedlars into all parts of Scotland in those old times.

Wraiths seem to have been akin to ghosts, and often appeared in his own likeness to the person thus warned of approaching death; again, as John Hay, in Hogg's *Tales*, described them, "They were sometimes like a light—sometimes like a winding-sheet—sometimes like the body that's to die gane mad—and sometimes like a coffin made o' moonlight."

But worst of all superstitions, was the belief in witchcraft over which Europe brooded for two centuries and a half, and from whence flowed such a deluge of blood, as even the perusal of it makes us blush for mankind.

Every calamity befalling nations, or individuals, was attributed to this cause; if a storm arose at sea or by land; if a tempest of thunder and lightning swept over the plains; if crops were blighted and cattle injured; if accidents occurred endangering life; if houses were burned or ships wrecked: these were not considered the visitations of Providence, but the work of some one or more of those accursed beings, who having entered into covenant with the enemy of mankind, received in return for the ruin of their souls, power to molest or injure their fellows. There was a general convocation of demons and witches supposed to be held at intervals, of which the one on Hallowe'en was the most important, and

hither, at the place appointed by the master fiend, flocked the whole satanic agency, some crossing the sea on shells, and others flying through the air on broomsticks, or as the witch of Fife expresses it—

“ Some horses were of the brume-cow fremit,  
And some of the green bay tree.”

At these gatherings a personal examination was made to see whether all had the devil's mark, and to listen to an account of their several doings.

After this the time was spent in dancing, to beautiful but unearthly music, the performance of one of the company.

“ He set ane reed-pipe till his mou',  
And he play it sae bonnily,  
Till the grey curlew and the black cock flew,  
To listen to his melody.”

An old writer, speaking of the powers of witches, gives them twelve ways of working, of which three may be quoted; some he says, “by way of emissary, sending out their imps or familiars to cross the way, jostle, affront, flash in the face, bark, howl, bite, scratch, or otherwise infest. Some by inspecting, looking on, or to glare or peep at, with an envious or evil eye; some by a hollow muttering, or mumbling;” and the following



may serve as a specimen of the mystic rhymes used on occasions where the mischief was done by muttering—

“ Hocus Pocus, l’agreements,  
Calibastic in Selentis,  
Bony, tony, Bantum Scrantum,  
Veno, Beno, et non quantum,  
Mixum gatherup, preste brew it,  
Molly Penny nunay quet.”

Then to counteract the baneful effects of those malignant beings, or to rid themselves of their dominion, spells and charms in return were resorted to, such as planting a *bourt* tree, or more frequently still, a mountain-ash near every dwelling, a branch of the latter being most efficacious when tied with red thread, hence the phrase—

“ Rowan tree and red thread,  
Put the witches to their speed.”

A horse-shoe nailed above the door was another charm, not to mention the herb drinks, salves, and simples too numerous to relate; also the marking of the person supposed to be the witch with the sign of the cross on the brow, called “scoring abune the breath,” at the same time repeating the words, “Gude preserve us frae a’ skaith.”

Elspeth Green was the last reputed witch in our

neighbourhood, and the sad story of her death, related to me by Bridget, made a deep impression on my childhood. By all accounts, a more inoffensive old woman than Elspeth could not anywhere be found, or one, it might have been supposed, less likely to obtain that unenviable notoriety. But superstition, in selecting its victims, did not always fix upon spiteful, ignorant, wrinkled beldams; sometimes these were young and beautiful, and sometimes they were benefactors to their kind, skilled in healing, and possessed of more than ordinary wisdom and sagacity.

If poverty had any share in connecting Elspeth's name with this crime, then she was indeed a likely subject to be selected; and yet, if she was poor, she was also proud and independent, hiding her sufferings from whatever cause they proceeded, locked up in her own breast, and never murmur or complaint was dropped by her into the ears of her fellow-creatures. By dint of unwearied spinning and knitting, in both of which she was most expert, and consequently well employed by the better class of peasants and labourers around, she contrived to keep a house above her head, and maintain a grandchild, the only creature she knew of in the world, with whom she could claim kindred.

The little Alice formed a striking contrast to the old woman by whose side she gambolled; long elfin locks,

black as the wing of the raven, hung over her shoulders, and almost hid the large hazel eyes that shone full of life and gladness, while her step was light and graceful as that of the young fawn upon the mountain. Elspeth's hair was scant and white, and her figure bent with age and sorrow, for no small share of the doom pronounced upon fallen man had mingled in her life's cup, and the last grief had been the bitterest of all. Ever since the day when her youngest child, sole survivor of her once numerous family, had been beguiled from her home by the artful English stranger, Elspeth had never felt able to hold up her head amongst her poor but honest neighbours; and though the unhappy girl had returned and died a penitent in her arms, leaving her infant to her care, still she could not be comforted, for the good name of her family had been dishonoured.

"Drowning 's ower gude for the auld witch!" exclaimed a young man, with an oath, to some companions who stood lingering around the smithy door one lovely summer evening.

"It's a pity that they dinna burn the dealers in the black airt noo as they did langsyne," answered a friend; "and Rab, ye wad ha'e bought a tar-barrel for a blaze."

"That I wad wi' a' my heart," replied Rab, while he struck a light with a flint to kindle his pipe, adding,

"there's a wheen lying' in the auld smearin'-house ; Thae wad do grand. Eh, how the lunt wad gang up !"

"But how do ye ken," asked a mild-looking youth, who had been listening, without before joining in the conversation, "that Elspeth is a witch ? I dinna believe she is ane, or that there are ony sic folk in the warld."

"Ye dinna believe," replied Rab, contemptuously : "then ye ha'ena read your Bible, that's a' I've to say ; wasna there the auld witch o' Endor that Saul consulted, an' mony mair forby ; an' didna the minister tell us ance out o' the pulpit that 'a witch was no' to be suffered to live,'—and that was to be found, if I dinna forget, in Deuteronomy ?"

"Weel, that may be true," persisted Neddy, "an' yet how are ye to prove Elspeth's ane ? My mother says there's no a cannier body in a' this part, and it's a shame o' folk to even her to sic a thing."

"I aye thocht ye had nae pluck, Neddy," said the first speaker. "Man, ye wad be frichted for your ain shadow."

"I dinna ken wha's showin' less pluck the noo, or being maist easy frichted," was the young man's reply ; "but ye ha'ena tell't me yet the grun's ye ha'e for supposin' that Elspeth is what ye ca' her."

"Grun's !" exclaimed a number of voices at once, "we can gi'e ye plenty."

"Did she no gar Bell Masterton's bairn dwine away till it died?" cried one.

"Did she no gar the farmer o' Ryethorn lose his gude horse by makin' it fa' into the ditch a'e nicht?" said another; while a third added—

"And nae farer gane than yesterday, she looked wi' an evil e'e on the gudewife o' Muirburn's cow, an' the smith had to be sent for to bleed it."

"But how can ye prove that the puir body did a' this mischief? Bell Masterton's bairn died o' a wasting o' the lungs; the horse at Ryethorn fell into the ditch, for the night was dark as pitch; an' as for the coo, I ken it ate the clover wi' the dew on't, an' that hurt it."

"There's nae use arguing the matter wi' ye, Neddy," rejoined Rab, "for everybody kens Elspeth's a witch; an' as for the coo, wha, I wonder, gar'd it eat the dewy clover but she? Johnnie Grumlie, the packman, was there at the time she was passing the house, an' the gudewife just remarked, 'Preserve us a', if there is na that woman gaun by our door! I doubt some mischances will follow.'"

"An' didna Lucky Ellshender watch her a'e day," cried another; "and just as she cam' near a silly foal o' the landlord's, she muttered a spell, an' the beast has never looked ower its shouther since. She had ta'en her ban off it, an' it began to thrive."

"That was aye a'e gude thing she did, then," said Neddy, "and if she was as ill as ye ca' her, she wad never do a turn to serve onybody."

"Ay, but for a'e gude turn, she's dune a hunder ill," said a hard-countenanced youth—the best harrier of birds' nests, and most determined cock-fighter about the place. "An' now, lads," he added "dinna let us lose time clavering here, for afore I sleep the nicht, Elspeth shall get her deserts. Never mind Neddy, he's nae spirit in him."

"And I'll neither be airt nor pairt in sic a wark," answered Neddy, as he left the band, who now set off with haste in the direction of the old woman's solitary cottage.

Elspeth, upon that evening, sat by her door, distaff in hand, and drawing out the fine lint thread by the light of the setting sun, whose beams fell upon the head of little Alice as she reclined upon the ground at her feet, stringing into a wreath the wild flowers she had just been gathering from the dewy grass.

"A braw gentleman met me the day, granny," said the child, "an' tell'd me I was raal bonny, for my e'en sparket like lammer beads. What like is a lammer bead?" she inquired, looking up into the old woman's face; "I wish ye wad get me some."

"Ye shouldna mind sic nonsense, bairn," replied her

grandmother, sadly; "neither should ye believe what folk say when they ca' ye bonny, for they dinna mean it; an' though ye were sae, it's better to be good, for beauty is but skin deep."

"Oh! but I mean to be baith," said Alice. "It's nice to be bonny," she added, at the same time placing the newly-finished wreath upon her head, "an' ha'e everybody praising ye and liking ye."

"Oh! Alice, dinna count aught on a fair skin or handsome features," cried Elspeth, sadly; "they're fatal gifts for a puir man's bairn, an' was the ruin o' your mother;" then, starting up as if to get rid of some thought that grieved her, she rose from her seat by the door, and busied herself with household matters, leaving Alice still wreathing her flowers into gay garlands, and singing merrily a childish song.

After some time, her grandmother called the child to come and eat her supper before going to bed, "for see, bairn," she said, pointing to a large company of rooks flying through the sky overhead, "the craws are a' gaun hame to their nests to be ready for their mornin's wark, an' it's time little folks were away to their rest too."

Alice looked up as her grandmother spoke, and clapping her hands, called out merrily, "Hurrah, hurrah! a weddin' o' craws, a weddin' o' craws;" for such do children fancy that a quantity of these birds

in the sky signifies. Then, following the old woman into the house, she began to eat with relish the piece of hard barley bannock taken from the cupboard, saying at the same time, "Are ye no' for ony supper yersel', granny?"

"The auld dinna need meat like the young an' growin'," was the answer.

Poor Elspeth was hungry, for she had scarcely tasted food that day; but, as the baunock was the last bread in the house, and not knowing when or where she would get more, she kept it for her grandchild, thankful that she could endure without murmuring, since Alice did not want.

Ere the plain meal was ended, the young men reached the cottage, and, without warning, unceremoniously lifted the latch, and entered the apartment where Elspeth and Alice were seated.

"What seek ye here, lads?" inquired the old woman, looking at them with surprise and alarm, while Alice screamed and rushed behind her for protection.

"We seek ye, to score ye aboon the breath, an' stop your cursed pranks, ye auld witch," cried the cock-fighting youth; and so saying, he rushed upon Elspeth, followed by the others, and in spite of her screams for pity, prepared to execute their inhuman purpose.

"I swear by a' that's sacred," she exclaimed, "I'm



innocent as the unborn bairn ; oh, lads, as ye hope for mercy at the judgment-day, spare me."

"Gag her mouth," said one, "or else she'll bring auld Nick hissel' on us."

"Had ye ony pity on Bell Masterton's wean ?" asked another.

"God help me, then !" was all that the poor woman could say in reply to these accusations, for she read in their eyes no compassion, and she felt that it would be in vain to try and defend herself.

A clasp-knife was next produced, and amidst threats and curses, the deed of ignorance and cruelty was soon accomplished, by two deep scars being made upon the brow of their victim, after which, the wicked band left the cottage.

Alice had swooned with fear, and upon recovering some time after, found her grandmother lying upon the floor.

"Granny," screamed the child, almost fiercely, "speak to me, for I'm feared ;" at the same time lifting her hand, which she dropped immediately, it seemed so stiff and cold ; then getting alarmed at the continued silence of her grandmother, she rushed from the cottage, and flew across the field to the house of a neighbour to tell her tale of sorrow.

Good Mrs Jones was preparing for bed, where all her

family already were, when Alice's quick knock brought her in haste to the door.

"What do ye want, bairn?" she asked hurriedly, seeing the child's startled look and tear-stained face; "has ony harm come ower your granny?"

Alice tried to give an account of what had just passed, but she could scarcely speak for sobs, and her limbs trembled violently.

"Puir bairn," said the kind woman, "I will gang back wi' ye an' see if I canna get your granny to speak; she will likely ha'e fainted wi' fear."

And so, hastily putting on her dress again, Mrs Jones followed Alice to the cottage where Elspeth still lay as when her grandchild had left her.

"She is deid," exclaimed Mrs Jones with a voice of horror, as she looked into the old woman's face. "Puir body," she added mournfully, "ye ha'e met wi' a sair death."

"Deid!" cried Alice, sobbing violently, and clinging to Mrs Jones, "an' will she never, never speak to me again; an' will they bury her in the green out o' sight, just as they did wee Jeanie Dawson? Oh, Mrs Jones, I wish I could dee too, for I canna live ahint granny!"

"Puir lambie," said the kind-hearted woman, whose tears now flowed in sympathy with those of the bereaved child, "God help ye; but, oh, thae wicked



men!" she exclaimed angrily, "what ha'e they no' to answer for, that ha'e killed that auld woman, an' left the bairn without a protector in this cauld warld."

It was even so, for fear and the shame of being suspected of such a crime, combined with the hard usage she had received, had broken Elspeth's heart. Poor Alice must have been left upon the bounty of strangers, but the motherly heart of good Mrs Jones pitied the forlorn state of the desolate little one, and taking her home, she reared her with her own family; and though she had no temporal wealth to bequeath to the orphan, she could teach her to seek what was far better, even an inheritance beyond the skies, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away" like the transitory things of earth.





## CHAPTER X.

### THE KIRN.

"The nicht's the kirn, gae haste ye, lass,  
To scour the tins and clear the brass ;  
Then place the chairs against the wa',  
(They'll nearly haud the strangers a').  
Syne up the burn to Geordie Riddle,  
An' bid him no' forget his fiddle ;  
Ye'd better tell the Wabster body  
To come and help to brew the toddy.  
He'll drink it tae, if I'm no wrang,  
But then he jokes and sings his sang,  
Which helps to gar the folk be cheerie,  
It wadna dae to ha'e them wearie.  
Hech ! but Nan Goddard will be braw,  
Wi' gorlin-hair,\* an' flowers an' a'.

\* *Gorlin-hair*—Swan's down, or feathery ruff.

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Sae, see ye don your camlet fine,  
An' gar your silver buckles shine,  
Then tie your snood wi' ribbons blue,  
For Jamie will be here, I trow."

ANON.



**A** GREAT event every year in our home was the one at the close of harvest, termed "The Kirn." "The kirn," though often applied to the last handful of corn cut down in the field, is also the name given to the feast of harvest-home, and this is celebrated, either when the grain has all been cut, or after it has been fairly housed in the yard, and made secure against wind and rain.

One of these kirn evenings in particular I well remember; the weather was becoming cold, with slight frosts during the night, but the trees still wore their bright autumnal tints, and the mignonette and carnation lingered in the garden beds. We played amongst the new stacks of the golden grain in the barn-yard, watching the teams approach, nodding from side to side beneath their load of sheaves; while the full moon in the dark blue sky was shedding a silvery shimmer of light over hill and plain, making the dim and distant pine-wood appear dreamy and weird-like.

As the last cartful of grain reached the gate, my father, who superintended his workers, called us to leave our

sport, and bid the servants prepare supper; and we, proud of our message, strove who would soonest reach the house to deliver it.

Soon all was bustle in the kitchen; some brought wooden deals which they supported upon tressels to serve the purpose of seats; others covered the table which extended the length of the apartment, with abundance of wheat, and barley-bread, oat-cakes, mutton, and beef-hams, cheese, black-puddings, etc.; while at the upper and lower end were two large earthenware plates, one filled with curds and cream, the other, containing milk half-churned, whence it is supposed this feast receives its name "kirn."

In the course of an hour or two a crowd of healthy-looking peasants took their seats around the homely board. The girls, who were within reach of their homes, had arranged themselves hastily in clean "short-gowns," not omitting to place in their neatly smoothed hair the sprig of blue corn-flower, or crimson poppy; while the lads, having washed their faces, appeared smart in the light moleskin jackets, donned for the occasion; neither had the matrons of the party forgotten to exchange the sun-cap and petticoat for the plain white mutch and drugget gown; but their sober-looking husbands, who had been busy to the last minute upon the farm, had not found leisure to make any preparation for

this important meal. Amongst the company were a few genuine sons of Erin, in the form of Irish reapers, of whose origin there could be no mistake, for like the Jews they carry the marks of their race in their peculiar physiognomy ; with them life is in a great measure a farce, and as they know not what may be on the morrow, they leave it to take care of itself, and think only of to-day, resolved to get as much fun out of it as possible ; and so they sat amidst the shrewd, sagacious-looking Scots, in their tattered garments and carelessly-knotted kerchiefs, quite unconscious of the inferiority of their appearance, joking and laughing as only Irishmen can do.


Unfortunately for our *douce* friend, Adam Somerville, he had got into too close proximity with one of these witty, clever, "Tipperary boys," named Barney O'Fogerty, who took the opportunity of pouring into the ears of the sedate Scotsman all manner of incomprehensible tales about the beauties and wonders of his "own native isle." He told of having one evening planted a walking-stick on the ground, and the next morning it was hid by the number of "purty" flowers that had sprung up around it—of the thorn bushes growing apples and pears as big as "them plates afore them"—of "Judy O'Rafferty's" *hins*, which laid eggs that had four yolks," etc.

"Now, that beats a'," exclaimed Adam at last, heartily

sick of his volatile neighbour; adding "oh, man, Barney, if I couldna speak without telling lies, I wadna open my mouth;" to which compliment the Irishman only replied by shrugging his shoulders, muttering something about "ignorant crathers that won't hear a man speak sinse;" then, not a bit abashed, began talking to his next neighbour in the same strain.

Near Adam and Barney were Elder Allan and Nelly Elliot, discoursing upon themes of a more serious nature: and beside them sat the little golden-haired Mary Neil, listening earnestly to subjects never mentioned in her wretched home; her deep, calm eyes the while noticing every change of expression in the countenances of the speakers. Poor Mary!—did "coming events cast their shadows before," impressing upon her young heart thoughts of the new life on which she was so soon to enter? Who can tell? for these things are among the mysterious workings of Him whose way is in the sea, and his path amidst deep waters; but certain it is, that when a few days later the child lay tossing in delirium, she spoke words she had heard that "kirk"-night, and, with them on her lips, went down into the dark valley of death.

Amidst the confusion of voices and clattering of plates and spoons, loud bursts of laughter occasionally arose, bearing testimony to the good humour of the





guests; whose beaming countenances, indeed, witnessed that all were bent upon enjoyment.

The provision was plentiful, and ample justice was done to it by the company, who soon left nothing but scraps and empty dishes.

The table being cleared, my father, accompanied by two of his neighbours, took his place at the head, and as the dangers of moderate drinking were not then realised, he, according to ancient custom, began to brew the punch, which was sent round the company, for though strictly temperate himself, he did not deny his guests the frugal use of liquor. Each, as he received his glass, rose, and bowing to the landlord said, "Your very gude health, maister, and mony mair kirns may ye see!" then turning to the company, "Gude health to ye, friends, an' may we ha'e mony like meetings;" or, "Here's wishin' you, maister, an' a' the company, very gude health!"

As the succeeding glass was handed round, various toasts were proposed, such as—

"Green hills and waters blue,

Grey plaids and tarry-woo."

"Honest men and bonny lasses."

"Health to the sick, honour to the brave,

Success to the lover, and freedom to the slave."

After, this, Jamie Brown being asked to sing, amused

us greatly by the pressing he required before he began ; he declared he had “nae v’ice,” that it was “nae use to ax me,” etc. ; at length he yielded to entreaty, and giving a loud hem as a signal for silence, tilted back his chair, poised upon its two hind legs, at the risk of losing his balance, rubbed his elbows, stroked down the few locks of grey hair upon his temples, looked first to the ground and then to the roof of the kitchen, then finished by striking up the favourite ballad of those days, entitled “The Lass o’ Glenshea.” As the young may wish to know the kind of poetry that the Scotch peasant then loved, and which had probably been written by some obscure individual in the neighbourhood, I will give the few verses of this song which I can remember.

The story is that of a gentleman, who, becoming enamoured of a plain country girl, asks her to be his wife. The rich lover begins by promising her all manner of fine things :

“ ‘ A carriage o’ pleasure ye shall ha’e for to ride in,  
And folk shall say ma’am when they speak unto thee,  
Servants ye shall ha’e for to do your biddin’,  
I’ll mak’ ye my leddy, the lass o’ Glenshea.’

“ ‘ Oh ! mock me nae mair wi’ your carriage to ride in,  
Or think that your grandeur I value a *flee*,  
I wad think myself happy in coatie o’ plaiden’,  
An innocent herd on the hills o’ Glenshea.’

“ ‘The lark may forget to rise in the mornin’,  
The spring may forget to revive on the lea,  
But never will I while my senses govern me,  
Forget to be kind to the lass o’ Glenshea.’

“ ‘Oh ! let me alane, for I’m feared I wad blunder,  
An’ set a’ the gentry a laughin’ at me,  
They are book-taught in manners, baith young and auld  
yonder,  
An’ we ken but little o’ that in Glenshea.’

“ ‘They wad say, Do ye see his brave Highland leddy,  
Put up for a show in a window sae hie ?  
’Twad set her far better a hamely spun plaidie,  
Then satins and silks on the lass o’ Glenshea.’

“ ‘Now years have gane by sin’ we buckled thegither,  
And seasons ha’e changed, but nae change is in me,  
An’ Jeanie’s aye gay as the summer’s fine weather,  
That mak’s a’ look glad on the hills o’ Glenshea.’”

Young Peggy Aitken then sung, by special request, the following homely words to an air which is one of the most popular amongst the poor in Scotland, entitled “Ower the hills and far awa’.”

“ Ower the hills and far awa,’  
A shealin’ stands in birken shaw,  
Where wee birds sing the lee-lang day,  
An’ gladsome lambkins blythely play.

Nae wealth is there to tempt the e'e,  
Nae pictured ha', nae tapestry ;  
But wild and fresh the breezes blaw,  
Amang the hills sae far awa'.

Ower the hills and far awa',  
Ower the hills and far awa',  
Ower the hills and far awa',  
A shealin' stands in birken shaw.

" 'Tis there he lives, my laddie true,  
Wi' tartan plaid an' bonnet blue.  
An' when he gangs to kirk or fair,  
There's nane wi' Donald can compare.  
He's young an' gallant, kind an' leal ;  
Wi' hand to help, wi' heart to feel ;  
While love lights up his sparkling e'e—  
That mak's him aye sae dear to me.

Ower the hills and far awa',  
Ower the hills and far awa',  
Ower the hills and far awa',  
There lives the lad that's best o' a'.

" My friends, they say that Donald's puir,  
An' bid me never mind him mair,  
But to their words I'll ne'er agree,  
For o' he's kind and dear to me !  
Auld Robin Glen, he counts his gear,  
An' thinks wi' it my price he'll speir ;  
But sune he'll ken, gin he should try,  
That gowd my heart can never buy.

Then ower the hills and far awa'  
I'll tak' my plaid and hie awa',  
For Donald waits me in the shaw  
That's ower the hills an' far awa'."

"Weel dune, Peggy!" exclaimed Wat, the weaver, who had been anxiously anticipating an invitation to sing; "and now, he added, "ye deserve a sang in return; sae, wi' the leave o' the company, I'll gi'e ane o' my ain making; an' if ye shouldna like it, ye'll aye gi'e me credit for ha'in' dune my best;" so saying, Wat struck up what he called "The New Plaid," which he sung to the air of "The Braes o' Mar:"

*THE NEW PLAID.*

" 'What did ye wi' the new plaid,  
The new plaid, the new plaid?  
What did ye wi' the new plaid,  
Your mother span at e'en, joe?'

" 'I gi'ed it to my soger braw  
That day before he gaed awa,  
To bield him frae the drifting snaw,  
Which blew around sae keen, O.'

" 'What did ye wi' the links o' gowd,  
The links o' gowd, the links o' gowd?

What did ye wi' the links o' gowd,  
That spanned your waist sae sma, joe !'

" ' The links o' gowd were far ower fine,  
They mocked me wi' their glittering shine ;  
Sae I gi'ed them to this lad o' mine,  
Afore he gaed awa', O. '

" ' Your soger will be false to thee,  
Sae let him gang, an' come with me,  
I'll cleed ye braw, as ye should be,  
Wi' silks an' satins fine, joe. '

" ' Ye needna think I'll gang wi' you,  
Or ever hope to gar me rue,  
By telling me he'll no be true—  
The bonnie lad o' mine, O. ' "

" Capital, Wat ! " cried many of the party, when the weaver had finished his song ; while my father laughingly said, " If you carry on at this rate, Wat, you will rival Tannahill soon. "

" ' Deed, maister, " answered Wat, slyly, " some folk dinna think me far ahint him already. "

This ditty brought the evening's proceedings to close, for just then Elder Allan, chancing to observe the hour upon the clock, exclaimed, " It's ten o'clock friends ; sae I'll be bidding you a' gude nicht, for it

against my creed to be muckle out o' my ain house after that time;" and so saying, he rose from the table, and taking his hat and staff, walked quietly away, followed by those of the guests who preferred their beds to a dance in the barn, whither the younger part of the company adjourned. There under the superintendence of Adam Somerville, they footed it merrily till dawn began to break.





## CHAPTER XL

### HALLOWE'EN.

"This is the nicht o' Hallowe'en,  
When elves and witches may be seen ;  
Some o' them black, and some o' them green,  
And some o' them like a kidney bean."

NURSERY SONG.

**T**HE festivities of Hallowe'en are doubtless a relic of Pagan times, for there is nothing in the observance of the following day of All Saints to have given rise to such remarkable doings as those which distinguish it.

Hallowe'en! How do those words bring back the memory of the time when we firmly believed that night to be sacred to the inhabitants of the unseen world, when fairies loved to hold their revels in some quiet sylvan dell, where they footed it lightly in the merry



dance before returning again to the land visited by  
"Bonny Kilmeny"—

". . . . . Where the cock never crew,  
Where the rain never fell, and the wind never blew—  
.  
.  
.  
A land of love, and a land of light,  
Without e'er sun, or moon, or night;"

and when other beings, less harmless than these Elfin folks, strayed abroad;—not only witches, who rode athwart the sky on broomsticks, or pressed our favourite cats into their service, but devils, and other mortal-hating spirits, walking to and fro upon their baneful errands.

The village fair in the beginning of October was the great source wherefrom we derived materials for keeping that night with advantage, as in it we supplied ourselves with a stock of apples and nuts, essential for the entertainment.

On one of those anniversaries, many years ago, after having surveyed the arrangements of the schoolroom, we stood around the blazing fire, occasionally pausing, as we chatted, to watch for the first sound which announced the approach of the friends who had been invited to spend the evening and share in our sports.

"Hush! I think they are coming now!" exclaimed

my sister. We all listened attentively, but nothing could be distinguished save the sighing of the wind amongst the leafless trees, or the rustle of a twig against the window panes.

"It is scarcely dark yet," exclaimed Cousin Agnes; "let us go and see if they are in the avenue."

"But the fairies!" I cried, shrinking back with alarm. "I dare not go for fear of them."

"Don't be foolish, child," answered one of the elder and more adventurous ones, "fairies are harmless beings, and love our race, don't you know that, you stupid? It is witches that you need fear, and I don't suppose they would approach such a party of us."

"If we keep together, then," said another timid little friend; "but mind, you big ones, you must not leave us alone."

To this the "big ones" agreed, not being over brave themselves, so we opened the door quietly, and, hand-in-hand, stood gazing into the deepening twilight. At last we gained courage to proceed, but nothing fearful met our view; only Robin passed us, riding leisurely upon one horse and leading the other to the watering trough, the clanking of the harness mingling with the merry tune he whistled as he jogged along. Next came Peggy the milkmaid, with the cows, which she drove before her to their stalls, stopping every now and then in her song to

hurry on some loitering one with "Get on, Bawsie," or "Prue, leddy! prue, leddy! come hame!" A few solitary ravens croaked above our heads as they winged their way across the darkening sky to join their brethren in the fir-wood, and the burn gushing past sounded cheerily, like the voice of a friend.

Soon a faint rumble of wheels was heard, which drew every moment nearer and nearer, and then came the hum of voices, growing more and more distinct, and ere a few minutes had elapsed we surrounded a party of young companions, helping them to get rid of their heavy cloaks and wrappings, and chafing their cold fingers in our glowing hands.

Margaret, our dear good cousin, looked beautiful that evening, as she bent her head till the brown curls, clustering around her neck, touched the little face of Charlie Grant, who poured all his tales of joy into her ears. Kind Margaret, she was almost grown into womanhood, while we were but children; yet, so loving, so gentle was her nature, that we treated her at all times as a playmate.

The recreations of the evening were begun by ducking for apples, and merry were the shouts of laughter as one after another got well drenched when stooping over the tub, endeavouring to seize with the mouth the floating fruit. It wriggled and rocked to and fro, eluding all

endeavours to secure the prize; little tenderness was shown to either age or sex in this diversion, tiny hands eagerly pushing the head of friend or companions down into the vessel, to prevent any chance of succeeding in the pursuit.

After the amusement was over, and we had all grown well soured, we proceeded blindfolded to the "kail yard" to pull the cabbage-stock, prophetic, from it being straight or crooked, little or big, of our future husbands and wives; the quantity of earth attached to the root foretold the amount of fortune, and the taste of the *custoc*, the natural temper and disposition. Burns refers to this custom in his poem of Hallowe'en:

"Then, first and foremost, through the kail,  
Their stocks maun a' be sought ance;  
They steek their e'en, an' graip, and wale,  
For muckle anes an' straught anes."

Nor had we fear now, though we groped our way in darkness, stumbling over bushes and shrubs; for company gave us courage and banished our fears.

This part of the sport over, we returned to hang above the hall-door the "stocks" that we had selected. The one which earliest found its place there, gave its owner a claim to the Christian name of the first youth of

maiden who passed underneath it, the others following in succession.

Next we tried the white of an egg, dropped slowly into a tumbler of water; and eagerly we clustered around cousin Margaret as she interpreted what would be the different occupations of those spouses, the grand object of all our spells.

"*You* shall have a tailor," she said to one proud girl, whose haughty manners made her unpopular amongst us, adding, "for I see a thimble and pair of scissors represented in the glass!"

"I don't believe a word of such rubbish," was the reply of the annoyed one.

"Janet would have had faith in you, Miss Bertram," rejoined her brother, "if you had seen instead a carriage and pair of horses;" and then turning to his sister, "would you not, Jenny?"

But to this speech Janet deigned no reply, and the fair soothsayer went quietly on, interpreting the different fortunes according to some fancied resemblance to the dropped egg; to one she promised a minister, to another a soldier, and to little Lizzie Miller—the pet of the party—a sailor, alleging that she traced there the figure of a ship. But when called upon to foretell the various occupations to which the future wives of her male friends would belong, she was rather at a loss; how-

ever, she did her best among the few female professions, and so we passed on to the next enchantment, the one of nut-burning, which Burns describes so well:—

“The auld gudewife’s weel-hoordit nits  
Are round and round divided,  
And mony lads’ and lasses’ fates  
Are there that night decided :  
Some kindle, coothie, side by side,  
An’ burn thegither trimly ;  
Some start awa’ wi’ saucy pride,  
An’ jump out-ower the chimlie  
Fu’ high that night.”

This spell is intended to discover whether or not a lover is faithful, for if a nut cracks or jumps, he or she will prove untrue; but if it begins to blaze or burn quietly, then it is a good omen. Long we sat and talked over the fire trying this enchantment, and telling tales of all the dreadful and terrible things that we had ever heard of in connection with this night.

One declared how an old servant had seen the fairies dancing in a dell near where he chanced to pass, and the music to which they beat time was something nearer akin to heaven than earth; another told of a young woman who went alone to eat an apple before a mirror, hoping the apparition of her lover would appear over her shoulder; but instead of any mortal man, it was “The

Enemy," with horns upon his head, that peered from behind her back, which frightened her so much that she died a few hours afterwards in convulsions. And then a third related a story of one who went to a rivulet, where "three laird's lands meet," and laving her sleeve into the stream, returned and hung it by the fire to dry, and at midnight she saw the figure of her future husband appear and turn it.

We next tried our fortune with the three dishes.—two of them being filled respectively with clean and foul water, while the third was empty. After these were arranged in order upon the table, each of the party in succession, being blindfolded, advanced by turns and dipped a hand into one. When we touched the clean water, that was a sign we were to marry a maid or bachelor; if into the foul, a widower or widow; but if into the empty basin, the unfortunate one was ordained to be either a bachelor or old maid; and for a description of this custom, I would once more quote our great national poet:

"In order, on the clean hearth-stane,  
The luggies three are ranged;  
And every time great care is ta'en,  
To see them duly changed."

If we were merry in the schoolroom relating stories

and trying our various fortunes, so were the servants in the kitchen, and a full benefit they took of Hallowe'en enchantments and spells, nothing deterring them from courageously attempting every charm, however fearful, that would enable them to get a glance into the future.

They stole out singly and unperceived to the barn, to sow a handful of hempseed, repeating the charmed words: "Hempseed I saw thee, hempseed I draw thee, let him (or her) that is to be my true love come, after me and maw thee"—expecting to see the appearance of the person thus invoked in the posture of pulling hemp; though I never heard that any such form was seen. Neither did they omit the "*fathoming*" of the peat stack, which required as much courage as the other—this spell compelling them to go thrice round it, with outstretched arms, hoping the last time to embrace the hoped-for apparition of their intended partner.

To such charms as these, however, we never aspired, but contented ourselves with the more social ones, where we could work in company; and so the last for that evening was the chalked board, written over with the letters of the alphabet, to which each in turn was desired blindfolded to point.

"Now, cousin Margaret," we all cried, "it's you who must point next."



"Ah! we know to which letter it will be," added a merry boy.

This remark, though made in a low voice, made our cousin blush and exclaim—

"Deal fairly with me, and do not move the board from its position!"

"Let me hold it, then," Jack Marten cried. "Now for it, Miss Bertram," adding, as he slyly shifted the board, so that the finger fell upon a particular letter, "Ah! just as I anticipated; you see you cannot contend against fate; three times, madam, let me inform you, you have touched "D," and we know what we know—hem—don't we, Lizzie?" chucking our little favourite under the chin.

"Oh! Jack, how can you be so cruel!" exclaimed Lizzie; "for, see, you have vexed Miss Bertram;" and, drawing near cousin Margaret, she put her little plump arm round her friend's neck, whispering, "Never mind Jack, Miss Bertram; he's a very bad boy, and I do not love him a bit."

"Oh! how can I survive!" cried Jack, placing his hand upon his heart.

"Dear child," said our cousin, who at this moment somewhat recovered her agitation, her voice the while trembling with emotion. "And you, Jack, indeed, you have done no harm; it was only a strange, sad feeling I

cannot account for which crept over my mind, and seemed like a voice in my ear whispering, 'It's death—only death for you;' and there floated before my eyes the vision of a hearse with nodding plumes, and it was a strange thought, but it passed away."

I shall never forget the look of spiritual beauty seen in that much-loved face, when our cousin uttered these words; and, as it may be supposed, there were no more Hallowe'en diversions for us, though the poor girl tried hard to revive them again.

March had come, and the blackbird that we watched during winter, hopping about the lawn, with his yellow bill and ebon plumage, had resumed once more his seat on the twig of the budding aspen tree opposite the parlour window, where he poured out in the bright sunshine a rich flow of mellifluous notes; our old friend the robin, too, had taken his perch upon the white gate of the shrubbery fence, from whence he flung about strains not less beautiful, as if to thank us for our care of him in the winter, when the snow-covered earth could yield him little food.

But spring, that gladsome time, which called the birds into song, and the trees into leaf, had also its blighting winds, that withered the delicate flowers and shrivelled the tender blossoms.

Cousin Margaret had been gradually fading away

during the winter months, though her cheek wore as fair a bloom, and in her eye shone a light, bright as of old; but now these blighting winds of spring had a chilling power; and, even in the season of opening beauty, that she loved so well, was she called upon to leave this earth, and every one dear to her. Nor did the summons startle her, for she had long been standing waiting by the river's brink. So at length, meekly and quietly she passed over with the songs of heaven upon her tongue, to that land fairer than poet's dream, of which it is written—

“The sun shall no more be thy light by day, neither shall the moon by night; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy sorrowing shall be ended.”





## CHAPTER XII.

### THE MISTY NIGHT.

“Far’s the gait ye ha’e to gang, dark’s the nicht an’ eerie,  
Far’s the gait ye ha’e to gang, dark’s the nicht an’ eerie ;  
O’er the muir, an’ through the glen, ghaists mayhap will fear ye,  
Oh, stay at hame, its late at nicht, an’ dinna gang an’ leave me.”

HECTOR MACNEIL.

**T**HE poetry of Scotland abounds in allusions to the secret courtships of our peasantry ; Burns in particular sings most sweetly this subject—

“But warily tent when ye come to court me,  
An’ come na unless the back-yett be ajee ;  
Syn’e up the back stile, an’ let naeboddy see,  
An’ come as ye werena comin’ to me.”

Or this—

“Although the nicht were ne’er sae wet,  
And I were ne’er sae weary, O,

I'll meet ye on the lea rig,  
My ain kind deary, O."

And yet another—

"The westlin' wind blows loud an' chill :  
The nicht's baith mirk and rainy, O ;  
But I'll get my plaid, an' out I'll steal,  
An' ower the hills to Nannie, O."

The work of wooing among the humbler classes in Scotland is generally conducted in a very romantic manner; young men toiling all day at the plough, or wandering the hills after their fleecy charge, cheerfully set out, in the *gloamin'*, a walk of it may be fifteen or twenty miles, to see their fair ones, returning in time to begin work the following morning; and sometimes these nocturnal excursions are not devoid of danger, as the succeeding tale will show.

It was the evening of a gloomy November day, but the fire blazing on the hearth in the lonely cottage of Birkshaw shed a cheerful light around, contrasting strongly and pleasantly with the darkness outside. There was no carpet on the apartment, only the clean and well-sanded floor gave an air of comfort to the scene. A mattock and spade stood in one corner beside the old-fashioned clock, while another was filled by the dresser, upon the shelf of which stood a quantity of

delf-ware and wooden plates, etc. Around the whitewashed walls hung various prints in homely frames. In his own chair by the fire sat Andrew Ross enjoying the luxury of home after the toils of the day, sometimes talking, and sometimes reading aloud the newspaper; his wife and daughter seated near him sewing the household clothing.

"Ye'd better put the bolt in the door, Helen," said Mrs Ross, when the evening was beginning to wax late, rising as she spoke, and placing on the table beside her husband the old well-used Bible.

"Is't nine o'clock already, wife?" asked Andrew, looking up from his paper. "If it is, this night has passed quicker away than ordinary."

"It's just gaun to strike," was the reply; "an' as ye ha'e to be up sune the morn, ye maunna be late in getting to your bed."

After worship was over, Helen Ross smoothed her pretty auburn hair before donning her cap and bonnet; then going to the door, she unbolted it, and left the house to "supper" the cow, and see it made comfortable for the night. The evening was a dreary one, and a feeling of sadness stole over the young girl's heart; she gazed upon the lonely moon thinly covered by the first fall of snow, save where here and there a dark patch appeared, either caused by the rays of the noon

day sun, or swept of its white mantle by the gusts of wind that ever and anon came howling down the glen. The moon and stars glimmering faintly through the hazy atmosphere shed but an obscure light over the landscape, while the silence reigning around was only broken by the ripple of the burn flowing between banks whose margin was adorned by delicate winter crystals of every fantastic form, and the moaning of the wind among the few and stunted trees near the cottage.

"I hope he winna come across the moors the nicht," said Helen to herself as she proceeded to provide for the comfort of her charge. Before returning to the house, she looked again long and earnestly over the dreary moorland, and soon she thought she discerned in the dim light a figure advancing in the direction of the cottage, which she soon discovered to be her betrothed.

"Did ye expect me the nicht, Helen?" said her lover, as he held the trembling little hand of the young maiden fondly in his own.

"I didna ken whether ye wad come or no, Norman," answered Helen, "an' 'deed, I maist wish ye hadna ventured; for the roads are ill to travel on, but noo that ye are here dinna stand oot in the cauld." And so saying, she led the way to the cottage, in the *ben end* of which a fire had been kindled in expectation of his visit.

After a cordial welcome from Andrew and his wife,

who had not yet retired to rest, Helen and her lover were left to talk over their plans for the future, and as they had much to say to each other, an hour or two passed quickly away. At last the young shepherd rose to depart, and Helen, accompanying him to the door, perceived that a dense mist had settled down upon moor and mountain.

"Ye canna gang awa' the noo, Norman," said the anxious maiden, as she held him back by the arm; "my father an' mother wad blame me sair if I was to let ye, for mist's sic' a bewilderin' thing, and the road's no' a safe ane. Ye might miss the fitpath by the burnside, or fa' ower some o' yon fearfu' stanes near Redbraes," and she shuddered as she spoke.

"Dinna ye be feared for me, Helen," answered Norman cheerily, "for I ken every fit o' the way sae weel, I could gang it wi' my een tied up; now, keep a gude heart, an' no fear yoursel' wi' thochts about havers, an' sic nonsense."

"But it's a temptin' o' Providence, Norman," persisted Helen, "for mist's as stupefying as snaw-drift. Do ye no' mind o' the bit herd laddie wha gaed oot in a nicht like this last winter, an' was found dead the next mornin' on that very moor ye've to cross. Oh, Norman," she added earnestly, "had ye seen the puir thing lyin' cauld an' stiff on the floor, and his auld mother pu'in' an' wringin'



her hands ower the frozen corpse, ye wadna sune ha'e forgotten the sight. His dowgie, too, looked sae waesome, aye lickin' the hand o' its deid maister, ye wad ha'e thocht it kent he wad never speak till't mair."

"I maun gang though, Helen," answered her lover, "for I ha'e to tak' my sheep to Rosland the morn; but think o' the nichts like this I ha'e had to gang the hills, an' never harm cam' ower me. I ha'e gane when every fit was up to the knees in snaw, an' the drift blew sae thick in my face I couldna see an inch afore me. I dinna care about mysel'," he added thoughtfully; "but I'm no likin' to vex you."

"I will try, then, and no be feared," replied Helen, "if ye canna stay."

"That's a gude lassie," answered Norman cheerfully, and then bidding his betrothed an affectionate farewell, he threw his plaid around his shoulders, and grasping his strong staff firmly in his hand, went forth into the darkness.

Helen lingered for a time by the door after her lover left, listening till the sound of his steps died away upon her ear; and then softly closing it, she re-entered the room so lately gladdened by his presence, but now looking cold and dreary in his absence. The fire had sunk low in the grate, but lighting the lamp from its still smouldering ashes, she placed it upon the sill of the window,

saying to herself, "Wha kens but either he may need its light yet, or else some other benighted crater that has lost his road in the darkness."

Helen Ross had one of those sober, well-balanced minds, which are seldom needlessly alarmed, or give way to childish fears, yet why a haunting terror should overpower her on this occasion she could not understand, and neither could she reason. In vain she tried to recall Norman's words at parting, thinking "he has been out in waur nichts than this ;" but still a dread was upon her mind of his either falling down exhausted on the moor, and sleeping the last sleep of death, or being dashed over one of the precipices in his homeward way, and the visions of a mangled corpse haunted her imagination. She sought her pillow, but sleep fled from her eyelids. It is not man that can save him, if he is in danger, she thought ; and her heart turned to the God that from her childhood she had been taught to fear and reverence. Then came back to memory the psalms and hymns she had learned at her father's knee in the peaceful Sabbath evenings, when the good labourer had gathered his family around him, and spoken to them of a better world than this, beyond death and the grave. One time in particular rose up before her, fresh as if it had been yesterday. Again she saw her little brother on his bed tossing with burning fever, while her parents sat sorrow-

fully by, seeking in vain to soothe his wild delirium. Once more she was the lisping child standing beside them half afraid, half bewildered by the scene, sometimes trying to comfort them, and sometimes weeping because her companion could not join her in her play, and then suddenly, remembering how often her father had spoken to her of the great God who heard and answered prayer sending help to His creatures in their time of need, she withdrew to her little room, where, kneeling down, she asked the Lord to hear her in heaven, and make her brother better; rising with the assurance in her heart that her prayer would be answered, and even now she could recall her mother's look of comfort when she returned and told her "no to greet ony mair," for she had asked God to make her brother better, and He would, for He had said it in the Bible." "And can I not believe now that God will hear the cry of the poor and needy?" she thought; "or have I lost my childish faith in all the great and precious promises of the Bible? No, I will go again to the Lord, for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and so, while bathing her pillow with tears, the poor girl lifted up her heart in earnest supplication for one whose life was dearer to her than her own.

Hour after hour passed, and Helen rose every now and then to trim the lamp and look out into the dark-

ness, but with as little comfort as when she parted from Norman, for the mist continued dense as ever, and she inhaled the damp, cold vapour at the opened casement.

The clock in the kitchen had just ceased striking three, when a noise as of a deep-drawn sigh fell upon an ear quick to detect the slightest sound, and springing to her feet, Helen instantly unbarred the door, then, with the lamp in her hand, she took a few steps out into the mist, and presently recognised a figure stretched apparently lifeless on the ground. It was Norman. She knew it by instinct; and, as if possessed of supernatural strength, she lifted him in her arms and carried him within the shelter of the house, then calling her father and mother, who instantly came to her aid, they laid the almost lifeless body in their warm bed, and forced a cordial between his clenched teeth, while Helen brushed the rime from his brown hair, and held his frozen hands in hers. Ere long, exhausted nature began feebly to revive, and before an hour had elapsed, Norman opened his blue eyes again, and looked wonderingly first on one and then on another, till they rested upon the face of his betrothed.

“Oh, Norman!” exclaimed Helen, for the first time breaking the silence of that hour of agony and suspense, “ye maun ha’e had an awfu’ nicht sin’ ye left this house.”

"Awfu', indeed, Helen!" was the whispered reply; and but for the help o' the Lord, I had never ha'e looked on your dear face again."

"Then, my bairns, let us praise an' bless His holy name, for He hath dealt bountifully wi' us," said Andrew, reverently, at the same time kneeling down by the bed, while his wife and Helen by his side lifted up their hearts in gratitude to God for this wonderful deliverance, in which Norman joined with humble gratitude.

Soon the young man was so far recovered as to be able to tell the events of the past night. After leaving the cottage, he had lost his way upon the moor; and having no track to guide him, nor landmarks by which he could distinguish his way, he at last got stupefied and bewildered; the intense cold, which always accompanies these mists, seemed also to freeze his blood; and his limbs getting exhausted, he was again and again tempted to lie down and sleep, but knowing well that that sleep would be death, he tried to keep awake and still drag on his weary way, hoping to come upon some shepherd's cottage, where he might find shelter. At last, when he could hold out no longer, and had sunk down to die, his eye caught the light in the window, which, like a star of hope beckoned him to make one more effort for life, naturally

so sweet to all. "Oh, God! my fathers' God!" he cried, "give me help in this time of trouble!" and raising himself from the ground, he tried to reach the twinkling ray that streamed out in the night from the friendly casement. Nothing more could he remember until he opened his eyes upon the familiar faces of friends, and saw Helen bending over him.

Norman Linton and Helen Ross were married at the Whitsunday following; and often, when seated by the fire in their pleasant cottage, as they listen to the winter storm raging without, or the wind dashing the rain upon the curtainless window, where the lamp always shed its light, to guide the belated traveller, they talk of the misty night, which, but for the protecting care of an all-wise Providence, would have ended so tragically; and, in grateful remembrance of past goodness, they sing

"I love the Lord, because my voice  
And prayers He did hear;  
I, while I live, will call on Him  
Who bowed to me His ear.

"God merciful and righteous is,  
Yea, gracious is our Lord.  
God saves the meek; I was brought low;  
He did me help afford."



## CHAPTER XIII.

### VILLAGE AMUSEMENTS.

“ In shabby state they strut in tattered robe,  
The scene a blanket, and a barn the globe ;  
No high conceits their moderate wishes raise,  
Content with humble profit, humble praise.  
Let dowdies simper, and let bumpkins stare,  
The strolling pageant hero treads on air.  
Pleased for his hour, he to mankind gives law,  
And snores the next out on a truss of straw.”

CHURCHILL.

**W**E have now our Mechanics' Institutes, with their scientific lectures, our village libraries, and daily newspapers, tending to the instruction and amusement of our peasantry in the long winter evenings ; but formerly these things were unknown, therefore recreations less refined and elevating were eagerly sought after and encouraged.

Bands of strolling players then wandered from place to place, with their waggons full of old scenery, which they erected in some village barn ; and there, in gaudy tinsel dresses, they rehearsed such plays as the tragedy of Douglas, to the enthusiastic delight of their humble audience. But as these representations were familiar in all parts of Great Britain, and have been described by far more graphic pens than mine, I will rather try to delineate a style of stage effort, which must be new to some of my readers, because, if not local, at least it was very much confined to the southern counties of Scotland.

One very simple recreation was thus arranged by two old men dressing themselves in female attire, and repeating for the amusement of a select company assembled of an evening, some such colloquial verses as the following—

*First speaker.*

Hech now ! Marget, woman, are ye in ?  
For as sune as I heard it fast I did rin,  
I cam' ower the gate to tell ye,  
Ower the gate to tell ye,  
Ower the gate to tell ye,  
We'll no be left our shoorn.  
Oh dear Marget ! oh dear, dear !  
The French and Americans will soon be here,  
An' we'll be a' murdered,



We'll be a' murdered,  
We'll be a' murdered,  
That's very clear.

*Second speaker.*

Sure was I, Jenny, that a' wasna right,  
For I dream'd o' red an' green a' last night,  
An' twa cats fechtin',  
Twa cats fechtin',  
I wakened in a fright.

But for my part I carena', though they a' cam' the morn,  
I'll gi'e them a tug for a' the nicks in my horn,  
An' I'll no yield it,  
I'll no yield it,  
I'll no yield it,  
For ony man born.

Dae ye no mind, Jenny, on this very flure,  
When we were a' rigged out to gang to Shirramuir,  
Wi' stanes in our aprons,  
Stanes in our aprons,  
Stanes in our aprons,  
We did muckle akaith I'm sure.

*First speaker.*

But wait a wee, Marget, till I tell it a' out,  
They're bringin' in black Popery I fear and I doubt,  
A sad reformation,  
A sad reformation,

A sad reformation,  
In a' the kirks about.

Whish't a wee, woman, I thought I heard a gun !

*Second speaker.*

'Deed no, neighbour, it's nought but the win'  
Daddin' tae the auld yett,  
Daddin' tae the auld yett,  
Wi' muckle din.

*First speaker.*

Fare ye weel, Marget, for I maun rin,  
Ken ye if our neighbour Elspeth be in ?  
An' auld Robin Barber ?  
An' bowed Davie Morris ?  
Wi' cripple Wat Elder ?  
For I maun tell them.

The favourite pastime, however, was an entertainment upon a much larger scale, and arose from the representation of Allan Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd," familiarly termed "Patie and Roger."

This poem, which once took a strong hold of the Scottish mind, and was well known in every cottage home, has been almost entirely superseded by the cheap literature of our times ; so much so, that although many of the performers retained, till their dying hour, the names of the characters they had enacted, their children

often do not know why their parents were styled "Mausie," "Sir William," etc.

It is worthy of note, that whatever character was to be represented, the actors were always of the male sex, and any young woman attempting to break in upon this usage, would have lost caste amongst the village maidens.

In choosing the performers much tact was required, the success of the play depending greatly upon voice, age, and personal appearance, not to mention the necessary qualifications of confidence, intelligence, and humour.

As in modern times, some ostensible, benevolent object was generally combined with the love of amusement, such as providing coal and winter clothing for the poor,—the indigent, then comparatively few in number, being entirely supported by church-door collections and the kindness of private individuals.

Amongst my earliest recollections is, that of having been present at one of these "actings," which was got up by a few young men to assist the family of a poor labourer, who had been severely injured by falling from the roof of his cottage, while renewing the thatch.

For weeks before the representation, the performers met together in a house of the village to rehearse their parts, and the great occasion I am about to describe

was arranged to take place in the middle of the Christmas holidays, which was duly announced by a placard upon the smithy door, while Geordie the cripple conveyed the intelligence as he went his "rounds" in the country. Again the inn-barn of the village was put in requisition, and all the day Adam Henderson the wright was busily occupied in fitting it up for the evening. The materials used on this occasion were of the simplest kind,—the carpet of the inn parlour serving for a curtain, which was drawn up and down at pleasure by means of a rope and pulley; but, being unfortunately rather short for the purpose, the feet of the players between the acts were seen moving to and fro behind.

The foot-lights were represented by a row of farthing candles, while others of the same kind were placed at intervals around the walls. Rude benches were erected into a gallery opposite the stage, but traces of the hurried work were still visible in the shape of sawdust and shavings which lay scattered around, the barn having been but recently cleared of grain, to make way for the expected amusement.

Fortunately for the success of the performance, the weather, though wintry, was not unpropitious, nor were the roads difficult to traverse, notwithstanding the fall of snow which still hung shelving over the cottage

roofs, and weighed down the branches of the willow, till they dipped silently into the water; and as we bent our steps to the village, every twig and sprig in the avenue gleamed and sparkled in the light of the full moon, making us almost fancy that we trod some magnificent fairy vale of frosted silver, glittering with diamonds.

There were no tickets, but a small sum was received at the door, and upon entering, we took our seats on one of the front benches.

Presently, a bell being rung, the curtain was raised, and showed two youths in shepherd's plaids, reclining upon an artificial mound formed of bunches of straw, covered with a large worsted bedcover, while near them stood their faithful dogs, with ears erect, evidently ill at ease, and unable to comprehend the unusual circumstances in which they were placed. Unhappily, just then, a bench which had been hastily nailed together to accommodate some of the spectators, suddenly gave way, and the unfortunate occupants were thrown upon the floor, much to their own annoyance and the amusement of others; however, as nothing serious resulted from the accident, the affair rather tended than otherwise to increase the good humour of all present, though it arrested for a few minutes the proceedings of the performers.

Order being restored, the attention of the audience was next arrested by Sandy Good the tailor, who, with horn spectacles on nose, and play-book in hand, appeared as prompter, and commenced by giving the general announcement.

"Ack first, schene first," adding the descriptive words—

"Beneath the south side of a craigy beild,  
Where crystal springs their halesome waters yield,  
Twa youthfu' shepherds on the gowans lay,  
Tenting their flocks a'e bonny morn in May.  
Poor Roger granes till hollow echoes ring,  
But blyther Patie likes to laugh and sing."

The extraordinary manner in which these lines were drawled out, nearly upset the company; but Sandy, too much engrossed with the weighty duties devolving upon him, failed to observe the suppressed titter. When he had finished, with a look of importance on his face, he took his seat upon the stage, at such a distance as not to interfere with the players, yet to be ready to drop a hint in case of any failure of memory.

The young shepherds did not require the assistance of Sandy and his book, and notwithstanding the unhappy commencement, they got through their parts to the entire satisfaction of the audience, who expressed their pleasure by loud and hearty cheers.

When the curtain fell, the tailor seized the opportunity of snuffing the candles, at first with a pair of old snuffers, but, as these became useless, making his fingers do the work instead, which caused my father to exclaim with a laugh as the tailor passed him—

"Well done, Sandy! ye take what ye have, and never want;" to which Sandy answered with a grin—

"I find, somehow, maister, that my fingers are aye the readiest in the end. I can work wi' them best, an', ye ken, fingers were made afore snuffers."

Here the proceedings were again interrupted, but this time by the intrusion of a large rat; the poor animal having got out of his hole, became bewildered by the glare of light, a thing unusual in the dark barn, and, instead of retreating into it again, made for the door. The noise and excitement that then ensued, it would be impossible to describe, especially amongst the females, who jumped on the seats screaming lustily. Some of the young men seized pitch-forks, others rakes, or any weapon they could most readily lay hold of at the moment, and succeeded, after some little delay, in killing the unfortunate creature, and thus again restoring something like peace in the place.

"Hech, sirs!" exclaimed old Betty, in an audible voice, as some part was acted to her entire satisfaction; "it's pleasant to see a thing sae weel dune; I dinna think

that either Siddons or Murray could beat thae fallows."

To which her crony Peg Ramsay replied with contempt. "It's a' ye ken, woman. I ha'e heard oor Jock say (an' he's seen them baith) that naething ye can imagine in this world can ever come up till *them*."

"It may be," was the answer, "but I couldna think muckle could cove this."

Wat the weaver, who personated Bauldy, threw into the performance a great deal of life and humour; the very way his broad blue bonnet with scarlet top sat upon his head was amusing, and when he appeared twirling the enormous bannock on a stick, while a couple of black puddings emerged from the capacious pockets of his large-buttoned coat, the company applauded with all their might. And then, too, behind the apparent simplicity of his manner, there lurked native humour when he enumerated with much effect the reasons which led to the supposition that Mause was a witch.

"When last the wind made Glauf's a roofless barn;  
When last the burn bore down my mother's yarn;  
When Brawny, elf-shot, never mair cam' hame;  
When Tibby kirk'd, and there nae butter came;  
When Bessy Freetock's chuffy-cheeked wean,  
To a fairy turn'd, and couldna stand its lane;



When Wattie wander'd a'e nicht through the shaw,  
An' tint himsel' amaisht amang the snaw.

• • • • •  
"You, Lucky, gat the wyte o' a' fell out,  
An' ilk ane here dreads you round about."

This category completed, an old woman near us exclaimed aloud, "Troth lad, ye were aye mair fule," at which those who heard her laughed heartily.

Again did our friend Bauldy well sustain the feeling of mortal terror, when, having called Madge "auld," she flew upon him like a fury, summoning a ghost to her aid, and teaching him a lesson which he would not soon forget :

"Never to ca' her auld that wants a man,  
Else ye may get some witch's fingers' ban."

The peasants did their parts well ; and we, who had never seen anything of the kind before, were highly pleased, though the primitive simplicity of the whole made the elder ones of our party smile.

The youth who acted the character of Jenny had a fine voice, and gave the songs in his part with such spirit and effect that my mother, at the close, expressed a fear lest his voice might become a snare to him.

"How should that be?" we inquired, with surprise.

"Because," was the reply, "the gift of song is often a

dangerous one to young men, leading them into too much company, which frequently ends in dissipation."

A deep sigh near us here attracted our attention, and, looking round, we recognised pretty Nancy Murray, who, with some friends, occupied the seat behind.

It was evident, from her pale and agitated look, that she had overheard the remark which had just been made, though how it could affect her we did not understand, as we knew not the secrets of village life; but my mother, who interested herself in the poor around, upon our whispering to her that Nancy was near, turned and said, "Willie Turner has acted well, Nancy, and by-the-bye, I would wish you joy upon your approaching marriage with him; so good a son and brother must surely make a kind husband."

If Nancy's face had been before pale, it now got crimson to the temples, as she murmured her thanks; and then, curtseying, left the barn, where Willie, having got rid of his female attire, waited to escort her home.

Time passed away, and we had forgotten the long delightful slides on the ice, the playing with snowballs on the lawn, and the exhilarating races in those frosty days when the trees in the avenue glittered with crystals, and the grey sky threw out in bold relief the snow-covered roof of our home—those days when the low monotonous hum of frost was the only sound heard

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amidst the almost Sabbath-like silence, and this broken only by our own voices, the bleat of a far-off sheep, or the croak of some distant raven; forgotten, too, had been spring-time, with the search for the nests of the white ducks amongst the rushes and long grass of the pond, the making of whistles from the young fresh shoots of the plane tree that overshadowed the stream, the romping with Bingo and the kitten in the yard behind the house, and the swinging on the newly-felled firs in the park; yes, all these had been forgotten, for summer had come, with long days and shortening nights, with bees and flowers and blue skies banishing the past from our memories. The acting in the barn, amongst other things, had scarcely been remembered since it took place, and was only recalled to our minds by our once chancing to pass in our evening walk the cottage where Nancy resided, and seeing her as she sat by the door, knitting. The months which had intervened since we had last seen her, seemed to have wrought a great change in her appearance; the bloom had fled from her cheeks, and her eye had lost much of its lustre; but before we had time to marvel or question why it was thus, my mother stopped, and said kindly, as she returned the girl's wan smile of recognition—

“I see it has not been without suffering that you have done your duty, Nancy.”

"Oh! ma'am," was the reply, as she buried her face in her apron, and wept, "may nane belangin' ye ever ken what it is to see the face they liked best turn away frae them wi' a cauld, scornfu' look."

"Better it should be thus than a lifetime of misery," was the—to us—enigmatical answer. "Keep steadily on, Nancy, in the right way; and though it be rough, it is nevertheless a safe one, and be assured, sooner or later, you will come to see it has been well."

"What is wrong, mother?" we inquired, when beyond reach of the girl's hearing us, "what has happened to Nancy; she is changed since the night we saw her in winter; has she been ill?"

"Do you remember Willie Turner," was the reply, "the young man who acted the character of Jenny so well at the play?"

"Yes," we answered, "and who was engaged to be married to Nancy."

"The same," said my mother. "Well, that performance was the beginning of mischief to the poor fellow; his voice upon that evening attracted attention, and people sought his company for the sake of his songs, until Willie has become, I fear, a confirmed drunkard, and is breaking his mother's heart. Nancy, like a sensible girl, after a good deal of persuasion, has given up her engagement with him, and it seems he is to be

married next week to a foolish young woman, who is not afraid to run the risk of a life of sorrow."

"But should Nancy have done that, mother?" we asked; "might not his love for her have kept him right?"

"I do not think anything but the grace of God can change the reckless drunkard's heart, and I think the girl has acted wisely in so doing," was the reply of my mother, as we bent our steps homewards, leaving Nancy still weeping at the cottage door.

Years have passed away since that village play, and many who witnessed it have also passed away; but, whenever we revisit our old home, Nancy, who has long been a happy wife and mother, never fails to tell us that, under God, she owes her present state of comfort to my mother's advice and interest in her at that time. Summing up all by saying, "if only the rich kent how far a word of kindly counsel frae them gangs wi' the puir, they wad oftener gi'e it; for had I no been encouraged by the mistress in my wish to do right, when I was sae sairly tried, I wad likely ha'e been this day a puir heart-broken widow like Bell Turner, wi' a wheen fatherless bairns to bring up."





## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE OLD BUTLER.

"A kind heart and leal within,  
Is better than gowd and gentle kin."

"**I**E'LL never see the licht o' another mornin's sun,—my kind maister," whispered old Richard Laidlaw, the butler, to the young English tutor, Mr Stanley, as they continued their weary vigil, listening, while they sat by the fire, to the low, irregular breathing of the dying nobleman.

"Dr Stonmore says he may linger on for a few days yet," replied the person addressed; "but I much fear he will not survive to-night, for I have noticed a change in his face since noon."

"I'll speak lower to ye, Mr Stanley," said Richard in a whisper, "for I wadna like Maister Edward, puir laddie, to hear what I'm gaun to tell ye. My Lord will

never open his e'en on the gladsome licht o' another day, for the coronach was sung in the auld tower yestreen. Johnnie Bowie, the cooper, heard it when he cam' hame aboot midnight, and ye ken that bodes death in less than twenty-four hours to some ane connectit wi' the hoose o' Ormindale; but that's no' a', for Maggie Niven, the blind woman, couldna get a wink o' sleep wi' Wat Telford's dowg howlin'; forbye, my wife's takin' a spale aff the caun'le, the breadth o' a ha'penny ribbon; but maybe you buik-learned Englishers dinna believe in sic things," added the old man, scanning with inquisitive glance the countenance o' his companion.

"I am afraid, Richard," replied Mr Stanley, "that since coming amongst you I have got tinged with your superstitions; at anyrate, I love to listen to your strange weird stories, and should be glad to learn the legend of the coronach to which you refer, the more so that it has often been incidentally noticed in my hearing since I came to the Castle."

"It's no' a thing we like to speak aboot," answered Richard; "an' I doubt if it wad be chancy at this time, it's eerie eneuch to sit an' hear thae low gasps (wae's me, wae's me, that ever it should come to this!) let alane makin' it waur by speakin' o' the wanderin' speerits that canna rest in their graves, but maun rise an' scaur us puir mortals wi' their frichtsomeness."

"Yet I wish you would tell me the tale," replied Mr Stanley, "it may help to beguile the time as we sit by the fire."

"His Lordship never liked to hear aboot it, but as ye're anxious I will gi'e ye a' I ken o't," said the butler. "Nae doot," he then went on to say, "ye ha'e noticed the picture in the ha', o' the prood, scornfu'-lookin' leddy, wi' e'en like a grey goss-hawk, that follow you wherever you gang. She has a turban wi' white feathers on her head, an' an India plaid roun' her shouthers. Weel, that leddy, ye maun understan', was wife to him that was the first Lord Ormindale. She was, it was said, a great Duke's daughter frae aboot London, an' mony a braw offer she had, for she was a weel-tochered lass, forby bein' bonny an' high-born; but she wad look at nane o' them a' savin' Sir John Ormindale (he was Sir John then), an' when her frien's gaed clean against the match, she didna speir their leave ony far'er, but ran aff wi' him to foreign parts, where she learnt black airts frae the Papishers.

"When they cam' hame, after bein' lang awa', she had twa sons an' four bonny daughters, that grew up to be men an' women in the auld Castle, an' made its wa's ring wi' their merry sports an' daffin'.

"Things gaed a' on well eneuch till she took some kind o' dislike to the young heir, for it was thocht he had got an inklin' o' her ill ways, an' tried to pit them down;



sae she plotted wi' her evil counsellors hoo she might get rid o' him, that his brother, wham she liket best, might succeed to the titles and estates when his father died. Eh, Mr Stanley!" ejaculated Richard, as he paused in his narrative to comfort himself with a pinch of snuff, "surely ill women are far waur than ill men; they bring me in mind o' the prophet's figs, the gude are very gude, but the evil are very evil. Now, a man may do a thing in a passion when the bluid is up, but to sit doun an' deliberately plot the death o' ane's ain bairn—that gangs clean beyond my comprehension; but the Bible says, 'the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness;' and again, 'He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.' Well, she was ta'en in her ain net, for the poisoned wine intended to kill the auldest ane, by some bad luck fell into the hands o' her husband an' youngest son, when one day, comin' in wearied an' thirsty frae the huntin', they drank it to the drega, an' in a few hours were dead corpses. The unnatural woman had gaen to the tap o' the tower, an' was singin' the wail for the death o' the heir, when word o' the fearfu' catastrophe was brought her. Mad wi' grief an' rage, she in the instant threw hersel' ower into the loch, an' was never mair heard o'. Some say the de'il keppit her an' took her awa', others that she sank to the bottom like a stane, but hoo that may be I canna tell,—though aye sin'

syne there's little doubt her ghaist haunts the auld tower an' gi'es warnin' afore a death in the family. I heard it mysel', wailin' the nicht the last leddy died, an' yet Sandy Affleck, the tailor, said it was only the wind among the branches of the saugh tree, as if I didna ken the difference !”

“So you firmly believe in the ghost, I see?” said Mr Stanley, when Richard had finished his tale.

“As firmly, sir,” was the answer, “as I believe I'm a livin' man, though account for 't I canna, nae mair than I can for the fact that fairies tak' oor bairns an' leave some puir silly changeling o' their ain in their place, or that the kye in oor byres wad mony a time be witched if we didna nail a horseshoe on the door, or slip a bunch o' rowan tree owre their head ; sae, Mr Stanley we maun e'en believe, though we cannot tell for what wise purpose sic things are permitted ; but now, when ye ha'e listened to my auld-warld stories, let me ask you to be kind to Maister Edward, puir young crater, when his Lordship's gane ; for if a tales be true, he'll need baith help an' counsel sune.”

“He is a noble boy,” answered Mr Stanley, looking at the youth, who sat holding the hand of his dying father in his own, unconscious of all, save the great grief that was crushing him.

“And trust me, Richard, I will do what I can,

—though, God knows, that is very little—to comfort and uphold him when he needs it, which I fear will not be long.”

“I dinna doubt ye, no, I dinna doubt ye; an’ the laddie taks kindly to ye, stranger though ye be,” said the butler; then wiping the tear that trickled down his cheek, he added, “He’ll miss him sair, Mr Stanley, he’ll miss him sair, an’ so will we a’; for though he was a proud man amang the gentry, an’ carried his head braw an’ high (but it’s low eneuch noo), yet he was aye kind to the puir, an’ them that were dependent on him.”

Night wore on apace, but still Mr Stanley and the old man held their weary vigil, sometimes talking in whispers, but more frequently relapsing into a long season of quietness; the mourner by the bed also kept his place, and would not quit the hand stiffening in his grasp.

It was a solemn scene, the flickering lamp casting an uncertain light on the pale and haggard features of the dying man. The nurse, one moment wiping the death-dews from his brow, the next wetting his parched lips with wine. The breathing, which had been getting weaker and weaker, now became intermitting, and Mr Stanley, followed by Richard, rushed to the bed, only to hear the low, gurgling moan which told that all was

over, and life to the proud nobleman, with its joys and sorrows, had now ceased to be. A moment, all stood silent around the bed of death, for the boy checked even his sobs before the awful presence of the king of terrors; and then the nurse, stepping forward, closed the lids over the sightless eyeballs, and tied up the head in a napkin.

“Speak to Maister Edward, sir,” whispered Richard to the tutor, “speak to him an’ comfort him, puir callant, for he needs it sair; an’ I maun gang an’ see after things that canna be negleckit at this time. Oh, but it’s a sair job on us this, Maister Stanley!” added the butler, now fairly giving way to his before pent-up sorrow; then, as if ashamed that any one should see him thus unmanned, he hurriedly left the apartment, leaving the young man to try and speak words of consolation to the desolate heart of his pupil.

The banquet-hall of Ormindale Castle was a large and spacious apartment. On its vaulted roof were suspended the armorial insignia of that ancient house, while, from the richly-stained glass windows, there streamed a mellow light upon the pictures of the old barons and warriors that adorned the oak-carved walls.

A few days later, and that hall was filled with the retainers and friends of the deceased nobleman, who assembled there to pay the last mark of respect to his

memory, by accompanying his remains to the grave. Silently those mourners arranged themselves in order to follow the stately hearse, and from under the gateway there passed banner after banner, on which were displayed the different devices of the family and its connections, while trumpets sent forth their sad, wild notes, to which the procession moved slowly, headed by the young Lord Edward.

Onward they moved in that dull December day, while the mists hung thick and heavy from every hill-top and beetling crag; onward slowly and sadly, to place the fresh, bright, silver-mounted coffin of the departed amidst the mouldering ones, in which lay the bones of the once proud nobles of Ormindale.

"An' sae this is the end o' a' rank an' bravery!" said Joan Turner to her neighbour, Matty Sharp, as they stood and gazed after the mournful procession. "Hech, Matty! but he was a high man, him that's now awa', an' yet, ye see, death is nae respecter o' persons, or, as the wise king has it, 'There's nae discharge in that war.'"

"True for ye there, lass," responded her neighbour, "an' the minister tell'd us weel about it in his sermon last Sunday; but are ye no wae for the young Lord, puir laddie, left wi' sic a ravelled hank as the estates are now; but what can ye expect, after the racin' and huntin' his father had. It wad ha'e been weisser-like if he

had stayed mair at hame an' looked after his ain concerns ; but this Lord is clean different in his disposition, they say, an' has ta'en after his mother mair."

"He is like her in looks, too," answered Joan, "an' has her bonny blue e'en. I couldna help minding her when I saw him pass 'enoo ; there was mony a ane," she added, lowering her voice, "thocht his Lordship that's now awa' wasna as kind till her as he might ha'e been,—but then, folk said she hadna come o' gentle bluid, an' *that* was what the house o' Ormindale counted muckle on."

"Weel, he kenn'd that ere he married her," replied Matty, "an' it was nae faut o' hers, I am sure ; besides, there wasna a leddy in the land played her part better. A bonny young thing she was, too, when she cam' amang us, wi' her rosy cheeks an' lang, yellow hair, an' aye the pleasant word to a' body she met, gentle or simple. Though her tongue was strange, truly a better an' a bonnier leddy never sat in Ormindale ha'. Even Richard Laidlaw had to own that. Though he, like the lave about the place, was sair disappointed that his maister didna marry his braw cousin, Liddy Betsey Murray."

"An' what for did he no, cummer?" inquired her friend. "I am sure he gaed awa' to London for that purpose, an' great preparations were made, if ye mind,

for her Laddyship, but wasna we a' astonished when he brought hame the other ane instead?"

"Weel, as the story gangs," said Matty, "he was thrown frae his horse a'e day when huntin', an' carried to the nearest house, which happened to be a minister's. There he stayed till he got weel, for his arm was broken, an' he fell in love wi' ane o' the daughters. Naething wad serve him but he maun marry her, though his mother set hersel' sair against it; an' 'deed, they said the Laddy's ain faither didna encourage it either, for he thocht every bird should mate wi' its kind. But his Lordship was determined, an' wadna be contradicked; an' she was young an' fond o' him. My daughter Mary, that's now gane, used to tell me about it; she was her maid for a while, ere she fell into bad health, puir thing."

"Then, was't true, Matty," inquired her friend, "that his Lordship never would let her keep company wi' her ain folk after? An' that she just pined, in spite o' a' her grandeur, like a bird that has been ta'en frae the bonny green woods an' confined in a cage?"

"Weel, I canna deny it, Joan," was the rejoinder of her friend; "for Mary ance tell'd me that her father cam' to see her, an' his Lordship was sae unceevil to him, that the puir auld man saw it was better, for his daughter's sake, that he should leave quietly. Sair the

Leddy grat when he was gane, though she tried to let naeboddy see her. It was when Miss Emma was a bairn, an' Mary never thocht she was as bright after that, for she wasna weel at the time. There was a walk at the castle that she aye took; they ca' it the Leddy's Walk to this day; an' the way she liked it sae well was, that she could see frae it far away into the English borders. I believe she had fand out, or than, that to be a ledgy wasna the happiest life after a', an' mony a time she wad say to my daughter—"Your country is beautiful, Mary, and there are kind hearts in it, but oh! England, dear England! I will always love you best." Soon after that Miss Emma took a dwinin' an' died, an' her mother never held up her head again."

"Puir young thing," replied Joan, who had listened with great attention to the tale, and now wiped the large tears from her eyes. "Weel, she's away now frae a' her sorrows, an' it's a comfort to think that she was a gude friend to us a', an' muckle we missed her. They say," she added more cheerfully, "that Lord Edward tak's after her, an' has nane o' the pride that cam' to the family wi' the first ledgy, though it's no canny to speak o' her."

"Weel, he'll thrive nane the waur o' wanting their pride," said Matty; "for it's ane o' the six things the Lord hates. 'A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands



that shed innocent blood,' are a' clasped thegither; but, if there's no' Sandy coming hame, and I ha'ena his dinner ready for him." And, as she spoke, Matty Sharp hurried away from her neighbour's door to superintend home duties.

One evening, some weeks after the funeral, Mr Stanley and his pupil sat by the library fire, both looking sad and downcast, especially the latter, who seemed in a short space of time to have sprung into manhood, and outgrown at once and for ever the free, glad life of the boy.

Edward Ormindale was a pale, interesting youth of about sixteen years of age, more fitted, one would have thought, to have been the companion and solace of some widowed mother, or a studious recluse, than a soldier, to live in camps and endure hardships and privations; and yet his countenance, when scanned more narrowly, testified to anything but a soft or effeminate character. His eye, though blue, was bright and sparkling; and the smile, which in spite of sadness played at times round the corners of his mouth, showed intelligence and humour.

"This is the last night for years, it may be for ever, that I sleep beneath the roof of this house, Mr Stanley," said Lord Edward, after a long interval of silence.

"That must be as God wills, Edward," replied his

friend. "But do not be cast down; you have youth, and health, and above all a clear conscience, which is beyond price; you have acted nobly, my boy, in giving up the rest of the estates to your father's creditors."

"I could not do otherwise," answered the young nobleman, "nor could you, had you been in my situation; for, though the law might exempt me, justice could not. Besides, for the sake of my father's memory, I felt bound to see that no one suffered by him. Now, if he acted unthinkingly, Mr Stanley, it is only his son who must reap the fruit, and that is as it should be. My kind father," added the boy; "I would not have the poor man curse him for bringing ruin upon his family; but what I feel most," he continued, while a tear trembled in his eye, "is the parting with our old servants; I had hoped to care for them all their lives, and now ——" and the voice failed with emotion.

Mr Stanley was much affected also, for the time he had spent at Ormindale with his interesting pupil, whom he dearly loved, had been a happy season; and now, not only was he grieved to leave him and return to his country, but his heart failed him when he thought of the dangers and difficulties that must necessarily beset the path of the inexperienced youth, as a soldier, in distant lands. The short silence which followed was

interrupted by the entrance of the butler, who, stealing softly up to his young master, said, as he held out a faded purse, "Ye maunna be offended wi' me, Maister Edward—my Lord, I mean—but this gowd is o' nae use to my wife an' me, sae we thocht I nicht mak' as bold as offer it to you ; it may help you in a strait, for bare eneuch ye ha'e left yoursel', an' sogerin' is but puir wark at the best."

"My poor friend," said the young nobleman, with great feeling, "I do not need your hard-won money ; keep it for your old age, Richard ; indeed, I am rich enough for all my wants, and Mr Stanley will tell you how well I could endure hunger and fatigue last year when we went upon our Northern excursion, and how soundly I slept upon hard beds."

"Ay, but ye dinna consider," answered the old man, "that in strange lands ye may need what ye wad never miss in your ain country, an' gowd will open mony a lock that naething else will ; sae tak' the siller, my bonny bairn ; naebody has eneuch o' that kind o' thing, and wha, I wonder, has as gude a richt till't as yoursel' : it was a' made wi' you and yours."

"Indeed, indeed, Richard," was the response, "I could not take it from you—I could not sleep soundly if I thought you might one day require what your generosity tempts you to bestow upon me ; and also

consider your family; they may need it to help them on in the world."

"Let them work for't as their mother an' me ha'e done afore them," persisted the butler. "They are braw an' able for't, thank God, an' my siller is my ain; I can do wi't what I like."

"What shall I do, Mr Stanley?" said the young nobleman, who could not think of wounding the old man's feelings by longer refusing his kind offer.

"Take part of it as a loan, and that may please him," whispered his friend.

"Ah! I see," said Richard, sadly, "that ye're ower proud to let the auld servant help you; but, oh! Maister Edward, if ye only kent it, we wad willingly gi'e our heart's bluid to serve ye; an' siller is naething to us when ye are gane, an' strangers biding under the roof-tree that has for sae mony lang years sheltered your forebears."

"Then I will share the gold with you, Richard," said the boy as he grasped the old man's feeble hand and pressed it in his own, "and will repay you capital and interest when better days dawn upon our house; for better and brighter days may come again, bringing cheerier hopes with them."

Lord Edward spoke those words in a happier tone than he really felt, to soothe the kind heart of his

faithful servant who had watched so carefully over his childish years ; and Richard seemed somewhat satisfied, for he answered—

“ I wish it had been the hale o’t, though, an’ that ye wadna speak o’ len’s, for I’m proud, proud to help ye, my bonny bairn. Oh ! if ye could but ha’e stayed amang us,” he added, sorrowfully, “ an’ been to us what the Lord o’ Ormindales aye were, the freens o’ the puir, but God’s will be done, His will be done, an’ surely He will gang wi’ ye wherever ye gang, an’ bring ye, it’s to be hoped, safe hame again, though I mayna live to see it.”

The next morning Edward Ormindale took his departure for foreign lands, leaving the home of his childhood with a sad heart, but in the happy consciousness that he had done his duty, though the sacrifice he made was great.

But more than fifteen years had elapsed since then. In that time many changes had taken place around the Castle ; Richard Laidlaw and his wife both sleep quietly underneath the green mound in the old churchyard, and to mark the spot a gravestone has been erected by order of their noble friend, who, though absent, still remembered his country and home.

Now, however, the lands are free of debt, and his Lordship is expected back to take possession, which

welcome tidings Mr Stanley, his former tutor, the minister of the parish, conveys amongst the villagers, and kind hearts await anxiously the arrival of their soldier hero, for deeds of renown are connected with the name they still loved, and remembered with such pleasing interest.

It was a fine spring evening when a gentleman and lady stepped from a handsome travelling carriage near the village of Ormindale, and taking a near path across the fields proceeded on foot to the churchyard. As they sauntered on, the shadows were deepening upon the hills, and lights began to twinkle in snug cottage homes; sounds which in the busy day were unperceived now began to be heard distinctly—those voices of the night—the rustle of the forest trees—the trinkle of the purling rill, or the hum of some belated heavy-laden bee, mingling with the soft coo of the wood pigeon, as he sang to his mate in the nest in the greenwood tree—all these fell pleasantly on the ear of the travellers as they entered the gate leading to the old churchyard. The gentleman wore a military cloak thrown around his tall well-built form, while a bright pleasant smile lighted up his sun-browned yet handsome features as he spoke gently to the fair, delicate-looking lady who hung on his arm.

“Annette,” said Lord Ormindale, for it was indeed he who had now returned with his young wife to take

possession of the home of his fathers, "I have paid my father's debts, but what I owe to Richard Laidlaw cannot be cancelled. I will never forget his kindness when I left my home and country, and the money then lent me was of no little service to a poor inexperienced youth, for I had parted with everything to the creditors. Mr Stanley, by my orders, has seen to the education of his grandchildren, and I must now help them to climb the ladder of fortune.

"Spoken like my own noble husband," answered the young wife fondly and proudly, as she gazed up into the fine manly countenance that bent so tenderly down upon her. "Oh, how I wish, Edward, that the good old couple had lived to see this day, and to welcome you once more amongst them; but here are their graves," and as she spoke they stood by the side of a plain marble monument, upon which was inscribed these words, "Sacred to the memory of Richard Laidlaw, who departed this life January 1810. Also in remembrance of Ann Forbes, his wife, who died May 1815;" and underneath was the verse, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." "This stone was erected by their grateful friend and master, Edward, Lord Ormindale."

"They went to their grave like a shock of corn fully ripe," said the young nobleman, "and with hopes of a

glorious resurrection. They served God, Annette, in their day and generation; let us follow in their footsteps."

"Amen," uttered the gentle lady; "for though our station demands higher duties, yet we, too, are but servants; and, oh! Edward, may we obtain grace to be faithful, that at the last and great day we may be found at the right hand of the Judge, and hear Him saying unto us, 'Come, ye blessed of my father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"







## CHAPTER XV.

### NEW YEAR'S EVE.

"Old customs, oh ! I love the sound  
However simple they may be,  
Whate'er with time hath sanction found,  
Is welcome and is dear to me.  
Pride grows above simplicity,  
And spurns them from her haughty mind,  
And soon the poet's song will be  
The only refuge they can find."

CLARE.

**I**T is a curious and interesting study to trace the connection between those customs which the author of the "Shepherd's Calendar" loves to record, and the rites and ceremonies of our Pagan ancestors ;—customs which even the dawn of a purer light could not banish, though it caused them to be no longer regarded with superstitious reverence.

The festivities of Christmas and New Year especially

lead us back to the earliest Roman and Druidical records. The burning of the Yule log recalls the memory of our Norse forefathers, who thus sought to propitiate the favour of their gods Odin and Thor. Lords and ladies, as well as their retainers, took the liveliest interest in this observance, and willing hands aided in dragging the ponderous log from the forest to its destined spot, amidst the shouts of the bystanders; while around the hearth, where it blazed and crackled, old feuds were forgotten, and ancient friendships renewed, as tales of wonder and romance were related, some of them so grewsome that the listeners started when the midnight wind swept past, causing the tapestry on the walls to shake and quiver.

Then the mistletoe, which plays such an important part in the adorning of halls and houses at this genial season, though only to us a graceful recognition of hoary Christmas, was held by the ancient Britons in great esteem, because of its supposed medicinal virtues. By the hand of the chief Druid it was carefully severed with golden knife from the sacred oak, the people crowding around the white-robed priest to receive the sprigs which were suspended over the doors of their dwellings as an offering to the gods.


Nor is the Christmas tree a plant of modern growth, although it has but recently become popular in Scotland.

Far down into the soil of Norse mythology its roots extend, being doubtless a twig from the renowned tree of life with which the traditions of the north abound. This, like the Yule log and mistletoe, being adopted in early Christian times, was employed as a means of commemorating the birth of our Saviour ; and an interesting German picture of Reformation days represents Luther and his children gathered around a tree, illuminated with coloured lamps, spending their Christmas eve pleasantly and profitably, enlivened by the company and conversation of the good and great Melancthon.

In our practical land the Christmas tree has now obtained a vigorous growth, where it flourishes less as a means of gratification to ourselves than for the good of others. How many charitable objects are supported by means of its pleasant fruits, as the following lines composed by a Christian lady will show :

“ Oh ! ye in silken dress !  
With smoothly braided tress  
What know ye of distress ?  
Go—seek it out—’twill be  
A fresh life unto thee.  
The lighted Christmas tree  
Deck out with sympathy !  
On each branch hang some meat,  
Add puddings for a treat.

The useful strong-stitched shirt,  
And shoes to brave the dirt.  
Socks for the little toes—  
And kerchiefs for the nose ;  
Practice what others preach,  
Oh ! put them within reach ;  
The homely garment too  
Place in conspicuous view ;  
With jacket for good boy—  
Ragged—without employ.  
Open your money bag,  
Your fingers must not lag,  
Red cloaks make brightest flag ;  
Come bid the lame foot caper,  
And light the cottage taper ;  
Be to the erring kind,  
A guide unto the blind.  
Your tree will then be gay,  
With blooms on every spray,  
For charity's sweet flower  
Ne'er fades in wintry hour,  
Oh ! choose the better part,  
So thus cheer poor folks' heart.  
Go to the crowded court—  
To poverty's resort,  
And give a Christmas dole  
Unto the starving soul ;  
Cheer up the down-cast man,  
The workless artisan.  
Disperse his heart-sick gloom,



Light up that wretched room,  
See there—the silent loom !  
Restraining the broken lyre,  
Blow up the dying fire ;  
All—all your aid require !  
Your sister—and your brother,  
The little child and mother.  
The cradle—help to rock it—  
The candle's in the socket ;  
Whilst there is time, do good,  
Shake off your selfish mood  
And give them needful food,  
For hunger will not wait,  
Death claims her for his mate,  
To-morrow—is too late !  
Closed then will be the door,  
To serve God—through His poor.  
Ah ! ye in silken dress—  
With smoothly braided tress  
What think ye of distress ?  
A Christian Christmas keep,  
And weep with them who weep ;  
Rich, very rich, your pay,  
It ne'er will melt away,  
For what you lend your Lord  
By Him shall be restored ;  
As stewards ye were sent.  
Oh ! purchase sweet content,  
The increase will arise,  
Of such self-sacrifice,

Up to the very skies.  
Bread on the waters cast,  
Returneth home at last."

Christmas, however, has always been less a Scottish than an English festival.

North of the Tweed, in the times of our fathers, Hogmanay, the last day of the year, was the commencement of festivities, being the first of the *daft days*, a term applied to the uproarious jocularities which was wont to distinguish that period, and though this boisterous enjoyment has greatly declined (a circumstance not to be regretted), New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are still regarded as the chief national holiday.

In country towns and remote districts, where old customs are still maintained in much of their primitive simplicity, Hogmanay (the derivation of which yet puzzles our antiquaries) is not only the first but the principal day of these merry-makings, when the children of the humbler sort, arrayed in large pinafores, proceed in bands along the streets, calling at the doors of the better class for an expected handful of oaten cakes, singing such verses as—

"Get up gude-wife and shake your feathers,  
Dinna think that we are beggars,  
We are bairns come out to play,  
Or to seek our Hogmanay."

Or this—

“ My feet’s cauld, my shoon’s thin,  
Gie’s my cakes an’ let me rin.”

Varied, it may be, with—

“ We are not daily beggars  
That beg from door to door,  
But we are neighbours’ children  
Whom ye have seen before.”

The bread, with sometimes the addition of a piece of cheese, is deposited in the apron, which is folded as a pocket, and then with a curtesy or bow the little people march off to the next dwelling. On the afternoon or evening it is pleasant to see them returning home laughing and chatting merrily, the elder children leading their small brothers and sisters, each one laden with handsels upon which the other members of the family may feed, and thus in homely fashion enjoy the happy season.

In the evening the doing of the guisers or mummers commence. These, with false faces and masks, go from house to house in bands of four and five acting plays, in which singing forms the principal part.

“ Then came the merry maskers in  
And carols roared with blythesome din;  
If unmelodious was the song,  
It was a hearty note and strong,

R

Who lists may in their mummary see  
Traces of ancient mystery ;  
White shirts supplied the masquerade  
And smutted cheeks the visors made."

After this followed the custom of gathering round the Wassail Bowl, which, though now almost exploded, we may glance at in passing.

When the clock struck the knell of the departing year, the master of the household lifting the previously prepared draught of spiced ale, called "*het pint*," tasted it before passing it round to his family, saying the Saxon word "Wassail," *i.e.*, "to your health." Then came a general hand-shaking, succeeded by songs, such as—

" Weel may we a' be,  
Ill may we never see.  
Here's to the king  
An' the gude company."

After this the elder members of the party visited the houses of the neighbours, with the "*het pint*" in kettles, also a large supply of bread and cheese. They who soonest entered a dwelling after twelve o'clock were termed *first-foot*, hence it was thought necessary, in order to secure luck for the family with whom civilities were interchanged, that the strangers should come *full-handed*.



To this usage the poet refers when he says—

“ Long ere the lingering dawn of that blythe morn  
Which ushers in the year, the roosting cock  
Flapping his wings repeats his larum shrill ;  
But on that morn no busy flail obeys  
His rousing call, no sounds but sounds of joy  
Salute the year. The first-foot's entering step,  
That sudden on the floor is welcome heard  
Ere blushing maids have braided up their hair ;  
The laugh, the hearty kiss, the *good new-year*,  
Pronounced with honest warmth. In village grange  
And borough town, the steaming flagon, borne  
From house to house, elates the poor man's heart  
And makes him feel that life has still its joys ;  
The aged and the young, man, woman, child,  
Unite in social glee.”

Perhaps no family in Scotland was more particular in observing all the old manners and customs of our country than were the Leslies of Blawearry, especially those of New-Year's Eve, when a great feast was prepared for the dependants and servants of the household, and the laird brewed with his own hands the *het pint* which regaled the merry company.

Early in the last century, the mansion of Blawearry stood on the edge of a bleak and rushy moor-land; a small fir-wood was its only protection when the keen east winds rushed down the neighbouring glen in their

fury, while storms from other quarters raged unchecked against its time-worn walls ; though a laird's residence, it was small and unpretending in appearance, having little to distinguish it from the houses of the substantial farmers around, for scarcely aught of lawn or even garden could it boast, and the "steading," or farm buildings, and offices bore traces of decay. It was called by the country people the big or *heigh town* o' Blaweary, and the hamlet of the same name a mile distant was designated the wee, or *laigh town*.

In the days of which I write, Hugh Leslie, its proprietor, was an old man with firm erect gait, large yet handsome features, and an eye of undimmed lustre, though he could number threescore years and ten. Many stories were afloat in the country regarding his eccentricities, for the Leslies had ever been a peculiar race, and the laird, as he was familiarly called, seemed to have inherited no small share of the family characteristics, and yet few ever bore a higher reputation for probity and honour, or were more respected in the district than was Leslie of Blaweary. He was proud, too ; proud of his descent from a long line of ancestors which ascended so high as to be lost in the mists of antiquity, though with his descent he had also succeeded to a short rent-roll like many a laird of that period ; and yet he was proud of his lands and would not have

exchanged them for the best that Scotland could produce. But above all was he proud of his good and noble son Adam Leslie, the flower of all the country around, and the father of his little grandson Hugh, who was the very joy of his heart and the light of his eye. And thus the Laird did not consider himself a man to be trampled upon, not even by his haughty neighbour, the Earl of Westfield, who occasionally amused himself and his friends by hunting and hawking over the fields of Blaweary adjoining his own.

One day after his Lordship had been thus trespassing, he only answered the Laird's remonstrances by quoting the old saying, "The foot of sportsman never spoiled grain." Leslie summoned the wives of his crofters in the "laigh town" to assemble the next morning in front of his house, each leading a cow by the halter and bearing a barnyard cock on her wrist. Obedient to his call the women, about fifteen in number, appeared, and with this strange party he marched off to the corn field in front of his neighbour's castle. Back and forward through the grain went the laird and his dependants, with the cows in a row before them, and the cocks screaming and fluttering on their arms, until his Lordship, who had been watching from the windows this extraordinary proceeding, rushed down upon them, exclaiming:

"Are ye gane daft, Blawearly? What kind o' wark is this ye are carrying on?"

"How? what is wrang, my Lord?" was the reply of the Laird, not a muscle of his face moving.

"Wrang! I think there's plenty wrang," said his Lordship "ha'e ye nae mercy on my gude corn? It will be fit for little after this."

"The foot of sportsman never spoiled grain," answered Leslie, continuing his walk.

"Stop," cried the nobleman with a face of astonishment. "What do ye mean, Laird? I doubt ye're losin' your reason."

"I'm only hunting," persisted his neighbour, "a thing ye weel enjoy yoursel', sae ye needna grudge it to me."

"Eh! but ye ha'e ta'en strange birds for sport, an' as strange a company to sport wi'," answered his Lordship, looking around on the Laird's companions with a smile.

"Every man to his taste," was the rejoinder of the eccentric man. "Ye hunt wi' hound an' hawk; I wi' cow, cock, an' carline."

"Oh! Blawearly, Blawearly," was the reply of the noble Lord, making the air ring with his loud peals of laughter. "There's naeboddy fit to beat ye. Gang hame, now that ye ha'e trussed a' my corn, an' I'll promise you I'll never ride ower your fields again without leave asked and given."

The Laird being satisfied with this assurance, and having thus punished his neighbour for his unwarrantable and unlawful intrusion on his property, turned his party homewards, while his Lordship generously rewarded the poor women for their unwilling and most annoying share of the sport.

Leslie lived in superstitious times, but one peculiarity of his nature was, his utter unbelief in all tales of sooth-saying, omens, and the like, and his contempt for those who had faith in them, laughing at ghosts, wraiths, and other spirits of the unseen world ; adding often, " If folk wad only face the thing they think no canny, they wad soon find out there was naething after a' to fear them." And truly the Laird could speak from experience, for, upon one occasion at least his courage had been severely tested and did not fail. Passing late one night through a lonely part of the moor, his horse suddenly started and sprang back, endangering the security of his rider's seat. In vain was he lashed and spurred to make him advance, it only made him more determined to resist. Astonished at behaviour so strange, the Laird dismounted to lead forward the reluctant steed, and soon saw what had so alarmed it. Standing erect upon the side of the path, was an object which appeared like a coffin, and the nearer he approached it the stronger grew the resemblance, till the moon, shining clearly out

from behind the clouds which had obscured it, revealed to his astonished gaze the very brass nails and plate upon its lid! Yes, there it stood right in front of him, a veritable coffin; many a timorous man would have avoided a nearer approach to this unchancy thing at such a place, at such an hour; not so the Laird, for, going bravely forward until within a yard of it, he struck it a blow with the heavy end of his whip, causing a figure to start out in the shape of a boy.

"You little rascal," said the Laird, waxing wroth at the supposed trick. "What are ye daein' here at this time o' nicht? an' what gars ye stick up sic things in the road to fricht folk?"

"I was gawn wi' my maister to chest a corpse," replied the youth, trembling with fear at having thus unintentionally provoked the wrath of Mr Leslie, "and we had come this length frae hame, when he saw he had forgotten the screw nails, sae I was stanin' in the beild o' the coffin till he cam' back."

"And so," the Laird would add, after relating the circumstance, "every ghost wad turn out as substantial a ane if it was only seen into."

Misfortunes had of late been gathering over the house of Blawearry, threatening it with a still shorter rent-roll, and, what was worse, a fear of the land passing from the family. One friend for whom the Laird, in an unlucky

hour, became surety, absconded, and another failed, thus verifying the old saying that "sorrow never comes single." But for the decease of a relation in a distant land, to whose wealth the Leslies were the sole heirs, things might then have gone hard enough with them ; and yet the Laird was not without anxiety, for in order to secure that wealth, his son Adam had gone across the seas, a more formidable undertaking in those days than now ; and though three years had elapsed since his departure, no tidings of him had ever reached the old mansion on the moor.

And now morn had dawned once more upon the household of Blawearry. There was just snow enough to cover the earth with pure and uniform white, which glistened in the rays of the sun, shining unobscured by cloudlet or mist in the blue sky. Brightly fell those beams upon the frost-covered trees, here glistening a topmost bough, and there shooting through the openings in lines of gold ; streaming in at the ivy-covered casement upon the wife of Adam Leslie, busy, with heavy heart, preparing for the annual feast which could now be so difficult to procure.

Elliot Leslie, the Laird's daughter-in-law, was a young woman whose face had less of beauty than a peculiar kindly expression, betokening great good sense and a leal honest heart ; though attired in homely stuff dress

and apron, with plain linen frill standing up around her plump white neck. She needs not the bunch of keys hanging by her girdle to indicate her rank as mistress of the household; her whole bearing testifies to her position. Her step is firm and composed, and the manner in which she gives her orders to the serving maid, has in it an air of dignity only belonging to a well-born gentlewoman, such as Mrs Leslie was.

There is bustle this morning in the dining-room, with its high windows looking out into the long stretch of moorland, which, gleaming in the sunbeams, is bright and cheerful. The room, though destitute of all pretensions to elegance, is nevertheless snug and comfortable, with its carpet of thick grey woollen stuff, and its warm hearth-rug, the work of Elliot's nimble fingers, on which is seated little Hugh, playing with a handful of fir-tops that divide his attention with Tweed, his father's sheep dog; for the heir of the Leslies, when at his home, disdains not to put his shoulder to the work of the farm.

With a sorrowful heart Elliot has been making preparation for this entertainment, and as Mr Leslie enters the room she says with a sigh—

“Adam promised to be hame to our last year's supper, an' now another ane has come, an' he's no here yet.”

“I canna think what's keepin' him,” replied the Laird, “but doubtless it's something he's nae power to



prevent; for Adam's no' the lad to bide away if he could help it."

"He never did stay wi' his will frae his ain fireside," answered the young woman sadly, "an' when a' the lave were carryin' on wi' junketting and non sense, Adam cam' aye hame steady an' sober frae bridal an' burial; it's that that mak's me sae anxious noo, an' gars me fear something maun ha'e happened to him."

"But think on the length o' the road, an' a' that may ha'e taigled him in foreign lands," said her father-in-law, assuming a more cheerful tone than he really felt, to comfort the heart of the anxious wife. "'Deed Elliot," he continued, "it was nonsense o' us expectin' him sae sune, sae dinna be cast doon, my bonny bairn, for he'll be hame some day when we're no' lookin' for him."

"Then that'll be never, grandfather," replied Mrs Leslie; "for there's no' an hour in the day, or a day in the year that I dinna look for him, or, I may say, nor minute either;" adding sadly, yet fondly, while she dashed the tear from her blue eye, "Oh! weary fa' the world's gear that took my ain gudeman awa'; I wad rather the lands o' Blawearry were sunk in the saut sea than that Adam Leslie, the best an' bravest o' a' the country side, cam' to harm."

"Elliot Leslie, ye speak-na like a daughter o' your

father's house," replied the old man reproachfully, "for the Fraser women were aye ready to gi'e up their nearest and dearest without murmur or complaint if sae it was ordered by an all-wise Providence; an' was it no' Providence that cast this gowd in our way, at the very time it was needed to save the bonny holms an' haughs that in summer wave wi' yellow broom an' gowans, frae fa'in' into the hands of strangers. Tell me, Elliot," he continued, "wad ye like to see them pass out o' our line, where they ha'e been sin' the days o' Bruce and Wallace (for didna a Leslie fight by their side when the usurper Edward and his fause Southrons tried to conquer a country that, thanks to our brave hearts and true, has never been enslaved!) an' was the land no' worth savin' for your son? But dinna be feared about Adam," he resumed, in a more subdued voice; "there's something mak's me feel sure he'll come hame safe and sound ere lang, an' we'll plant the Whinny Knowe wi' firs to bield the sheep in winter (for the faut o' this place has aye been the want o' shelter; our hills are bleak and bare then, though bonny in simmer); an' we'll drain the Doocot Park, forby gi'en' it a gude dose o' lime—it winna bear right craps without it;—aye, an' we'll build you a braw new house, Elliot, for that's what a' you women folk are maist ta'en up wi'."

"I hope it may be sae, Laird," said Elliot, smiling

through her tears at the old man's animation, "an' that for a' our sakes; but if only Adam were hame, for my part, I wad be weel content to live in a but-an'-ben the rest o' my life, an' feed on bread and water."

"There's nae use arguin' wi' women," was the answer of Leslie, "for they canna reason a matter wi' ane; an' ye're nae better in this respect than the rest o' your sex, for it's aye the ower-word o' every sang, 'Oh, if Adam were hame!' I canna get ye to be proud o' the land that has been sae lang our ain, and whilk, it is to be hoped, will one day be your son's."

"I'll tell ye what I *am* proud o', though," replied the young woman tenderly, while a light beamed in her soft eye, and something of a sad, yet exultant smile parted her lips, "I'm proud, proud o' being the wife of Adam Leslie, an' proud o' bearin' his name. Does that no' content ye, Laird?"

"God bless ye, my bairn," replied the father in a softened tone, "an' I'm content, for I see there's something in a true woman's heart that's aboon a' price, an' that gowd can never buy; an' yet, I aye kent that," he added; "I aye kent that; it's no 'noo I ha'e to learn it;" then putting his hand on the head of his daughter-in-law, he stroked down the chesnut hair that waved crisply over her white forehead and frank, kind face, saying, "Ye're worthy o' my son, Elliot, an' may God

send him safe hame to you again." Then, as if ashamed for giving way in this manner, he lifted his grandson from the floor, and began to play with the child, asking him what he would do when laird o' Blawearry, "though far off may that day be," he said, "for an auld head which is of little count, but a young ane that's muckle worth, maun lie low afore then."

"I'll get a horse like you to ride on," replied the boy; "an' I'll buy mother grand feathers like the leddies at the castle, forby gi'en' her a coach to ride in."

Seated upon his grandfather's shoulders, little Hugh was then borne off, while Mrs Leslie continued the work of preparation, superintending baking and brewing, dusting and scouring, and I know not what else.

"Where is Hugh?" asked his mother, when the afternoon of this busy day was drawing to a close.

"I ha'ena seen him sin' he gaed oot after dinner wi' his grandfather," replied one of the servants.

"I saw him playing wi' Tweed after that," answered another, looking up from her work of paring a large pot full of potatoes; "but I'll gang out an' see if he's no' wi' Geordie in the barn."

"I wish ye wad," rejoined her mistress, "an' bring him in wi' ye; he maun get his face washed an' his clean frock on noo."

"It's no easy getting him away frae Geordie," said

the woman, putting on her clogs; "but I'll tell him ye want him," and so saying, she set off in search of the child, returning soon with the news that "he hadna been there this lang time," adding, "He's an unco callant for wanderin' away wi' Tweed, seekin' bonny stanes an' flowers, yet he's no' likely to get either the a'e thing or the other the noo."

"I'm never happy when he gangs danderin' his lane," answered his mother; "for naebody kens what may happen a bairn like him; see if he's no' playin' at the burn side, or wi' his grandfather in the wheat-land park."

Again Jenny went out in search of little Hugh, and again returned, telling her mistress that he was nowhere to be seen, and that he had not been with his grandfather for hours.

"My bairn, my bairn!" exclaimed the poor mother, now forgetting everything but the absence of her child. "What can ha'e come ower him."

Just then Mr Leslie entered in haste, saying, "Get me my plaid an' stick, Elliot, for I canna rest till I gang an' seek the laddie, though nae doubt he's snug eneuch somewhere, an' Tweed's wi' him, too, an' winna let ony harm come ower him."

Mr Leslie spoke in a cheery strain, for he saw his daughter-in-law's troubled countenance; and yet he

could not help feeling anxious, as three hours had elapsed since the child had last been seen, and first one and then another of the servants had returned without being able to throw any light upon the matter.

And now all have gone forth to assist in the search but the poor mother, who wanders like a ghost from room to room, and from parlour to kitchen, of that old house, calling upon her boy, watching the while with intense agony the quickly-gathering darkness, when the crimson glow passed away from the western sky softened into rosy tints, which in turn faded into green, until it emerged at last into a deep uniform blue, spangled here and there with a twinkling star. She saw, too, the shadows gradually thickening in the valley, and the hill tops darkening apace, becoming less and less visible to the eye; and then, as the moon began to appear above the horizon and scatter rays of light through the fir-trees, she hailed its presence as an angel of mercy. Two hours has the mother watched and waited—hours these of terrible grief and suspense, when not a footfall has broken the silence of that time; but now she hears a step approaching, and, rushing to the door, though her trembling limbs can scarce support her frame, sees in the moonlight a man with a child in his arms.

“My bairn, give me my bairn!” she exclaims, pressing forward to receive the child, unconscious of all, saving

that her boy was found, and never casting a look upon the restorer of her son.

"Elliot, do ye no' ken me?" asks the stranger, half sadly, half reproachfully; "and is this my welcome home?" but Elliot makes no reply, for joy and astonishment so completely overcame her, that she fell fainting into her husband's arms.

Who can describe the delighted surprise that awaited old Mr Leslie, when arriving soon afterwards from his hopeless, weary search, shrinking from meeting the eye of the mother when he brought back no tidings of her son, to behold, seated by the fire which blazed so brightly in the huge chimney, not only his little Hugh alive and well, but his own beloved son returned from foreign lands, and Elliot grasping firmly his hand, all trace of sorrow banished from her beaming countenance.

Adam Leslie explained to them, that having been detained longer than he anticipated before his deceased relatives' affairs could be settled, he had made all the haste he could home, knowing well how much he would be missed were he absent another year from the annual feast. Arriving at Liverpool, he travelled night and day for this purpose, and that afternoon, leaving the coach a few miles from the house, he hurried across the moor with beating heart, wondering if all were well, for no tidings of them had reached him in that distant

land. Upon coming to a hollow part of the way, he unexpectedly encountered his favourite dog, which at once bounded forward with a bark of welcome, but presently returned to the spot whence it had sprung, as if to attract his attention to a dark object over which it had evidently been keeping watch. As he approached he saw it was a child, sleeping soundly and apparently unhurt, protected, as it had evidently been, by the sheltering warmth of the dog. Wondering what could be the meaning of anything so strange, he gently lifted the unconscious little one, asking himself if this could be his boy he had left an infant. Yes, he felt it must be so; his age and features, as well as the dog's watchful care, testifying to the truth of the supposition.

That evening Adam Leslie sat at his father's right hand among the happiest of the company who were assembled around the hospitable board in the old mansion-house of Blawearry, while Hugh, seated upon his knee, looked up into the manly sun-browned face of the father whom he knew for the first time, and as he nestled into the loving bosom, forgot the sorrow of that afternoon when, wandering unconsciously too far out upon the moor, he had become tired and frightened, and at last lay down and slept a sleep so sound as only to awake from it at his own door.

The wealth which Adam Leslie brought from foreign



lands, after clearing off the debts on the estate, built a new house for Elliot, as well as planted the Whinny Knowe, and drained through the land; and though the property still continues in the family, it bears a more modern name than the old one of Blawearry. But as a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth, neither doth his happiness; and Mrs Leslie often confessed that, after all, those were pleasant days when she planned to keep up appearances, and worked with her own willing hands for those she loved—ay, perhaps pleasanter than when riches flowed in, and menials waited upon those whom it had been her pride and pleasure to attend. Young Adam, grandson of our little friend Hugh, is now heir to the wealth and estates of the Leslies, and a fine, handsome, manly fellow he is, promising to be no discredit to the race, while his mother, my dear friend, when she looks at him, says:

“He is a true shoot of the old tree, Rose, a real Leslie in heart and name, only, I trust, without their pride; at least I try to put before him how vain it is to count upon wealth, or rank, or a long pedigree; ‘for the Lord maketh poor and maketh rich; He bringeth low and lifteth up, leaving man nothing whereof he may boast.’”



## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE LOST BLANKETS.

**T**HE farm-town of Gritland, comprised a homely little world of its own. Far removed from neighbours, it had an independent life within itself, and what interested one member, was usually a matter of more or less consequence to all.

If the turnip crop failed, or the prevalence of wet weather prevented the safe housing of the cut grain in the stack-yard, then, from the old grey-haired labourer to the little "herd callant," all sympathised alike in what was considered an individual loss; or if the black colt became lame, or the brindled cow began to droop, mistress and maid, as well as master and man, shared in the wish to restore, as far as human means could do it, soundness and health again to the lame and sick.

But though Gritland had this independent life within

itself, it nevertheless hailed with avidity tidings from the outer world. Even the arrival of the ten-day's old newspaper was a welcome sight to the "maister," who, with spectacles on nose, duly read its contents, and discussed them at the market of the neighbouring town, or of an evening by the whitewashed hearth, with his eldest son Rob Tennant, though the "gudewife" and her daughters cared not to hear the politics of the nation, but contented themselves with the concerns of their own little household. Gritland was as fair a spot as eye could rest upon; situated amidst pleasant and picturesque hills, at the top of a wild glen, through which a water brawled and foamed over grey rocks fringed with birch and hazel. The house was one-storeyed and thatched, a very primitive, simple-looking dwelling, surrounded by its little garden, in which grew hardy vegetables and gooseberry bushes, diversified with its flower-borders, where bloomed the fragrant cabbage-rose, golden marigold, and rich carnation; while little less fair was the green pasture land stretching away on all sides, carpeted with its wealth of beauty—children of moorland and sunny-bank. If the newspaper was a welcome sight to the gudeman, so doubtless Peggie and Bell Tennant watched the advance of the weekly carrier as he was seen slowly making his way up the water-side on the summer afternoons, his old grey horse and cart creeping along, and

he often half asleep on the top of his stores; hens and cocks cackling and fighting in the cage behind, while the mastiff, another "Rab," chained below the cart, snarled and barked at every strange dog it met on the road. The carrier brought news of the doings of other farm-houses in his rounds, telling the gudeman whether some neighbour's field chanced this year to be in corn or grass, or conveying to the mistress the tidings of some rival's doings, besides bringing in his well-loaded cart groceries and other stores that supplied the family. Neither, amongst the welcome visitors at the moorland farm, must the wandering vagrant be forgotten, though of late that race had not been so well received by Mrs Tennant, on account of certain depredations having been recently committed by one upon whom the farmer and his wife took pity.

It had been a long, busy day at Gritland, the labourer had been at work from dawn till dewy eve, but now the September sun had set, and the moon hung out full and clear in the dark blue sky, to light the wearied workers from the potato field, laden with their baskets and other implements of husbandry. Soon there was bustle in the farm-yard, tidings of the approach of the company, eager for the substantial supper of porridge, the making of which had been the labour of the blythe Peggy Tennant, the youngest daughter of the farmer.

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"Are ye ready for us, Peggy?" exclaimed Rob, as he entered the kitchen followed by the others, and threw aside his broad blue bonnet.

"Ready for ye!" the girl retorted with a saucy air; "ay, and we ha'e been sae this hour an' mair; better for hungry folk, I reckon.

"We wadna ha'e worked sae late but for the braw moon," rejoined Rob; adding, "hech, but we've had a sair day's work."

"A young man like you crying out o' a hard day's wark; I wonder to hear ye, man," said Peggy, "ye'll never be able to haud the candle to your father."

Mr Tennant entering at this minute, and taking his seat at the head of the table, after an earnest grace, nothing could be heard for some time but the clatter of spoons and plates, and the merry laugh and jokes of the party, who seemed to be ready to enjoy their evening meal, after the labours of the day was over. When all was past, and the servants had left the kitchen to the undisputed dominion of Mrs Tennant and her daughter, they set "to tidy up the house," while the gudeman dozed comfortably by the fire.

Presently a rap at the door announced the approach of a visitor, and Tweed, who had been sleeping with his head between his paws at his master's feet, started up and barked furiously at the intruder. "Be quiet, will

ye ! Lie down !” exclaimed Peggy, giving him a push with her foot, while she proceeded to open the door, at the side of which stood a young man, who had started back at the rude reception vouchsafed him by the dog, but now, seeing the kindly face of the girl, plucked up courage to ask, in a whining tone, “ a nicht’s quarters.”

“ I dinna ken,” answered Peggy ; “ my mother is aye sayin’ she winna keep ony mair folk like you ; but ye’ll aye get your supper, an’ ye have plenty o’ light to take you to the next farm-house.”

“ Bless your bonny face,” replied the man, “ ye’ll no set me away, I’m sure, when all I ask is a corner in the barn or byre ?”

“ He canna be here,” cried Mrs Tennant, from the kitchen, where she had heard the conversation between her daughter and the stranger. “ ’Deed an’ he winna be here. The last folk we gi’ed quarters to, stole my blankets—an’ braw new anes they were, carded an’ spun by mysel’, as if I had naething to do but work for idle, lazy loons,” she added, with a mixture of contempt and anger in her tones.

“ Oh ! mistress, but I’m tired, an’ my feet are a’ blistered ; ha’e pity on me ; ye dinna ken how your ain may need pity some day.”

“ Gae awa’ wi’ ye ! a strong man like you wanderin’ the country ; it’s a shame to you. I’m vexed for a

wife and a wheen hungry weans, or ony auld frail body that canna work, an' canna starve either ; but you, a stout young chield, as fit to work as ony o' our men ; it's a shame to ye, I say !"

"I'm seekin' work, mistress. I'm willin' to work if ony body will ha'e me ; an' as for onything b'langin' to ye, I'll pass my word, it'll be unskaited by me."

"Na, na, I'll no trust ye," still persisted the mistress, while the young man held his ground, regardless of harsh words, and kept singing out in whining tones, the hardships and sorrows of his sad lot, and pouring out all manner of blessings on the household, if only he might have "a nicht's quarters."

"Tuts, gudewife, dinna be sae hard on the puir lad !" exclaimed the farmer, now roused from his doze by the fire, and at last interested in the youth's perseverance ; "an' dinna think because a'e set are bad that a' the rest are the same."

"But what caution ha'e I," retorted Mrs Tennant, "that he'll no touch ought about the place ? and his tongue's ower smooth to belang to an honest man, I doubt."

"I'll gi'e ye the Almighty Himsel' as my caution," replied the beggar earnestly.

"Weel, weel," said the farmer, impressed by the citation given, "that's the best caution ony man could

ha'e, an' ane that'll never fail; sae, gudewife, let him stay the nicht; he looks tired enough, puir chield."

Now, Mrs Tennant, at heart, was really a kindly, hospitable woman, whose "bark," as her husband expressed it, "was aye waur than her bite," therefore, not unwillingly did she proceed, when thus commanded to give out from her well-stored chest a pair of good warm blankets, to spread over some straw in an empty stall in the stable, thus furnishing no unwelcome bed for the beggar, to which he gladly retired after a plentiful supper, and being present at worship amongst the rest of the household, which always closed the day at Girtland.

"Peggy, Peggy, the vagrant's away, blankets an' a'!" exclaimed Rob, as he came hastily into the kitchen the next morning, where, though it was still early, his sisters were already at work.

"Nonsense, Rob, ye're only plaguing us," said Bell; but at the same time proceeding to the stable to judge for herself of the truth of her brother's statement, but soon after returning, she said to her sister—"It's true, Peggy, he's fairly off, blankets an' a'! What will oor mother say?"

Of course, Mrs Tennant was very angry when the news reached her; and, of course, in her wrath, she did not spare her husband, for, like many in this world, the



good woman was a great grumbler, and seemed to derive wonderful comfort from brooding and fretting over trials. As for the gudeman, he bore at all times her repinings very meekly; but especially just now, when he felt he was to blame, and also that he was confused as to the workings of Providence in this case. "I dinna understand it, Bell," he would say to his daughter, when they chanced to meet during the day; "I trusted the Lord, and He cannot fail; it's me that maun be at fault. Your mother has cause to be angry; but it's no' the worth o' the blankets that vexes me, it's that the man could steal, an' tak' God's holy name in his mouth the way he did." On the other hand, Mrs Tennant kept saying—

"I shouldna ha'e listened to your faither, bairns, for he's like a' other men; they've no' a grain o' sense, except about craps an' kye, an' ony bodie wi' a fraisin story 'll gar them believe black's white."

"Oh! mother," her daughters would say, "we'll no' be ruined wi' the loss o' the blankets; an' surely its better to be cheated than aye suspectin' folk; besides, ye ken, oor faither aye looks on the puir as his mother's legacy to him. Ye mind she charged him on her death-bed, as he valued her blessing, he wad never turn a hungry beggar frae his door."


"I might be sure ye wad tak' your faither's part,"

retorted Mrs Tennant in an aggrieved tone; "it's the way wi' a' my bairns—they never care for what I say, or how I am used." But Rob, who at this moment entered, went up to her, and said in coaxing tones—

"Never mind, mother, ye shall have half-a-dozen o' the best fleeces to do what ye like wi'; sae, dinna fret ower the scamp; he'll never thrive wi' his illgotten gains."

Again did another busy day pass away at the lonely farm-house. The out-workers, as before, engaged on the farm, from early morning till the moon again lighted them homewards, while Mrs Tennant and her daughters within doors, churned the churn, made the fine yellow butter into soft round rolls, and prepared the meals of the family.

Again did the sun go down in beauty, after burnishing with gold the fading heather on the hillsides, and sparkling on the mountain stream, where the trouts had sported and leaped in freedom during the day. The ploughmen and their young master had gone to the neighbouring smithy, to superintend the shoeing of the horses, and have a gossip with the intelligent smith and the men who in general gathered about him in the evenings; while the women talked and laughed, and spoke of lovers and merry-makings, as they milked the patient cows, or suppered them up for the night.



Mr Tennant read his newspapers by the light of the coal-fire, and his wife plied with busy fingers the wheel upon which Peggy had spun at intervals during the day.

Again a tap was heard at the door, and was answered by the herd laddie, who had entered the kitchen a minute before.

"It's a man wantin' a nicht's quarters, mistress," called out the lad.

The sound of the request at once brought out all Mrs Tennant's pent-up ire; she hastened to the door to give the unlucky vagrant a sound rating in revenge for the last night's defaults, but started back in astonishment, speechless, as she saw standing before her the thief of the previous evening. Nor was the man's amazement less than her own, and this was increased by consternation as he found himself face to face with the woman he had injured. Not long, however, was Mrs Tennant deprived of the use of her tongue; for breaking out in a torrent of indignation, she saluted the wretched culprit in no gentle tones—as a "cheat the gallows," "an unhang'd blackguard,"—while he stood pale and trembling in her presence, his limbs hardly able to support his frame. At last he exclaimed, in tones of genuine misery—

"Oh! mistress, as ye wad hope for mercy yersel' at

the Great Day, grant it to me," flinging, at the same time, the burden from his shoulder, and looking piteously around.

But Mrs Tennant was not to be deceived again with smooth words; she would give him up to justice; she would lay his feet fast; indeed there was no end to what she would not do to such a black, ill-faured, deceiving villian.

"Oh, Jeanie, Jeanie!" cried her husband, now approaching the poor frightened wretch. "Dinna be sae hard on an erring fellow-crater." At the same time, turning to the beggar, he asked, "How cam' ye back here, man, wi' your stolen property?"

"I didna ken the house again, for I got clean bewildered as I wandered o'er the hills frae daybreak, blinded by a mist sae thick I couldna see a yard afore me, and the burden on my back turned like lead. Oh! maister, surely the God I mocked was fechtin' against me," at the same time, adding, "Ha'e pity on me, maister, ha'e pity on me."

"Jeanie, Jeanie woman," answered Mr Tennant, turning to his wife, "ye see, our caution couldna fail us. Now Jeanie, woman, never let us mistrust Him again; an' now, for His sake, who has proved Himself this night a God whose ways are past finding out, a tower of strength to those who trust in Him, forgi'e this puir man,

as ye yourself wad hope to be forgi'en, and I'll warrant you he'll steal nae mair frae you."

"Ye ha'e said true, maister," answered the beggar, "for I ha'e learnt this day a lesson I'll never forget, that there is a God aboon,—a truth I, till this day, didna believe."

"An' I ha'e learnt a lesson likewise," said Mrs Tennant, penitentially. "Sae ye're welcome to your supper an' bed. Oh! but I'm a faithless, ungratefu' woman," she continued, thoughtfully; "An' wad I withhold forgiveness frae a fellow-sinner! If I did, I wad be like the man in the parable who owed his master five hundred pence, and yet beat his fellow because he could not pay him fifty."

No small astonishment was shown amongst the household, when one after another entered the kitchen and recognised the thief sitting a humble penitent man in the beggar's seat at the back of the huge fireplace, and Mr Tennant failed not to improve the occasion at worship to children and servants, and very heartily did their united voices sing the words of the 62d Psalm:

"My soul, wait thou with patience  
Upon thy God alone;  
On Him dependeth all my hope  
And expectation."

288      *ROUND THE GRANGE FARM.*

The old farm-house of Girtland is no longer to be seen, and all that is left of the spot is a stone, with a rude inscription, telling, in poetry, the story we have told in prose.

