



MACALPINE
ON SCOTTISH GROUND



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OR,

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CHAPTER XXV.

ON the night of the feast at Walter Malcolm's, Roderick Macalpine sat at his bundles of actions of law as he heard the rumble of a coach at his door. The glowing pages of the Bible, Shakespeare, and Ossian, for long his entire literature, had been for many years neglected for these records of his own strife. He was not in absolute absorption, for the bundles had been mostly before him daily for twenty years, and he was early at the carriage door, the thick greyish locks of his unbonneted head standing up in the night air, while he bent with profuse gallantry towards the lady who looked

forth. His imagination readily conceived a princess ; it was long since a lady had visited the quarters of the decayed laird.

“Will your ladyship alight?” he inquired in a soft melting tone, not knowing to whom he was speaking, although Miss Mar had announced her name. She descended from her carriage, and was led in the arm of the laird into his dwelling, not dissatisfied.

The chief of the Macalpines was greatly impressionable by a fine exterior. The visitor had neglected no charm of splendid attire by which she might storm the fancy of those who are captivated through the eye. The richest designs of fashion, in keeping with an ambition for Highland distinction, heightened the expression of her commanding form. Roderick Macalpine internally raged at his son’s blindness to the charms of so fine a woman. He himself was altogether charmed. He had cursed her a thousand times, and might curse her yet an equal number ; but while she reposed

in his presence in the full magnificence of a great Highland lady, he had nothing for her but the devotion of the gallant chief.

He turned from his volumes, containing many very hard names against his successor at Morven, to extol him. He delighted to think he saw in the visit of Miss Mar her inalienable engagement with his son. Intoxicating was the delight of this immediate sense of the prospect of success to the fond dream of his latter years ; and he launched into wild panegyrics, forgot his records of actions at law, and was in fancy back again in the old days, when a chief, cheered with the pride of state, and his younger imagination was in raptures with Nature and her Highland bard, Ossian, as he strode over the heather hills. Colonel Mar's gallantry as a soldier of course reminded him of a Macalpine's, about whom he would have rattled on *ad infinitum*, had not Miss Mar put a peremptory question to him, which had the effect of turning him for a few minutes into a listener.

She did not learn with surprise that Alan was a guest at a farm-house, though on being informed that there was a gathering of young people, a throb of uneasiness passed through her. She imagined the presence of Ellen Lee with the instinctive fear of a woman unassured of complete conquest. She thought she saw the face of Roderick Macalpine fall, as he spoke of the gathering at which Alan was present. What could be the cause of this, she thought, except his son's renewed attachment to so mean a rival? She wished to draw from the outspoken Highlander his distaste for the "peasant girl," as she drew her conclusion from the shaded brow of the father.

But the laird did not wish to tread near to this delicate ground. He was never truly wary and politic, but he felt the necessity cast upon him of being so to-night to his utmost, and he seized, with brilliant force, topics which were afar from that upon which his visitor wished to draw him,

although he strained every nerve to show his delight at the visit and its meaning. "Ah!" cried he, with the slightest pretext for introducing the subject, "Belief in the supernatural is a religion to a poetic people. These towering hills, dark crying forests, and lochs inviting to repose, associated with the supernal life, draw us closer to heaven. How I love the shadows on the hills, and the voices of the storm; they excite anticipation, or soothe the troubled soul. And in the vapours of night, the stars dim-twinkled through her form, or as the ghost of the hill when it moves in a sunbeam at noon over the silence of Morven, does my imagination find the spirit of a departed love, as it frowns or smiles hovering over my checkered life. Ah! to-night, like Ossian, my soul is full of other times; the joy of my youth returns. Thus the sun appears in the west after the steps of his brightness have moved behind a storm; the green hills lift their dewy heads; the blue streams rejoice in the

vale ! You are not surprised at my joy ! ” He wished her to observe his happiness, as if all were smooth and well.

Miss Mar wondered ; she thought him mad in his raptures ; but even she thought now there was some reality in all these poetic fancies. How she wished she could be enthusiastic in a mild way about nature and the “ vagaries ” of the poet’s interpretations. She was quite eager for more emotion—more intense sense of life, but without intending, however, to give up any of the kind she already possessed.

“ Your son seems a believer in prophecy,” she said ; “ when I showed him some doggerel lines prophesying the restoration to Morven of the Macalpines, he seemed to put faith in the fancy.”

“ He would not be a Macalpine if he did not,” said Roderick ; “ and will it not come true ? ” he continued, with an excited smile.

Miss Mar did not answer just at once.

He started from his seat. New emotion was

readily aroused in the breast of the old Highlander ; he grew fierce and gloomy, according in his appearance on the occasion with a tradition respecting these sons of the mountain.

“The truth of this prophecy has been proved before, Miss Mar,” he continued, while she watched, not without some apprehension, the new form of excitement in this being, new and strange to her, but one that her love of the original did not dislike. “Yet, I would,” he observed, after a pause, “you had not reminded me of it. I had thought of the restoration of the Macalpines without the spilling of blood.”

“It is my wish that it should be so,” said Lucretia Mar.

“Thank God for the avowal, lady. Ah, no ! ‘her heart is not the house of pride ; she is covered with the light of beauty,’” and he seized her strong and jewelled hand, and kissed it with a delicate fervour, which showed acquaintance with the accomplishments of

gallantry which succeed in reaching woman's heart.

"Surely," Miss Mar said, "if the Macalpines are restored without the flowing of blood, there will be no need for that horror. You almost make one fear to think of so quiet a proceeding, and one so easy of accomplishment, as a marriage between two modern Britons."

The laird recovered himself, partly by the presence which he felt of the woman of the world, while he remembered the obstacle to the union,—the dreaded plague of his thoughts; yet the reference of Miss Mar to the easy accomplishment of the marriage did not fail to arouse the pride of the Highlander, who, of course, delivered himself of it.

"It may seem an easy matter to the world," he said, "for an heiress to join hands with a Macalpine; yet, Madam, they are difficult beings."

"I know they are; I have heard of some

woman," her voice a little tremulous, but her aggressive haughty temper visible in every feature and motion; "but, of course, I have no rival now."

Roderick Macalpine gave no answer. She feared.

"A poor peasant girl," she continued, in her richest tones. "It is the freak of a spirit which delights in the fancy of freedom, that takes Alan to pass more hours than he cares with obscurity and innocence. Don't think I am really angry or jealous, though this may be done to pique me to be so. I found no male personage worthy the wish among my acquaintance, otherwise I might have amused myself, too. But do you think that meantime amusing with a being possessing only a poor yearning fancy, that I should not have expected him to give way when the hour arrived for my marriage with a man. So this poor woman will have to go out of the way; it can be managed, and no doubt you will assist me."

She rose, and seemed to ask, by her fine and commanding person, whether she was not justified in believing in the passion of any man whom she herself should wish to be her own.

The laird listened with a puzzled understanding to this speech. Such bold assertion of hard aggressive philosophy in a woman he had never known. Here was a woman capable of pushing on the accomplishment of things.

“Do you reflect upon how this can be managed,” said the cool heiress of Morven. “I, also, will now do so. We both desire this marriage; you most strongly. I do not doubt that the Macalpines will be restored to their ancient position. I regard this little episode as a flavour in the commonly tame wooing of the time. But not a word of this to him,” continued the triumphing beauty, who swept the round of the best room of the villa of the late laird of Morven, with the length of her

silk tartan train. She made an appointment with the laird for the next day.

As Miss Mar turned to the door, she asked Macalpine if he had ever seen Colonel Mar. The answer was "No."

"Never at any time before?"

"No."

She was not put off with this, and exhibited a miniature portrait, in a brooch, of her father as a young man, which Macalpine took to the light of the lamp, and looked at with the aid of a glass.

"It is like Frederick Marston. It is surely him. The high nose, the keen, sad-like expression."

Insensible of the presence of any one, he looked again and again at the picture, and sat down at the table and buried his face in his hands. The deep upheaval of the old man's breast awakened, even in one so cool as Lucretia Mar, some soul of sympathy; it had seized his fancy that the possessor of his

domains was his old rival, who had vowed the doom.

“Is this Colonel Mar?” he asked, on becoming calmer.

“Yes.”

“‘I, like an ancient oak in Morven, moulder alone in my place, and I tremble at the wings of the north.’”

But the wail of Ossian failed to soothe him, and he threw down the brooch, almost breaking it in his vehemence.

Lucretia Mar saw in Roderick Macalpine one who was readily the victim of passions and delusions. But she saw enough in the last scene to increase her anxiety for the marriage.

Roderick, as she passed out, was still under great excitement. As he led her out to the starlight night, and the light rush of the wind passed beside them, he was again with his bard: “‘Retire, retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark winds sigh in thy hair. Retire to the hall of my feast, and think of the times

that are past ; for I will not return till the storm of war has ceased.' ”

It was only a few minutes after Alan had left Ballatruim, sulking, as he thought, that he was met by Wat McTavish. Wat had been at Cameron the crofter's, who was very ill, and Cameron wanted to see Alan without delay. Alan did not think it necessary to tell his friend of what had taken place between him and Ballatruim, for he thought to tell the tale would only do harm ; and he offered no explanation to McTavish of the condition of his clothing, and the slight ruffle of his speech.

They two had not proceeded far on their way, when they were accosted by Roderick Macalpine, who had driven along in a gig. It was not possible he could remain sitting alone in the house, after the exciting break upon his lonely hours. The laird was now in an ecstasy, now in a cold sweat of fear. He was a glorious victor, above the clouds ; he was in one be-

cause of this mysterious successor ; he was under, drenched in collision with the cold temper of his son. Always vain, and a lavish man, he was still a heroic gentleman, above the meanness of the commonplace. We must have a kindness for this erring, suffering being, who waits, often with terrible pains, in his mystic dreaming, for his restoration to the home of his fathers (where he had lavished his love), and has deep raptures now and again with nature, all his old social world avoiding him.

The laird leapt down, took his son's arm, and got McTavish to take his place in the gig.

"I'm in love, my boy ; I could not sleep without coming out. She's been with me for an hour. Oh, Helen of Troy was never worth a duel compared to her ! Lucretia Mar is the finest woman—ay, and a free and bold one too—that I have seen for thirty years."

"She may be so," said Alan, who paid little heed, but was annoyed at her call.

“You have her too easy, man. You’re like old Roderick, don’t prize anything unless it’s got with danger. Pick a quarrel with some fellow who’s after her—say that pursy villain, Ballatruim—and you’ll increase your zest for her ten-fold. Damme, Alan, you’ll after that choke a fly that dare light on her coverlet.”

The son could not but smile, with all the grief in his heart. He had to dash aside these restored hopes again and for ever.

“Ah, how much would I give to be young again! Youth is never valued till it’s no longer felt. I’d drive now, this very moment, to Morven Castle, call out the finest chariot, four horses, and off, the devil knows where; but feeling the glory of life in every vein, with my arm protecting my lovely flame from the touch of every gainsaying rascal in Christendom.”

Alan could not yet be heard. After more such pictures of beatitude, the damp cloud

came down upon the excited Gael. Altogether softly and gently it was done, but the manner could solace little, where the matter was so deadly.

His heart throbbed with anguish. The world of his dreams seemed gone from him for ever. Speechless for a time, he summoned strength yet to speak.

“Ah, I have wished to follow your mother, to rest where she rests. All these records of actions in which I occupy my time, have been merely engaged in to keep me from madness! Ah, that I had died with her; then I would have been spared these unutterable horrors. Morning after morning, as I awake, my spirit rankles with despair. I had hope, from your aspiring spirit, that you would yet regain the land of the Macalpines; but you won't work for the grand end. Soon I may be taken to the land where I can no more sin, and blunder, and be a fool for myself and every other body around me. I am disgraced in the roll of the

Clans—an outcast and a plague. The world despises me—despises you, and all your deeds. I would dwell an equal number of years in hell rather, if it were to get the better of the scoundrels.”

He lost himself, and recovered, in a raging fury. He cursed the world, he cursed Morven and its people, he cursed Colonel Mar, and he cursed doubly the innocent Ellen Lee.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE party, including Roderick Macalpine, now arrived at the hovel, dignified by the name of cottage, occupied by Cameron the crofter. The outline of the clustered hovels was sufficient to denote the living desolation of Muickland. All indicated a broken-down ownership, through poverty and heartless neglect, to despair and death. The walls of the dwellings were a compound of boulders, divot, and clay—chiefly the two latter; and the roofs were as vile a compound, gatherings of the woods and the stubble-fields. Several of the hovels stood dismantled, so that it could not be known whether they had been set-up—not for man or beast—but by man at all, and were not the remains of the holes of pre-historic savages, were not there apparent the vestiges of the meanest calls upon civilised comfort.

The inhabitants of these wrecks of tenements—cast out, as most of them had been, from happier places, by long industry made their own—still had lived in continual dread of being tumbled out of these. Some, already ejected, had had their roofs taken off, when they had been compelled, by inclement weather, to carry their persons and families off, with chattels not worth to others the cost of removal.

Never here could the patriot Scotchman be filled with the pride of his national poet, who delighted in country rambles at the sight of the many smoking cottages, which gave, as he said, a pleasure to his mind which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and worth which they contained.

The hovel in which Cameron lay was better cared for than most of the others; and the little piece of ground around was more than the common allotment. Heather and mud, and boulders from the fields, were, nevertheless,

almost the only material visible. There was a wooden door, and it was a distinction the hovel possessed that there was glass in the holes intended for windows; but wind and water swept through the spaces in the rotten material. There was a clay floor, certainly susceptible to the watery element beneath; the walls were white-washed; but the place was a "whited sepulchre," for agues, rheumatisms, and other scourges of man's inhumanity penetrated this mockery of comfort. The stars were not, in this hovel, visible through the roof.

The embers of a dying fire of brushwood gave the only appearance of comfort to the cheerless place. Its furniture was of the scantiest order: a table, a bed, a board, a large pot, and a few utensils required in eating, were almost its sole plenishings. The occupants of the room were a very old woman—the mother of Cameron—the crofter himself, who lay in bed, apparently watched over by this aged relative fitter, it would have seemed, herself for

the cradle, and who looked now and again, with a helpless expression upon her withered features, at the dying fire, which she scarcely appeared able to renew. Beside the embers lay a collie dog, emaciated from want of food, and stiff with no employment.

Not long ago, the inhabitants of this cottage, man and woman, were in their respective situations the sturdiest of their glen. Cameron's frame was massive, and supremely strong; and he was, besides, mentally rather a prodigy among his people, possessing some poetic lore, the frequent application of which infected his common speech, and gave him the repute of superiority of intellect. The woman, although pinched by great age and toil, gave evidence of a constitution in which there was a tenacity requiring extraordinary opposing forces to destroy. The dumb animal had, among its congeners, as powerful and intelligent a predominance. But so cruelly were these stout inhabitants prostrated by the want

of the meanest necessities of life, and by the dreadful thought of being forced to quit their home, that they were now sunk to that lethargy upon which soon follows death, if not arrested by the strong hand of some new and powerful agency.

The old woman knew there were persons in the hovel, and the dog rose stiffly as they entered, while all the recognition they gave was, that the one turned her head for a little towards the party, and the dog snuffed the reeky air where he stood, resuming his dull rest at the fire-place. From the bed, the stifled, pained murmur of Cameron himself proceeded in the Gaelic tongue.

McTavish stirred the embers with the stick he carried, and threw on a few more pieces of wood ; while, groping about, he came upon a lamp, consisting of a small iron utensil, with a little oil at the bottom, and a drooping rush falling over the mouth. Alan and his father approached the scantily-covered bed of the

crofter, and, with the aid of the rushlight, looked upon his pinched and fever-worn face.

The old woman moved her dried lips, and wrung her withered hands, as she saw both Macalpines struck by the emaciation of her lately powerful son.

"Tam, man, what has brought you to this? you are not to let Andrew Cameron throw you on your back," cried Roderick, ever with ready speech to the peasant.

"It's you, laird," muttered the half-conscious Highlander, in Gaelic, aroused by the strong and familiar speech of one for whom he long possessed an awe and an affection. "You are far on yourself; do you know the way to the land o' the leal? or, your son Alan can tell me; he's aye preaching the right road o' things; maybe he can say how I'd best get out o' this world to the great land o' everlasting spirits." The speaker fell back with his first effort, exhausted, and turned heedless to the wall.

“Ah! he’s weary and lone, puir man, but he’s glad you’re here,” ejaculated the old mother. A sense of pride could still awake in her at the coming of the chief of the Macalpines, while he of their own clan was the spoiler of her house.

Allan addressed the woman about his having sent for more food and wine, and also for a doctor, though he knew the prejudice against those of the healing art among many of these people.

He bent again, after a little, over Cameron’s face, to see if the crofter could speak of any mission he had for him.

“‘To-night let me dwell with my narrow house. Let not the soul of the valiant wander on the winds. Raise stones, beneath the moon, on Moi-lena to the fallen. Though no chiefs were they, yet their hands were strong in fight,’” he cried, as if to the wall, with stifled struggles.

“His mind is on his burial,” whispered the

commiserating old laird. "Poor Tam, must thou go? Many a time, as he bore my bag from the hill, have I pointed out to him the shades of the old heroes of Morven, or excited him with the shadowy visions of the bard. By my soul, Tam, I am sorry for thee."

Still standing beside him, Alan, as the Highlander threw out his arm, took his hand in his own. Its horny leanness sent a shudder through Alan's frame. "He is starved to death," cried the young Highlander.

The sick man caught the words: the painful cry which shrieked in his weakened brain seemed to restore his strength. After a little he turned, his eye moved with a sudden brightness. An indignant rage held possession of his weakened body.

"No, Macalpine! no food or drink of thine, or any man, will enter my door," cried the victim of famine and pride. "Starved! Death! do you think I'll beg to live when the old croft that I fed for my winter's use is mine.

I'll have my own. Who calls me a beggar hound? I've paid every man. I owe nothing. Let the wretch that has cursed my days end his work with my life. Ah! I can be as proud as them, and prouder. I curse him who kills me; as I lie here like a dying dog, I worry my heart to death that I have been the tame cur, and not the bloodhound to track him, and seize him by the throat: 'Thus didst thou, robber of my people and my flesh, and die the death of a worse than cateran—a slow designing murderer.'” The raving Highlander rose in his bed, but fell back. Each trying to soothe him, the voice of his aged mother only could draw over his fevered brain the veil of calm. He gazed by the aid of the failing light into the withering concern of her worn face, and wondered who she was. The burst of his passion brought relief, and with a quaint recognition he lay down, with her hand under his head.

“Give all that's over to the old woman,” he said, subdued to softness. “I would live for

her, but the sight drives me mad. There is no hope. May heaven have mercy on the lone widow, that made baith for a 'sair warsle.' ”

Expostulation is vain with frenzy; yet who could hear such fierce pride and say nothing. Alan conjured him to shake it off, and be still the man he had been, and the guardian of his oppressed kinsfolk.

Cameron turned his face on his hard pillow, breathing hard with the effort he had made. With a low and melancholy wail, he entreated young Macalpine's services for his stricken people.

“I wished to see you about the pair folks that must be creeping their way along to the sea, to-morrow; you must guide them, Alan Macalpine, for the sake of the honour of Morven, and the souls of thy ancestry, whose blood has flown with the Camerons beside her lofty mountains. Treat them as the descendants of warriors, not as you see them, withered like the

fallen and tottered twigs that nestle for an hour on the rocks, uprooted from their own hardy glens by the tyrant's hand. They are the sons of men, once the chiefest of Scotia's blood. God give them life for to-morrow ; I will be dead by then, before the heather-top chokes me i' the bed I lie on."

McTavish had told Alan that it was expected that, to-morrow night, the remaining families at Muickland would be surprised and ejected by taking the roofs off their hovels, and other dismantling.

All in his humble power Alan would do : his heart was full with resentful pain.

The crofter now lay, breathing like a spent gladiator, on the forepart of his bed. They were all loth to leave the robust spirit, that almost went out as it lighted up in its now frail tenement. But as his strong feelings had found their vent to men whom he most respected, a quieter, softer expression came over his face, and he seemed still inclined to

speak. He looked up at the elder Macalpine, and motioned the others to step back.

"How is it with yourself, laird," said the man. "I cared for your damn more than many a man's smile; you were often to murder us, but aye the heart beat for ye."

"Maybe, Tam, I'll damn ye in Morven land yet," said the laird, with half a laugh.

"Thy smile cannot cheer me, thy frown cannot fear me," recited Cameron, in the English tongue. "Ye have na long to wait after the blood's spilt, according to the old rhyme. Though they say there'll be no blood needed, but the joining of the Macalpines and the Mars. If ye go back, mind the poor bodies, as was your wont, laird, and maybe the poor o' Muickland'll not need to trust to the waves."

"That they will not, if I go back to Morven," said the laird, heartily; "but we're not there yet, and the Macalpines are as proud and mad

as you are, Tam; it must be their own labours they live by."

"Well, well; if that be it, God give them better luck o't than I have had; and ye more hold o' the rhyme, to oust Marston. He's the real man, laird."

"Marston! Cameron, what do you know about Marston?" whispered the laird close in the ear of the crofter, with an apprehension which made his own shaken frame tremble like an aspen.

"True as this is death, laird. He's the man I helped to carry to the Morven Arms, from the bloody fight that day you brought your bride to Morven. I have seen the scar you gave him. Haste, laird; by marriage or blood I'd have ye back i' the place for auld langsyne, though I die for't." The eager clansman stretched forth his gaunt countenance penetratively, as if he were in concert with the chief's destiny.

"My God!" cried Roderick Macalpine, flying from the bed before he heard the last

sentence of the crofter, and forgetting in his own suffering that he stood beside death. He was utterly unnerved, and fell down on the broken stones which served as a hearth. Alan and McTavish ran to his assistance, but he refused to move, and their entreaties were only answered by the groans of the prostrate man. The occupant of the bed relapsed into that state of dull half-consciousness which soon returns, after exertion, by the prostration of the vital powers, and his nigh dotard watcher looked on, now at her son, now at the others, benumbed to events.

At last the laird looked up, and his son saw, by the aid of the blinking fire-light, how fearfully the information of the crofter had told upon mind and body.

"It is the vengeance of heaven," he muttered ; while in rhapsody he poured out his pain, as had the crofter who had been partly taught by him. "See how he waves his arm over my lands, and I lie licking the ground. In the

erie night I have heard his cry mix with the subtle wind, and pierce the walls of the castle. He is avenged ; my sins are upon my own head. Alan, your mother's spirit I have believed to hover in the sunbeams, but her ghost will chide me for ever in the clouds. I killed her. I gained her heart, but she pined beside the loud and roaring native of the rocky wilds ; and her old lover, who would have died for her, supplants me in the old halls ; he comes like a thief in the night, when no man knows ; and I am cast forth on the road to die."

He relapsed into a fit of speechless despair, such as his son had never hitherto witnessed. But the ever volatile and emotional Gael revived at the exciting thought of a revenge still before him, and the change of fortune which, according to his superstitious nature, an attempt to procure it might bring about.

"Tam, blood, say you ?—ay, we shall have blood. He'll have it—the one as the other—as he swore he would. Ha ! ha ! lands and

life—let us see if he can take both, Tam!” crying loudly to the now silent crofter.

“Father,” said Alan, kneeling beside him, “you forget poor Cameron’s condition. It may be his last sleep.”

“Nay, boy,” cried the laird, who could at the moment with difficulty think of any pain but his own; “the sufferings of the crofters cannot equal mine; they have known no greatness,—ay, to know heaven, and to be sent to hell!”

Sitting now upon the floor, the laird reclined upon the brushwood, which lay scraggily to feed the crofter’s fire in the cold night of early spring. He looked round with a strange puzzled look as he saw Alan and McTavish quite quiet,—afraid as they were to disturb the occupant of the bed,—and listened to the occasional deep cry which proceeded from the dying man.

The sense of his utter moral prostration, and of the lowly situation in which the once proud Highlander found himself, brought the

tears to his eyes, and he turned his face upon the wood and wept like a child. They were the tears of a suffering and mortally wounded spirit, as of the impotence of age and passion.

“Would to heaven we could go with the crofters,” cried Alan to McTavish.

“I shall not leave it, boy ; never, never. I can do no good now ; my bones must yet feed the soil of Morven lea, and my flesh may the corbies eat, if you will not bury me in the kirkyard-o’-the-hill where my fathers lie, and your own mother waits me,” cried Roderick, nervously alive against any voice for departure from his old home.

These words came to the ear of the dying peasant of the bed. In his dreamy prostration, his imagination brought Sir Andrew Cameron and the officers of the law to his side, greedy to bear him off to jail, death, and the kirkyard. Stretching his lank, bony face outwards, the old woman gave a cry of pain and tottered from her seat. His previous excitement had

been too much for him, and the still, glassy eye betokened that death had, in the interval, taken him for its own.

“Is that you, Tam?” cried Roderick Macalpine, who heard the moaning efforts of the crofter in the silence, and saw the others hold the tottering body of the old woman, forgetting his own prostration at the sight of the last throw of one who had wrestled—king with king.

To man made of the dust of the ground, the greatest moral agonies must always become distant and unrelative in the presence of the annihilating power of the unseen.

“Away! off! let me alone; there’s room enough for me and you. I have been robbed enough. What say ye of to-morrow?—I’ll not see it: I defy it and thee. No, no, no, I leave my own, in my own, to the ground that’s mine. I shall go to-night. Off, I say,—do not touch me with your bloody hands. I am my God’s. Let me die.”

Yet with pangs of the contending spirit he

bore throughout his days towards the crushing tyranny which bore him down, did the proud-hearted Gael pass away from the world of clay—clay to him in every sense, save where illumined by the poetry obscurely infused in his heart, or by the light which warmed in his spurned and indignant soul.

The party did not leave the hovel till the crofter was dead, and the old woman was given in charge of a neighbour. The elder Macalpine, when they returned home, did not seek forgetfulness of his emotions in sleep. These, with the night air, kept alive his teeming brain, and in a confused dream he read and wrote—consulted prints of old ballads and histories concerning his clan—dragged forth forgotten manuscripts of his own, which he read with avidity, and made memoranda of with eager haste, as if to-morrow was the day of the great trial which concerned the lordship of Morven. At last he fell away in his chair, and after

strange dreams he awoke with the daylight, his old hopes wrecked, yet clinging to life as before.

Alan was chastened and subdued by the events of the night. He read, by the present chastity of his soul, evils that had run with his conduct. It smote him that he left the prostrate form of Ballatruim lying in the mud. How cruel seemed this in the light of his pale contemplation. True, he had the excuses of anger justly, excessively roused, and of forgetfulness in the call to the dying crofter, and the engrossing scenes there—where across his mind, indeed, had flitted fears for Ballatruim. He now mounted his horse and rode at a rapid rate towards the scene of his recent struggle. As he approached the spot, his fears began to subside: the laird was not there; he saw no evidence of many foot-marks on the wet clay; and he concluded that Ballatruim had risen and gone himself. A light was visible in the house at the corner of the road, at which the laird would have called in case of requiring

any assistance. Alan tied his horse to a tree within the woods, and went forward to the cottage, which had been occupied for some time by Tam Scoular.

Tam had attributed his forced exit from Finzean to Ellen, and was all the worse disposed in his heart to her, though he would have married her still. He bore a grudge to Alan, too, on account of her preference for Macalpine; and the latter knowing this, was somewhat unwilling to call upon Scoular, especially at this hour—even upon such an errand.

It was no mean act, under the circumstances, for the midnight wanderer to give a look through the window—the blind of which was too short, or not drawn down to its full—in order to see whether Scoular or his servant was about. Alan started back at the sight he saw. In the further corner of the room sat together Tam Scoular and a lady, dressed in a dark grey riding habit, with a hood and cloak of the same material, with the former of

which she would be able to screen her face, but being at present thrown partly back, enabled Alan to observe the features of Lucretia Mar. Scoular was scanning the contents of a parcel, evidently received from the lady, who appeared restless and anxious to move, while a shade of sullen irresolution seemed visible upon the countenance of the man.

“Some infamous paction,” muttered Alan to himself, his fears instantly running to the side of Ellen Lee.

His first impulse was to fly in upon the pair, and denounce them in the act of making an infamous bargain; his next, to play the part of the detective. He did neither, but walked forward towards the toll-house, where he would learn, he thought, for certain if Ballatruim had passed. His unsuspecting temper, formed in a region where crime was hardly known, was difficult to swell.

Having gone along the road for a little distance, he turned to look back, and saw the

figure of Scoular holding a horse at his door, while Miss Mar was leaping unassisted to the saddle. Alan stood beneath a tree which overshadowed the side-way, and was screened from observation. The rider came along slowly, as if to prevent the clatter of the horse's feet disturbing the other inmates of the house ; and it was possible for Alan to accost her, if she continued her walking pace to where he stood, without any sudden surprise. The impulse was upon him to make her aware of his knowledge of her movements, and he stepped forward as she approached. Seeing a man apparently bent on intercepting her passage, her first thought seemed to be to turn and gallop off in the opposite direction, but putting her right hand to her side, she drew forth a pistol, with which she intimated her intention, if necessary, to make her way. Macalpine was staggered somewhat.

“You are prepared for emergencies, Miss Mar,” he said, coming forward upon the road.

The lady threw back the hood which concealed her face, exposing it to the star-lit morning, and laughed loudly. The reception was somewhat different from what the other expected.

“I know you are surprised at all this,” she said ; “but my love of adventure is strong. I declare that had you not revealed yourself, you might have been sacrificed to it, and have been even now sprawling at the foot of yonder tree, like a winged pigeon.”

“I had only one word to say,” said Alan, whose seriousness was not moved by her jocularity ; “but am compelled to say it : ‘Beware.’ ”

“You take me, then, for a midnight marauder, or a plotter against the State, or some of its well-disposed subjects. And what might I think of Mr Alan Macalpine, the guardian of the people, and the promoter of their education in science, literature, and morals, when I find him at this hour prowling on foot, hiding in

trees and hedgerows, covered with mud, and issuing forth upon a solitary woman, whose business, such as it is, compels her to be out ? ”

Alan felt the imputation, while he still stood to his position of warning.

Miss Mar needed no explanation, but continued : “ I know more than you think. What if my errand, about which you are so jealous, concerned your own dearest welfare ; and that I am even now anxious for your fate ? ”

Macalpine was puzzled.

“ Do you wish to hear more ? ” she inquired, with familiar seriousness.

“ To-night deliberate plans have been made of which the planners will repent if they do not destroy them,” was Macalpine’s answer.

He turned as if to go. The lady’s face fell, and Alan could not notice the consternation which dwelt in it.

“ This is too serious, and too cruel to be answered now,” she cried ; “ I was your visitor to-night in your absence. I will expect to see

you to-morrow for certain. Ah! you have cause for a disturbed mind. But I see you are in too proud a mood to accept of my poor aid. Well, after all, it is an odd meeting, and naturally we may be dreadfully suspicious and jealous. Adieu, then, till to-morrow—at your earliest. Remember, be it early, and be prepared for”——

She hesitated with the close, and did not finish her intended injunction.

Striking her horse a blow, the brute, weary of the night, went off in the other direction at a rapid gallop. Coming upon the sight of Macalpine's horse, she drew the reins, but whether from inability to keep the eager animal in, or that an impulse of hers was instantly abandoned, he only noticed the incident to observe in the course of a minute that she was out of sight.

A Lydia Languish fancy in the composition of Miss Mar had met as yet with repression. Now that, like Lydia, her lap-dog could eat out

of gold, her parrot feed on small pearls, and her thread-papers be made of bank-notes, it would be very provoking if she could not humour her fancy for a little romance, and make an elopement, though it would end eminently in safety and respectability. The hero and the materials of flight were there ; but his will was not.

He saw the dash of her character not without some excitement. But Macalpine was not governed by his blood.

Hearing nothing of Ballatruim, he returned home in a more tranquil mood.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE breakfast party at Finzean, on the morning following the entertainment at the farm of Ballatruim's tenant, might have been expected to begin with uneasiness. Ellen had on the previous night, while driving home, not referred to the revelations at the supper table. She knew that her uncle would think he had cause of quarrel with her, for her silence upon what had taken place, while she felt, in consequence of the state of his mind hitherto on the subject, all her actions in connection with her marriage, must take place independently of him. However, now that the fact was out, she felt free and frank ; and, notwithstanding the concerned face of her uncle, and the angry looks of his wife, she wore her emotion on her face : she was in no mood to encounter

these with a narrative of the serious motives which had impelled her to join her life with Macalpine's.

"He that will to Cupar, maun to Cupar," said Ellen, looking to her uncle in a bright, loving way, two minutes after they sat down. "He would have it ; and so I consented."

"Most imprudent, lass ; most imprudent." He threw back his egg-plate, but drew it in again ; while the matron shook her head savagely, and thrust doses of sugar into the cups of bohea, where the lumps were already melting.

"It may be so," replied Ellen, her heart trembling.

"Most undesirable," ejaculated the farmer ; afraid of his speeches, from experience of their effect.

"But do you not remember the passage I read to you from Burns the other night, where he speaks of that 'delicious passion which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-

horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, was the first of human joys'”—brighter at the remembrance of her own emotions with the poet.

Ellen awoke that morning after rosy dreams, often a prelude to the accomplishment of the rosy day.

“And where are ye to stop, Ellen?” inquired Arnot, showing himself to be rather mollified. Her old sweet manner, not untinctured with humour, was seizing his tender heart.

“At the cottage on the south of the land.”

“And the auld laird, he'll need removing, or you'll hae a fine life o't.”

“His bark is waur than his bite.”

“It seems to me you're rising aff your canny seat. If ye had minded your uncle, and your uncle's kin, ye micht hae been a leddy; but the Macalpines, with a' their pride, canna draw a bottle o' ale for want o' the penny—a spendthrift, prodigal lot,” cried Mrs Arnot.

“I am content,” said Ellen, placidly, wishing

no quarrelling; "and though people will speak, I am happy in my lot. It will do no good to disparage Alan Macalpine's selection of a wife, or her acceptance of a husband."

"True, Ellen, we maun make the best o' the fate. I hae muckle respect for Alan; and ye'll make him a gude wife, for that matter o't. So we'll say nae mair about the disparity. We maun just whistle o'er the lave o't; and ye'll gi'e us the sang before ye gang to the meeting—that nae doubt ye are eager for." The good-hearted farmer's pain was over, and his sound Scottish breakfast was heartily resumed. He submitted to the sweet inevitable which relieved him of the burden of decision.

It was about ten o'clock in the forenoon of a fine March morning, that Alan and Ellen met at the trysting place. Ellen was in joy that she had happily gained her uncle over. She would have liked to have whispered delicately to Alan, what her uncle had muttered to her, his intention to bestow a tocher on her; but Ellen

shrunk from approaching the proud heart of her lover with this news.

The indomitable expression which Macalpine's face wore as he waited for Ellen's coming, changed to the soft, joyous spirit of his best nature, as he saw her approach. He told her the series of adventures in which he had been concerned after parting with her the previous night, without omitting what he saw of Lucretia Mar. They walked along through the wood, the pine trees freshened by the soft rains, and the larch already budding. Gently the breath of spring at intervals swayed the boughs, and played through the awakened branches. The robin was back from its urban haunts, and the linnet essayed a melody. The face and voices of nature have always a sternness in these high regions, but it is the sternness of love intensified, and though, where the lovers went, there met them, as they had fain lingered, nothing of the soft, voluptuous splendour, and gay, easy meanderings of the south, the

joy of nature and themselves was the deeper. Alan's spirit bounded towards the work he was called on to perform; how chilled he would have gone as the husband of a woman between whom and him there was no communion of heart.

They sat down for a few minutes together upon the trunk of a fallen tree at the confines of the wood. Ellen, with the yearning sympathy of her nature, commiserated with Alan upon several misfortunes which had befallen him. "And yet, Ellen," said she, for himself, wishful believer in the present and a true one then, "we shall never be happier."

They were on their way to Sir Andrew Cameron's. Early in the morning, after four hours' sleep, Alan had visited the crofters, and ascertained from them what they were willing to do. He saw that their claims against the landlord, for meliorations on their former crofts, though well-founded in equity, were so loosely constituted, by the crofters' ignorance of business, that it was in vain to hope Sir Andrew would give

effect to them. He only ventured to approach Sir Andrew for a week's delay. He endeavoured to get this done by another, as Sir Andrew was no ways well-disposed to him ; but another could not be got to brave the fury of the tyrannic magnate. The crofters were meanwhile preparing for their departure, without a hope of respite.

"I am surprised," said Alan, "that he has never put into force his threat of imprisonment; it would have been further gratification of his lust of little power."

Ellen could not resist a little laugh.

"What do you think of me as the lawyer who has prevented it?"

"Why, that, if you have over-reached Sir Andrew, I have cause to fear for myself."

"Oh, you are very much afraid that your *wives* should be too clever for you—you advocates of woman!"

"You are not a Portia, my fairy."

"Now, how would you scold if I were in the

skies : ‘Come down quickly; for the porridge, the butter, the cheese buyers are at my door; my neighbours require to be entertained.’ Oh, I know how shrewdly learned in laws I have to be,—

‘Nae Scottish lass that e’er I kent,
But kent hoo she was canny, O!’”

And she ran lithely past Alan with a waggish mirth which had almost set them on to bringing themselves to Sir Andrew’s door in a twinkling.

All men in their fanciful hours would preserve the “tricksy spirits” of their loves as pure as Ariel’s; but simple sweetness a Scotchman cannot thrive with. It seems to be a necessity, from his severe soil, that his own character should possess some hardness, and his mistress’s some shrewdness, as preservatives even of their romance and tenderness in the rough roads of Scotia.

It not unfrequently happens, immediately on congratulations with self in contemplating

our unclouded happiness, that a cloud, bigger than a man's hand, comes over the horizon. So it happened now.

The pair returned to the sense of their own happiness, in which there was no play. When a tender heart is supremely happy, it may wonder that it has been singled out in the myriad crowds. This feeling Ellen could retain; while Alan's thoughts were, left to themselves, harrowed with the preplexing anxieties of the previous night and the forthcoming encounter.

"You have to thank an excellent mother, no doubt," Alan observed, as they came to talk of the relish for the happiness both thought the only real; "the example she has given you of a pure life; the benefit of a true education."

She felt an impulse to draw her arm from out of his and stand still.

She feared and shocked herself with the dread of a shame by the character which the world had given to her parent. It was, per-

haps, but a foolish fear, which her suspense in making the avowal increased; and she saw herself gathered up by his strong, reassuring voice.

"I should, perhaps, have spoken to you before now about my people," she began.

"What do you mean, Ellen?" he asked, rather apprehensively.

"I fear," she said, "you may not think I have been quite frank with my history, but"——

As she paused he cried——

"He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen,
Let him not know it, and he's not robbed at all."

He recited the words with a mock, as if to shame himself and her for the fears of a moment.

They walked on a few steps in silence.

"I would have sworn my mother foully wronged."

She looked Alan hard on the right side, and saw a darkness.

He remembered that, when at Tarbet, a natural inquiry which he made concerning Dr Lee had been strangely answered. He thought nothing of the circumstance then. His roused imagination saw it now as the indication of some mysterious crime.

Ellen paused in dread ere she continued.

“I cannot hide, now, what I should have told before, the words that I have heard whispered into my ear of my parent.”

“Tell me the worst : murderer, forger, thief, adulteress, what is it ?” Alan cried, annoyed and excited beyond all his usual calm. It was a strange blow, he imagined, amid all the happiness of these moments.

She felt his hurry painfully, and resented it by an abrupt avowal ; the long and smoothed tale which might have occurred to her, was swept away. She rose in her own pride, independent of the accidents of birth, as she had learned that independence from him whom she now sickened !

“You have said it, the last on your list. A nameless one, the world calls me.”

Her face she averted from him upon the wall at her side, and leant motionless. He would come and take her away, or she would remain there until the darkness of night permitted him to see her form no more. She felt the pain of the avowal with full force at this moment, as a great sore first bared by and to our frail humanity harrows every fibre.

The shock he received—awful redound to his rebounding spirits—for a moment rendered him more like a man who had received a summons to infernal torture, than the recipient of news affecting his life here. He dared not for a time look upon the woman who, but a few minutes before, was the dearest object to his sight in all creation. The pride of his blood lived and thrilled through every fibre of his being. He turned towards her; there, leaning her head upon the wall, was she whose fine lineaments had at once struck his sense of

beauty with joy. Her small, but high and finely shaped head; her white arching neck, her firm delicate heel, and chiselled ankle—to him special gifts of the Divine Maker—now all these were hateful by the thought which her words conveyed. With anguish Alan approached her.

“But you can disprove this—it is false, it is a lie.” His tone was not that of the man assured of the truth of what he said; it spoke the attempt to flee from the clutches of despair by the seizure of some hollow words.

Yet the woman loved him because of the prejudice of his pride, because of his stern sense of dignity.

“Miss Lee—Ellen”——

Her warm feverish hand lay like a piece of dead heated flesh in his own. He felt the shudder of his refined aversion pass into her fingers. With the instinct of her electrified frame, the touch she knew to be that of the philosopher, not the lover, and she put his hand away.

She turned upon him, her long auburn hair—neither decked by the artifice of the daughter of society, nor hanging loose as if she were a wild, dishevelled creature of impulse, suggesting, in the simple handling of its luxuriance, freedom and emotion without licence—falling upon her face, and hiding, with the little handkerchief held to her eyes, the big tears that had dropped there.

“Alan, can this be an end of our days together—of our love—our marriage; what have I done that you should turn away from me as accursed.” She spoke without advancing. She evidently wished to believe it was but the paroxysm of his recent excitement that she had experienced; and that it would yet pass away.

“No day is like unto this day in all my unfortunate life,” he said, with sternness which she could not now mistake. “You have given me back to chaos. I should be most miserable; you would sacrifice all your happiness.”

He stopped. He tried to be frank ; he could not. She muttered as if praying.

She bent down, scarcely knowing what she did. "I will sacrifice all my hopes, but do not put me away from you as accursed—you, to whom of all in the world I would have flown for protection from its cruel gibes. But a minute since all was love ; why without any fault of my own can you treat me to this cold, freezing attitude—hate. You cannot, dare not, toss me aside. Your nobler nature defies the deed, for ever, for ever."

Alan was motionless as a statue. She was again recalled to herself, not by his compassionate silence, but her recollection of self, which the proudest may momentarily forget, under the influence of excessive devotion.

Yet he was steeling his heart against her passion.

"It is no fault of yours that you are this ; none whatever, no more than that you are not a crippled object, but a beautiful woman."

He spoke with fiercer sternness.

"Then why do you put me away? am I a leper? am I a mass of corruption within, and bear but the outward form of God's help-mate for man? Would to heaven, Alan Macalpine, that I had known your pride on the day we first met!"

Her sense of wrong was fully aroused, but she could not rage.

"Your uncle knew my principles—my fastidious temper, if you will."

"The subject was never truly broached between us. What he does know I cannot tell."

"You have intended none, but there has been deception, which I forgive; though I have reaped its cruelty bitterly—bitterly."

"You will be avenged," she said; "do not curse me. I now return from my—our—happiness to solitary toil. And I will rather this ten times than I would ask you to sacrifice your principles of family purity and honour. You have already sacrificed the

dearest object of ambition, by refusing the opportunity of regaining your family estates. You have courted seclusion and humbleness, and even the dangers of want, all in a cause which is also mine. You have been really true to your love through a great temptation—not of family restoration alone—but the temptation of a woman more seductive than I am. You cannot sacrifice more. An evil fate has fallen upon me ; but I see nothing to rail at. I am content with the decree.”

He struggled ; it was a fierce contention with his emotions.

“ You have a Father, Ellen,” he commenced ; but he could not go further ; it struck him as a damnable hypocrisy that he should use Scripture to make display of reason, while his heart was adamant. He saw himself like a frantic Pharisee.

“ Who wove the amber light into her hair,
Who gave her all the changes of her eyes,
Who framed the treasures of her breast, and carved
The balmy marvel of her throat, whose hand

Fashioned the silver curving shoulder down,
Who clothed her limbs with colour like soft fruit,
Who wrought and rounded her swift gleaming feet ?”

Else than man though he could feel it not !

“Leave me Ellen, now—time”——

“I go to-night ; or remain your bride, to be your wedded wife, sharing your home until death do us part in this world.

“Now, I only want your expression of forgiveness,” she added, as he did not speak, not meeting him face to face.

“You have it, and more ; in my heart of hearts never worthier woman lived to me.”

He leant upon the wall, and for minutes seemed dead to himself and to the life around.

“I will go to Sir Andrew Cameron’s, he must tell all the story of my people,” she muttered to herself.

“Do not believe him,” Alan cried, hearing the name ; but he scarcely knew to what she referred. “We shall meet soon ; yet, Ellen, we cannot part this way,” he continued.

“Will you go first, or shall I ?” she inquired.

He was startled with the strange question. put with the simplicity of an honest and a fearless heart, to one loftier in his desires, but shaken to the centre by devilish blows.

They promised to meet again that night at the foot of the avenue to Finzean House.

Ellen turned back a little and went into the dense wood of pines, which stretched far beyond Morven. For a time she could listen only to the eerie music of the sighs of the heavily branched trees : from the heights afar off came the slow melancholy sweep of the wind, which fell and rose, and accorded with the dejection and the rise of her swelling bosom. 'There was no end to her constancy, while she was cast down with a sense of the obdurate pride of the man to whom she was devoted, and through which her life was already withering. O God! she seemed to think for a moment, that she might pray that she could tear her love out of her breast, and whistle it down the wind, which rested, as for the purpose, upon her fevered

cheek. But no. The flashes of his sensitive pride, the cold, haughty freeze of his delicate heart, were parts of that refined nature which had delighted and even warmed her own. Her breast was conscious that the suffering entailed upon her was not due to herself, and she lay upon the moss-covered roots of the stalwart trees, and thought herself like poor Barbara.

*“ Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow.”*

“ She was in love, and he she loved proved mad,
And did forsake her.”

“ Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve,”
sang also Barbara.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ABOUT an hour after she parted with Alan, Ellen, on her way by the main road to Sir Andrew Cameron's house, heard behind her the rumble and clatter of an equipage of unusual dimensions for the neighbourhood of Morven.

Turning to look from the top of a short declivity, she stood at the approach, at a slackened pace, of the large and handsomely equipped carriage.

Four beautiful greys stamped lightly up the slope, drawing the gaily adorned chariot, upon the front and back of which were seated handsome servants in blue and yellow livery.

The only occupant of the carriage, a lady, was almost lost to view amid the surroundings,

but Ellen recognised the splendid person of Miss Mar.

A vague feeling of satisfaction burst upon Ellen as she saw rightly, for the first time, the woman whom of all others she was, according to natural bias, the least likely to admire. She did admire her. But she smiled at the folly of the woman who was so conspicuously in love with pageantry. The occupant of the carriage looking out for the awe of persons superior to the bewildered crofters, must have been glad to come upon a foot passenger having the appearance, which Ellen Lee possessed, of superiority to the rough daughters of toil. She drew forth a gold eye-glass, through which, though in the enjoyment of a far-seeing and sufficiently vigorous pair of eyes, she stared hard at Ellen. The recognition was apparently mutual. The Lady of Morven had received so ample a description of Ellen, that she had no hesitation in believing that the woman was before her who had to be put away ere the

path was smooth for her marriage with Alan Macalpine.

Miss Mar was a clever strategist ; and while not wearing her heart upon her sleeve for daws to peck at, could wear it outwardly to gain the favour of rarer birds whom it was very desirable to make her own.

She had her carriage stopped almost immediately after she had passed Ellen ; and, permitting the latter to come up, leaned to the side, and with the most gracious of smiles addressed Ellen.

“You are, I am sure, the niece of Colonel Mar’s friend and tenant, Mr Arnot ; if you are going my way, will you take advantage of my conveyance ? You see I have sufficiency of room ;” smiling in gracious ease to allay any trepidation Ellen might be supposed to possess, but as a powerful spider may act at bringing a poor fly within its toils.

“I am going to Sir Andrew Cameron’s house,” was the answer.

“So am I.”

Ellen was a little taken aback. Rejecting any fear for herself in the adventure, she entered the carriage by the aid of the lacqueys.

Miss Mar thought to crush for ever the obscure creature who stood in her way. Jealous! not she. She saw beauty no doubt; the emotional features, the lithe and free figure, which were wanting to herself. She observed, too, with a little respect—though it was borne down by the scorn of a proud woman who believes in the victory of other material than that which hearts are made of, in the world of love, as in business, or war—that the farmer's niece was not abashed by her company, or the splendour by which she was surrounded, but at once placed herself on an equality with this magnificence, and expressed herself with freedom.

“The interest you take in the people has gratified them very much,” said Ellen, as they spoke of Morven.

“Do you think me then a favourite with them?”

“Yes. I have observed that nothing gains with the humble poor so much as frank sociableness.”

“Pooh!” exclaimed half-audibly the growing convert to democracy, who had a feeling that she was being lectured to. Ellen’s manner exhibited no such spirit. The charm in her style of speech, indicating an aspiration in all gentleness, which had delighted the radical Macalpine galled the imperious leveller, Lucretia Mar.

“I attempted to do something a little while ago for the Muickland crofters,” said Ellen, in simple sincerity, after a little pause; “but it was a failure so far as Sir Andrew was concerned. I did expostulate; but it is the common understanding that a poor person has no right to expostulate with richer neighbours; and he put me from him. Might I take the liberty of asking your kind services on their behalf?”

The lady was on other business bent than the concerns of a lot of dilapidated peasantry ; she said coldly she would see what could be done.

“You do not know, perhaps, that at this moment something of the kind is being attempted for them,” Miss Mar said, after reflection.

“Mr Alan Macalpine may be now at Sir Andrew’s with this intention ; but he fears the ill-success of his mission.”

Miss Mar of course would not say that *she* also was aware of this. It tried her temper severely to hear the “peasant girl” treat her tongue to familiarity with this name.

“Do you go, too ? perhaps your joint efforts will be successful.”

There was of course a covert sneer ; but the simplicity was admirably feigned.

“I go on business of my own ; I saw him this morning, but we parted an hour before I met you.”

Lucretia Mar thought now of Ellen Lee's business. She saw, from the tremor with which Ellen concluded this remark, that something was wrong. She had been making inquiries about her that morning, and learned that the position of the Lees at Tarbet was a doubtful one ; and from a private source she had heard a tale of Mrs Lee being amenable to the criminal law had she lived, with which tale Sir Andrew Cameron's name was mixed up. Now that she wished to think her surmises regarding the questionable family were doubly confirmed, she hated and despised the "poor creature" who went, as she mentally exclaimed, "upon stilts before her."

Ellen fancied, in the silence which came over them both as they cut through the cold spring air, and Miss Mar with every manner of kindness placed the wraps about her, that she could read in the other's heart, dissembler as the woman could be, the pitying contempt of herself. Thereupon did our tender heroine

differ from those gentle creatures who suffer and pine in their hearts. She did suffer very sorely, but her elastic spirit was not of the wearing down order. Ah! she had faith in her lover still.

She spoke now almost with fire, which Lucretia Mar had too restless a temper not to feel, although her deep coolness made Ellen seem even at the worst. "I can divine the thoughts of these lairds towards Mr Alan," said Ellen, "from my own experience of some great people, Miss Mar: those who have not the sensibility to appreciate truth for its own sake; such as despise everything which looks to be in the way of their pleasures, because not supported by the accidents of fortune."

"Macalpine's weakness is not the want of the accidents of fortune," said Lucretia, "but his lowering his position to associate with the unworthy; though the real preference of his tastes and affections are, I know, to higher society.

"He seeks for heart and for truth," said Ellen.

"It is an affectation to find these only among the lower classes," retorted Miss Mar.

Ellen chid herself for having entered the carriage, but she had determined to be brave.

The equipage and its occupants had now arrived at its destination. Miss Mar immediately asked to be shown into a room with Ellen, informing the latter that Sir Andrew Cameron was engaged with Alan Macalpine.

"You may be surprised at my coolness as we came along, for he is in great danger." Upon Miss Mar's countenance great concern had arisen. She was a little afraid that the woman whom she had, to her maid Madge, only spoken of as a "peasant thing," was something more than that gentle sacrificing creature of innocence she had read of as the generation of the cottage. The magnificent sweep of her brocade, her lofty head, her diamond-sparkled hand, she now knew were nothing to conjure with here.

Ellen gave a faint cry of painful surprise as Miss Mar went on, in a tone almost sepulchral, to tell her the story of how a warrant was out for Alan's apprehension on a serious charge—manslaughter or murder.

The thrills of her fear broke out in indignation, as she saw how much malignity might hope to destroy him, under the circumstances she knew surrounding his defence against Ballatruim's attack.

“You will never reveal,” continued Lucretia, “what I now tell you, as you value his life: I am, I believe, the chief witness against him. I ought therefore to fly with discreet cunning out of the way. So must he, until the affair blows over. If he remains, the faction will procure somehow his punishment; if he takes flight, let him do so now—fly with another apparent design than escape—the world then may put the construction on his flight favourable to himself, and forget in time the suspicion against him.”

“I rely on the justice of heaven,” cried the honest heart.

“Pooh ! heaven helps them who help themselves.”

“I foresee his indignation at the proposal ; he will not go.”

“Sheer folly ! Is it truth that always triumphs ? does innocence always vanquish and guilt fall ? you know better. Unless within an hour Alan Macalpine flies he is apprehended ; and if he escape the highest penalty of the law he will be disgraced, even by the paltry infliction for the crime of assault.”

“He will not fly ; he will seek out his accusers.”

“My father is powerful. I am ready, out of my love, and I confess too out of a liking for adventure, to run the danger. But I might blush myself to make the proposal to him. Do you it ; you are a friend on familiar footing. Notwithstanding our engagement, I have not seen him for months ; and before it, had

seen little of him. How odd a meeting and proposal is this, you will think ; but I declare, if carried out, it will be the luckiest thing in the world for all of us."

Not truly did Miss Mar believe her wild suggestion would be approved of. She had thought, as she had read, that the humble daughter of innocence possessed virtues of self-sacrifice which the children of fulness were not at all called on to recognise for themselves in their creed of duty ; and that Ellen would, in her simplicity, at least seek the salvation of Alan by renouncing all concern with him, who might be already tired of the "poor thing," although in his conscientiousness troubled with her tacit or expressed importunity.

To Ellen the conception and the scheme seemed utterly ridiculous. In her heart of hearts she pitied as she smiled. Riches are a snare and a delusion most when they clog up the mental vision, and for the close penetrative knowledge of the human heart is

substituted by a distant and unreal perception. Looking from a tower, the complacent observer sees himself large, and the men and women below pigmies, but when handling these he needs other eyes.

“I will beard Sir Andrew, and send to you Macalpine,” Miss Mar said, hurriedly. “Save his life—his honour ; they are in your hands.”

She was nearly out of the door when Ellen flew to her. She almost knelt to the magnificent train of brocade as it stood in its wide sweep and gave her time to breathe the terrors which the thought of such an encounter had for her.

“Stay, for mercy’s sake. If you move I will fly from the house. I dare not meet him.”

Surprise and pleasure marked the countenance of Miss Mar. She thought she had made her discovery complete.

“I do not understand you ; are you afraid to meet him ?”

"I believe his life is safe."

"You fail to assist the man whom I know you esteem! Talk, talk, and do nothing," cried Miss Mar.

"I confess my inability to make the proposal, if I were willing," Ellen said.

"Then is he to suffer by the law."

A sparkle stood for a moment in Ellen's face before she answered, not tauntingly, "The proofs of his innocence must be strong, if you are willing to elope with him."

She looked with hardness at Ellen, for an instant, without showing any other emotion when the latter uttered her speech, and then stepped with majestic sweep up the staircase.

In the course of ten minutes Ellen was aware that Alan and Miss Mar were gone.

"Please you, Sir Andrew, this is the lady as came with Miss Mar," said a servant, throwing open the door to the knight.

Ellen would have gone, considering what had happened,—it was no opportune time to speak Sir Andrew fair,—but might not she to-morrow be far away from Morven ?

“Did you come with Miss Mar?” the knight asked, his face having fallen with disappointment and vexation at the recognition of Ellen, and yet favourably disposed to a friend of the wealthy heiress.

“I wish to see you again, Sir Andrew, before I go.”

“Ay ; the best thing you can do is to be off with Macalpine ; the law, else, has him in its clutches in an hour. Go to Australia with him. I’m ready to give you the hundred to be off for ever. Eh ; do you hear that now ? ”

“Why do you desire me, Sir Andrew, so much to leave my own land,” she began, abruptly.

“Your own land ! what have you to do with land ? Were you born here ? ” He was startled, and interrupted her with eagerness.

“That is a mystery ; sometimes in a dream-land I fancy emotions and sights which may be the impressions of early childhood. I have never been on the sea, but I think my dream looks like the vision of some vast expanse of cloud or water, a dazzling blue and gold region which I have never known in Scotland. Upon speaking of this to my mother, she said it could not be—that I had fever when a child—and that these fancies were the remnants of the brain images.”

She paid no heed, in her longing to clear the past, to his gibing speeches.

“I hate the remembrance of your mother, and the sight of everything belonging to her ; that is why I wish you away,” cried the knight, with a terrible scowl.

“Ah ! but you loved her once—loved her only, perhaps, of all the world. Remember her as of that time. Remember the cause of her forgetfulness of you—of herself—her sorrows—her penitence. I saw it, Sir Andrew. I speak

the truth of God, when I say she died with bitter tears—claimed the mercy of heaven; ay, silently the forgiveness of man. She is dead. Oh, she was innocent in her pure, deep-loving heart. Forty thousand husbands could not have known her as I did!”

Ellen wept. To none had she poured out grief like this.

“Who said husbands?” asked Sir Andrew, terror getting the better of other emotions.

“Husband, then,” said Ellen, confronting him boldly. And she cried wildly into his ear, “She was your wife.”

The knight was cowed. Ellen saw that what she had divined was true.

“And if she was, and ran off with another man, would you expect me to call her back; and if she did not come, to call her fine names now, and be gracious to the—— to her offspring?” his terror so getting the better of him, that his language became a jangle.

A thought was breaking into Ellen’s mind,
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filling her heart. Was she the child of this man—of him she now confronted with a desperate boldness, very painful! She would sink. The strange excitement bore her up; but her tender heart trembled in its grief and apprehension.

The knight revived on observing her suffering.

“You would have been better had you rested content with what I told you,” he said; “see what people get when they wish to hear too much about themselves.”

“I must be content with the truth,” said Ellen, forcing herself to answer, “though it ruin me with——;” she was to add, “with the world,” thinking of lovers and friends unchangeable to her true self; but alas! what was her experience of the last hour?

“Bah! girl,” said the knight, as she stopped and turned aside to hide the grievous melancholy of her eyes, “the sooner you get away from this land the better; once emerge from your obscurity, and your mother’s shame pursues you with a prophetic curse. It has

done so already ; your junkets with this Macalpine have already set the gossips agoing, and your history is as well known as I can tell you."

"I care not for gossip—the malice of the ignorant. I will not leave because other tongues rattle and knees tremble !" cried Ellen, feeling her own confident bravery beside her sense of the cowardly fear of the worshipper of the world's repute.

"There is no need to colour matters for you, I see," answered Sir Andrew, with a savage sneer. "Here, in this box" (opening a cabinet) "are all the records of your illegitimacy ; and, mark me, another word, and I'll have the whole affair decked out in its bare horrors in the courts of law."

"Let me examine them," said she, reaching towards the box.

The knight looked at her with puzzled wonder. This was no whimpering piece of softness then ! and she rose in his esteem, which she

would not have done by tears, sighs, and gentle upbraidings. The box fell from his hand, the lid burst open, and the papers scattered on the floor. Like an overgrown schoolboy after a vanishing prize, he crept with eager boundings, on all-fours, on the carpet to regain his treasured manuscripts. The incident relieved Ellen. Her sense of the ridiculous was a little aroused by it, and by the oddity of her strife in technicalities with a man of business. She was not altogether inconsolable then.

“Ah! you may keep them to yourself, if you insist, Sir Andrew,” she said, looking through a smile in her tears, the buoyancy of her spirit not to be repressed. “Why, Sir Andrew, you bring down the ridicule which you wish to avoid. What a situation for me, in search of a history! which you say lies revealed in your hands. You shake your fist in the face of your wife’s child—guilty only toward you of her misfortune. Why we should quarrel, I

know not; we have been both unfortunate—the more reason we should give pain to each other no longer. Do not imagine,” continued Ellen, her countenance full of her native dignity, “that I am a claimant for bounties or for rights. I despise the meanness of any care in the presence of the holiest tie, except that by which it may be made surer in love.” Having delivered herself of this very pretty and most real sentiment, Ellen lost command of thought or speech.

Sir Andrew was moved; his stifled nature was seemingly to assert itself; he found he had a heart. He looked at the handsome figure of the woman before him, bright in her solitary sadness, and actually said to himself, “If this be my daughter, why should not I acknowledge her?”

He muttered something. Ellen thought she heard her Christian name. She listened with her eyes bent on the ground, yet these eager to brighten and look up. The softness of his

voice was stopped; he turned his back and looked out of the window. The thought of all reconciliation's consequences—of the world's taunt—but mostly, the overthrow of his scheme of aggrandisement—shook his heart with irresolution and then terror, and he stood paralysed. Ellen waited for a minute, herself struck with apprehension. He looked as if he wished her gone.

“Have you nothing more for me, Sir Andrew?” she asked, meekly.

Sir Andrew had shut himself up.

Ellen walked slowly towards the door, turning towards the laird as she did so. “Whatever I may know, the memory, then, of those kind hearts who did their utmost for me, is alone for me. But, oh! how cheerless without the heart to cherish of him who may yet be nearest to me—he would have found me true to him.” But Sir Andrew was dumb. He had closed his heart.

She went away slowly up the quiet avenue,

the beech leaves of the hedges yet being cast off for the new life of spring. Alas ! her life seemed to her to be blighted,—the certain story of her birth no further hers,—rejected by her lover and by her mother's husband—nay, her father? But her simple, pure heart grew more and more to receive the sober and widening access of strength of a mind which had been free to acquire it, though she sorrowed bitterly.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AFTER Alan parted with Ellen, the pressing affairs of the crofters drew his thoughts from his own unhappiness. He walked away under wild impulses, which are, however, the reliefs of the young poetic mind, burdened with the sorrows attending the accomplishment of its often difficult designs. He was free from the fears of the coward. He did not think long: "All men would point me out, once the heir to Morven,—yea, the descendant of Kenneth King of Scotland,—now settled on a pendicle as a poor drover, and married to an unfortunate." Yet it was in no sense pleasing to have to fight even a little society, and Alan knew that the fact would proscribe him even more, and limit his little circle; that, however, he was prepared for, if he could conquer himself.

The interview with Sir Andrew Cameron was, as Alan expected, stormy and without benefit. Sir Andrew could only be influenced through his fears of a Supreme Court litigation.

“You will be sooner in Edinburgh than you care for, young sir,” said the knight. “I have issued a warrant for your apprehension; you are my prisoner.” Sir Andrew would have been frightened to say this to a bad or guilty man,—it was the acknowledgment of a secret, and perhaps unknown respect for Macalpine’s character as a man, to make so bold an avowal.

“You are either jesting, or playing some foul piece of work which will cost you dear, Sir Andrew.”

“Do you know Ballatruim has been found dead—murdered?” said the knight, retreating to the bell.

It was not fear or shame that cast back the rising blood into his heart, and made Alan stagger into a seat. Events had flown these

twelve hours so rapidly upon him, that he had forgot for the time the finish of his struggle with Ballatruim. He had hoped to be alone all that morning with Ellen Lee. Even to hear this fearful intelligence first from Sir Andrew Cameron, almost stunned him. Yet he could weep in his sore heart for the man who would have assassinated him.

He saw the knight was to ring the bell and alarm his servants. Quick as the thought, Alan started from his chair and held him off.

“I am innocent of this. You must not ring for your fellows,” he cried ; and his fine noble and expressive face struck an awe into the man. “I will answer it. But to-day I have work in hand. If the officers with me, they will find me in my garden to-night at ten.”

He walked to the door, and the knight, free of the proud-spirited look that held its spell upon him, rang loudly for his servants.

“Rascal,” Alan only could cry, when Lucretia Mar appeared upon the scene.

“I know,” she said, “what this is about. Stay !”

Alan said nothing. An expression of pain, over which a smile of melancholy softness passed, looked upon the entreating countenance of the woman. But he passed her and went out.

“I remember last night,” he said ; and she saw him pass down. She shouted ; but the knight was already out, in sound and fury, expecting every moment to give the word of command to his men to apprehend Macalpine. She however interposed ; and struggling with Sir Andrew, out of pretence of keeping him from danger, she prevented his shrieks from being heard. But Macalpine was gone, and she dared not at once follow him.

Having got the loan of a riding horse on his way, Alan rode fast to the crofters, and found them already in all the hurry, confusion, and grief of preparation for departure.

“E’en now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done.”

A few farm servants and small tenant-farmers of the immediate neighbourhood were collected, to render some assistance, and see the old inhabitants of the glen part from their native land. The children, in whose looks native health scarcely matched the sickening curse of squalid rearing and poor food, prattled and ran round the emptying cots. Old men sat dreary and numb, watching the operations of their youngers, and looking now and again with pained apprehension towards the west, where, but a few miles up, was the scene of their happier days; and thousands of miles onwards was the new home which they scarcely hoped to reach—or reach only soon to die. There was little noise; and the movements of carrying little pieces of furniture and some scanty bedding, in the case of a few of the crofters, to the few carts required in conveying these to the seaport, were effected quietly, with a

sullen sense of the cruelty of the laws and the man who had ground them down to the last stage of famine, and compelled them then to go forth into the wilderness. The dogs, congregating together, long dumb with want of employment like their owners, their lean and lank bodies stretched upon the hillock surveying the scene, or running weakly after those who worked at the slight labour of removal, alone, as yet, gave full vent to their sense of the situation. Their intelligence taught them that the unusual commotion was a leave-taking, and the howling was occasionally so wild and prolonged as to strike the silent old men and women who sat out of doors, or moved uneasily in the last looks of their ingles, with a mysterious horror, such as the imaginative Gael is subject to, by any unusual voice of nature.

A wailing noise was now heard from one of the cottages. It was the old mother of Cameron being led from the hovel, previous to the removal of his remains to the Kirkyard-o'-

the-Hill. His funeral was the first work of termination to the labours of removal. The old woman had apparently been expostulating against the sudden burial of her son : but that morning alive, and speaking in all the accents of his national eloquence and pride, the meaning of which she scarcely followed, but the tone of which penetrated her gratified heart; and already to be taken from her sight and laid in the earth ! The women who surrounded her, too, howled their expression of pain and grief. But they knew there was no other course, except to leave the remains of the once strong leader of their party at the mercy of the myrmidons of the law, or of the storms, —and they encased these in the rude boards of his out-house, to lay them that afternoon in the dust, in the presence of his people. Knowing of the coming of Macalpine, and of the result of his mission, and anxious now to hurry onward, —forgetful in their benumbed and stricken spirits of the religious rites, commonly very dear

to the Gael,—the funeral party issued forth, bearing upon spokes of rough wood the corpse in its primitive coffin, which was covered with a pall of old tattered pieces of cloth sewed together. Amid the mourners, who were the whole people, was the clay of their fervid brother borne away to the soil which he loved and would not leave. His obstinate and proud heart had refused to give way at the call of man, thinking he obtained in his death some measure of that victory which he could not reach by living. As they laid him down in the rocky brow of the hill which overlooked the river flowing from his western home, and which surveyed the misty mountain tops rising above it, there was not wanting sensibility in many present to imagine that the remains of the son of the mountain kissed eagerly the long home of their refuge, and that the spirit, hovering over, would smile with joy that they did him the homage of appreciating the dignity of his love. As the first earth was thrown

upon the entombed, Alan said, "He loved the land that God gave him ; and if man has bereft him, the Lord will restore." With this simple expression of faith, which those present understood to carry their friend beyond the victory of the mere man, in which they were at that moment, in the presence of the awful, perhaps cognisant of error, the earth and sod were pressed down, and the party returned to its work of the exodus.

It was none of the least touching incidents of the afternoon, to see the men, women, and children part with the faithful dogs which stuck to them to the last, and with which they would not have parted now but for absolute necessity.

Alan had noticed he was followed by a lean collie, which seemed throughout the day to become attached to him ; it had even followed him to the kirkyard, and was the last, with himself and a nephew of Cameron, to leave the spot. It was the dog of the Highlander, which

he remembered the dying man had, by a gesture, consigned to his care. He stroked the poor animal, and acknowledged the legacy, which it seemed anxious he should not forget—the keen instinct of the race, and some kindly notice of Macalpine that morning, after the final silence of its former master, attaching it.

All the crofters, with the exception of Mrs Cameron, whom Oliver Arnot generously sought after to offer her a room and provision during the remaining days of her life, were leaving the glen. She was like the widowed, solitary thing of the “Deserted Village,” “left of all the harmless train.” The final procession had, before the coming of gloaming, started from Muickland. With a last fond and sorrowing gaze, the party stood upon the high ground on their way a few yards from the last cottage, and parted with their glen for ever,—

“And took a long farewell and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main.”

Now and again, the few people of Morven

who had witnessed their leaving, heard the wail of the song of the departed Gaels, as it rose with an intenser volume of its painful notes, and, occasionally, later on, the bagpipe, as it echoed in the valley, between the hills ; reminding the remaining inhabitants that they saw, in the departure of these people, a tale of the decayed glory of the Highlands. Gaels and Saxons were aroused to anger as well as grief, and they shook their heads with indignant sorrow, and with a sense of forthcoming vengeance, thinking upon those who had begun and completed the work of this desolation.

The mourning lines of Goldsmith, repeated now and again by the young and patriotic hearts in survey of these solitary regions, tally with the story of the crofters of Muickland. Of recent years it had been the fate of the country of the Lowlands, as of the Highlands, to become depopulated. The Lowland Scots, more restless and aspiring, have gone generally

to seek a better fortune ; the clansmen, attached to their native strath, have been driven forth. The dull level of great arable surfaces may be beloved of the agriculturist and economist ; but the heart of the Gael is attached to that far-off land of his own which is surrounded by the mountains, amid which forest, river, and loch are free, and all are dear by their story, as by the love intensified of his secluded home.

Alan had intended to proceed to the seaport where the greater number were to embark for Canada ; and the remainder were to separate, to seek for labour in the large towns, too poor or dispirited to trust themselves to the colony, and mostly destined to suffer more intensely in the end in consequence. Awaiting them were festering dens and vicious life, and coming from the free, fresh regions of simplicity, they were to be dragged down deeper and deeper, until life itself was at its best but a fitful fever escaping from a palsied crawl. In the state of his own affairs, Alan had to delegate his

charge to the nephew of Cameron, a youth who seemed to have inherited the capacity of his uncle, with even a more commanding figure, which gave him an influence with the party.

Approaching the scene of Alan's adventures that morning, after his leaving the farmer's evening party, cottagers here and there stood by the side of the road, and occasionally little groups watched the progress of the procession. With shaking of hands, and waving with painful adieu, they turned away as they parted with their familiars of the band. But Alan observed that some of the half-stifled cry of pain was directed to himself, and as he came to the spot where Ballatruim had fallen, he observed a group eagerly scrutinising the gravel pit, and the place around it. In ominous silence the group around the pit permitted the procession to pass on. They were mostly Ballatruim's people, and although wondering at Macalpine's situation with such a charge against him, they re-

garded him as a dangerous character. His appearance at the head of the crofters, whom some of them were fain to regard as obstinate and illegal possessors, though admitting the latter's sufferings, they now looked upon as in keeping with a wild, deep, and revolutionary spirit, which they magnified into something worse. Coming opposite the farm of Lockhart, the old Tory, Alan was asked by a messenger to ride down for a minute to the house, where the farmer wished to see him.

"Are you mad, Alan Macalpine," was the greeting of Lockhart, as Alan dismounted and met him in his warm parlour, where he had been watching the party.

"I am performing as well as I can the work entreated of me by a dying man, a fine Highlander, who perished this morning of injustice, and is already laid in the soil he loved," answered Alan, his fine eyes full and enthusiastic as the most emotional of his tribe.

The old Lowlander was moved for a moment, but resuming his querulous tone, he said,—

“They are well gone, starving upon trumpery bittocks : their time had come. There was nothing else for it : what needs you mourn the inevitable ?”

“But why should a fine race of men be driven out to give place to chaos. Is the Chief alone to enjoy the native hills by the filling of his coffers. A time may be soon when the land will mourn the loss of the Gaels of the glens,—when men have huddled themselves to death in the towns,—and riches are the god of the oligarchy left,—and the land sinks menaced by foes,—then will there be cursing of those who have shut the Highlanders from their soil, and closed the glens into a tyrannic solitude.”

Lockhart was moved in spite of himself ; Alan turned aside ; it was a strong cause which could bring the water into his eye ; but as the last of the party turned down the hill, and the wail of the music he loved broke upon

his ear, the whole force of the injustice struck upon his heart, and he gave way.

"I won't argue any more," said the farmer, softened. He was an economist, as was Macalpine, but at this moment he felt pleased at being moved in his heart by generous promptings.

"Ah!" said Alan, "what a wail is made by Britons over the Blacks, who are, probably, better cared for as slaves; but our own Gaels are starved out without a cry."

"Ou ay, your patriot Fletcher wished the puir folk all slaves again," answered the farmer, with a humour slightly acrid.

Hastening to repair the effects of this speech, he placed a small roll of paper in Macalpine's hand.

"You know, Macalpine," said Lockhart, in remembrance of what Alan had said the previous night, "I and my fathers have made fat upon these folk, and I restore only an ounce of the 'creesh.'"

There was no malice in the attenuated humourist, and Alan could even smile amid all the anxieties of that day, at the generous close to the bitter resentment of a compassion which had not been his.

He completed his work, and supped with the party at a village ten miles on, bringing a cheerfulness among them he scarcely himself felt. He returned to Morven at a rapid pace by a different route, promising, if it was in his power, yet to meet the party at the seaport.

He told his father what had occurred respecting himself, and that he might not return to the house that night. There was no scene between father and son. Roderick, always attributing any particular stroke of adverse fortune to the malice of enemies, cursed the lairds of the place with the wild language of which he was master. It would have grieved the heart of the old Highlander had he thought that Alan could have been taken without opposing force

to his captors ; and after Alan had gone he was soon forth himself, treading the ground around the place, armed with cudgel and pistol, to support the supposed defensive operations of his son.

CHAPTER XXX.

AT dinner in Morven Castle, several hours after her return from Sir Andrew Cameron's, Lucretia Mar was more talkative to Colonel Mar than usual.

"Marston? Yes, that was the name of Macalpine's mother, Lucretia," said the Colonel, endeavouring to be calm, while the hypochondriac showed trepidation. He dared not ask how she came to make the discovery. Nor did she dare to ask whether that was not at one time the name he himself bore. "The Marstons were not of the common kind," he further ejaculated, and then relapsed into an uneasy silence, and soon slipped away to his snug library, in a quiet corner, and, alone, sat through the night.

His daughter remained a few minutes be-

hind in the dining-room, with resolute eagerness penetrating into the past and into the future of her own history.

During her absence in London, the chief part of the Castle had undergone embellishment. The hall was lighted with numerous and brilliant lamps, as were the staircase and lofty passage leading to the rooms of the upper floor; and as Miss Mar, closing her reflections, emerged from the dimly lighted room which Colonel Mar preferred, she entered the large and gorgeous drawing-room. A numerous body of servants had been engaged after the Colonel's further accession of wealth. Splendid Highlanders, in the tartan, as Miss Mar supposed, of the family of the celebrated Earl of Mar, were walking in the lobbies, or completing the arrangements for her reception in the drawing-room. She herself wore a dress of silk tartan of the same pattern, whose long and ample folds required the occasional assistance of the female companion who attended her, to

preserve from entanglement. She was met at her entrance into the room by a lady whose attire was only inferior in richness to her own, and who was a companion she had chosen to relieve the tedium of the nights.

The shrewd, plain Lowland woman, Madge, Miss Mar had found no longer sufficient, and the adroit management of that well-wisher of Macalpine had now small chance for play.

Miss Mar preferred to see herself, in the flattery of her new companion, a majesty of beauty and power, taking by the hand the gallant knight who required only her smiles, and the bestowal of herself in marriage, to reap the reward of his prowess. Her companion so ministered to her, here scarce concealed, vanity, that had she not been in most respects a woman of strength, she would already have been little better than a mere gewgaw—sacrificed utterly to the god she set up to adore.

She sat now thinking of the visit that Macalpine must pay her that night. She listened

to each step she heard, or fancied she heard, in the passage ; and when the door opened at last and he entered, her usually cool face showed that her mind was summoning its full force. She rose, and with her her woman, at a respectful distance.

Allan's eyes were dazzled by the brilliancy which met them. He came in from the dark outside, not prepared to meet the stately magnificence of his reception. Two stalwart fellows preceded him, and when he was ushered into the presence of Miss Mar, he felt as if he were back into the days of feudal pride, realising the dreams of early boyhood, with its gorgeous bowers of reigning beauty, to reach which a thousand dangers lay for the aspiring hero.

With a warmth which no true heroine of the Middle Ages is represented as ever having permitted herself to exhibit, the heiress of Morven welcomed him whom she was to consider her lord-elect. All the dignity and grace she possessed seemed o'ermastered by the loving

delight of her greeting. Her dark eye sparkled, her cheek glowed, and her full form moved as if to the impulses of a heart of which he who breathed beside it was the life. Her face was close to his, as if for that greeting of lovers which finds the warmest expression by the gentle pressure of the lips ; and her hand took his as if she should not soon part with the prize.

But Alan's was cold ; he led her back to the seat from which she had arisen. She motioned to her woman to leave the room, and Alan and she were left alone ; she in her heart of hearts wounded, while she preserved her former smiles.

“ I have rapidly had this part of the Castle set in order for our reception ; it will be ours alone, and Colonel Mar will never set foot in it except as an invited guest. How do you like this room ? It was impossible to consult you, or I would have asked the benefit of your taste in deciding upon the work.”

Her voice, her looks, her gestures were rich and pleasing, and yet poor was the provision of heart amid so much ostentation.

“But we have more pressing matter on hand than decorations,” she continued, seeing his stolidity, while she had wished to begin with the light, toying ease of assured lovers; “do you know the terrible danger you are in now?” her expression changing to the deepest concern.

“I am aware of the accusation, though not of the danger,” Alan observed, quietly.

Miss Mar had obliged him to sit down close to her upon the ottoman which was nearest the fire.

“How cold you look, Alan,” she said, looking into his face with anxiety.

“It would be cruel in me to affect a warmth I scarcely feel.” He returned her look.

She knew of course that she was again accused of playing a part—dissembling her

understanding of the real situation in which they stood to each other.

“I was sorry to learn of your illness following our delightful evening at Finzean. I caught no cold from our devoted defiance of the elements : my circulation must have been more excited than yours.” Her smile was real ; and she was determined to keep to her posture of betrothed.

“My ailment was mental ; I have scarce recovered yet ; and to-night, when I am again face to face, mind to mind, with you, it returns.”

“Oh ! cease this solemnity and mystery. You Highlanders, from your solitary intercourse with the grand varieties of the natural world, acquire a habit of spiritualising which becomes irrational. You must be conscious of the dangers of your own habit of life, since no one is free from some.”

“I am,” answered Alan, with firmness. She might spread, by her clever ease, that influ-

ence over his regard which her heart never could command.

“Now I have to tell you what I went to Sir Andrew Cameron’s house this morning for. It was to see you, having learned that the justices had ordered your apprehension, and to beseech you to keep out of the way till the rage of the lairds had expended itself. If you fly, I will stake my life upon Colonel Mar hushing up the case; if you remain, I can scarcely see how you will escape the ignominy of apprehension, and of conviction of some crime short of murder. I am ready to aid you in every way: you are my betrothed husband, and in the day of your peril I will not desert you, but take part as one involved: plans are perfected already by which we may—may be married, and find our way to the Continent for a time. Your flight will be set down to my account; and you will return to Morven in the course of a year its manager and its future lord.”

Macalpine rose uneasily. Her proposal might have been considered an immodest one ; yet it was made so calmly, and so thoroughly in business-like judiciousness, that he could not fail to be impressed by her force of character rather than by the indelicacy which her action might convey. He could not well be this night all his better self, and though not ourselves, we cannot always flee away.

“Miss Mar, I trust, as I hope for mercy, that you have not been deceiving yourself. I came here only to hear your condemnation and to speak mine,” was all Alan could say.

“We have not been perfect, nor can we hope to be ; but, good heaven ! this is not the time for moralising. Even now the officers may be on you. If they come here I have given orders to ‘drug their possets ;’ see what thoroughness is in my plans. Pshaw ! you are not a man of the world ; you are inclined to fall at delusions of the imagination. Forsake these, Macalpine, and stand to your manhood ;

leave the fictions of boyish dreams to the children of weakness and penury, to whom Providence has given the compensations of imagination."

She knew his vulnerable part. It might have occurred to herself that she seemed a Lady Macbeth, in her dark form, flashing forth resolution to the drooping head and heart of her lord. His over-conscientiousness gave too much heed to the voices which warred against his stern judgment, whenever he misgave.

"I do not understand you," he said. "There is something strange in all this."

"And therefore, as a stranger, give it welcome," observed Miss Mar.

The track of suspicion was to be lost by some jocularly.

"It may be harsh, cruel, and unjust, but I declare before heaven, that I do not believe that you, the child of good fortune, and ambitious of excelling in some world of fashion, seek for its own sake an alliance with a poor man

— a humble farmer — who offends against the proprieties, and curses the conventional tyranny to which you are bound neck and heel, for all you may desire to the contrary.” He was going to sound her to the depths ; but for what good end ?

“Are you so merciless and uncharitable,” she replied, tauntingly, “that a woman’s heart must be bare as her neck ere you believe in its professions. Oh ! Alan, believe in me, rest your hopes in mine ; I dare not deceive you—I love no one but you.”

He did not approach her, and permit her to lay those sparkling fingers of symmetry and strength upon his shoulder.

“Miss Mar,” he said, more resolute, “I came here to condemn, and to part for ever.”

“What ?” she cried, with vexation in every feature.

“There can be no marriage between you and me.”

“No !” and she rose to hide her sense of her

degradation ; she turned after a few moments with the traces of pain. "I took Alan Macalpine for an honourable man ; or has he so small an opinion of his own worth that he still doubts his capacity for the match ? I had not taken backwardness like this to be his weakness, or, truth to tell, I would not have permitted him to possess even my esteem."

"I should not be here at all, after the letter which I wrote to you a few hours after the night of our romancing at Morven. Silence presumed consent, by your not replying to this letter, and never for months writing to me at all."

"What letter ? if you wrote it, I did not read it." This was so far true : on seeing its contents at a glance, she threw it in the fire.

"Directions were given that it should be forwarded to you, and I wrote again in the same terms. Second thoughts satisfied me that my serious consideration of some foolish

gallantries, would 'only afford you amusement, and I wrote no more."

"I wonder if Madge could have been at the bottom of this," urged the lady; "she might have guessed or known their contents, and kept your letters back. She is a devoted servant to the fortunes of the Macalpines, so devoted that I verily believe she would commit crime to benefit them. From her I first learned of your youth, Alan, and learned to love the elements of a life simpler, truer, nobler than my own." Her warmth returned, and her languishing glances almost penetrated the cold exterior which Macalpine presented to her.

"Why did you not write me? Was it like a betrothed to be absent for months, and never even write one word of herself or of him. Even had we been serious, this alone sufficed to make me free."

"What if I did write you? what if every forenoon I began, after my morning's thoughts of him whom I had left behind in the regions

of snow—distant in body only, but present to all the warmth of my imagination—and I failed to set down in the cold language of my pen the burning wishes in my breast? I tore the heartless words and cast them in the fire. They would never have satisfied your exacting spirit. I cannot write, and I despaired. Many a time did I beseech Colonel Mar to write to you, that I might convey a message, and which so transmitted would not startle your high spirit; but he would not. I fretted till the day that set me free from the south, and I am here, eager to make amends, but put unkindly, cruelly, upon the tenter-hooks by your difficult ways. Ah, I may be strange, but you are stranger.”

It required all Macalpine's efforts to remain free from the influence of the rhetoric.

“It is in vain that we discuss our misgivings of the building while the foundation is an utter deception. But I knew of Colonel Mar's jeopardy; and you dared not lead me to

believe you serious while his fortunes and your own were undecided," he said, stolidly, while she smiled at the advantage given her.

"Even be it so, if you will. Would it not show my consideration for you, that I would hold you free till I could lay my wealth at your feet?"

"Not your consideration for me, Miss Mar, but for yourself. Had you written me at once, 'I am threatened with ruin,' I might have answered, 'If the threat is effected, you will become as myself; we are one who formerly were two, by the great inequality in worldly condition.' 'Come weal, come woe,' is the motto chain binding the hearts of those who love. There may be honour in wealth allying itself to poverty; but the brave heart upon the brink of parting with old possessions, which delights itself upon its alliance with poverty, instead of courting in the golden channels from which it passes away, insures a title to love."

“ You are young, and so am I ; and you have ideas which are those of youth, which I do not possess, and never did. I admire and love you for them. You know, we cannot all be alike. I do not—never can—feel as you do in some respects ; but I will learn much in your society. Yet, will you remain true to all this devoted sentiment ? You know, as I do, that men before you have not done so. Few there are who retain the warm sentiments and elevated actions of youth. When the blood chills with age, and the sense of the ingratitude of the world cannot be repressed by your flow of spirits, you must change ; you cannot keep for ever these noble designs in your mind. Then you will feel that it is better to be independent—to repose in ease—to have warmth and the attentions of your fellows—than to lie in the cold of your worn-out dreams, and fear the smiles of men and women at your infatuations. I offer you, of these, certainly the former. You now think, with your fine health and warm

impulses, that the world will remain always the same to you—taking up your abode in a humble cottage, working the soil, and retiring to rest beside a woman whose tastes are as simple as your own. It is a dream which you will never realise. It is the false creation of an overheated brain. I love to feel the presence of a fervour which is new and strange to me, and I do not smile at it as most women would do ; for it contains a great truth which we can never, as the world goes, completely fulfil. But, in the name of friendship, and of love, complete as my imperfect nature permits, I implore you not to ruin your life, but insure your happiness and my own.”

Alan felt he had drifted, and was drifting further, partly by his good nature, into calms, the calms that can only precede a storm. He was moved ; he feared the climax, but the time had come, and he must out with it—the harsh truth.

“ You speak with ability and kindness, Miss

Mar," he said, while a strong emotion shook his frame, "and I am honoured by the interest you express in my life. It would be cowardly to expect your friendship while I cannot say I love. What you may have regarded as such has been false, and a lie."

Miss Mar rose. "You are speaking the truth now?" she asked, confronting him, "have you utterly deceived me?"

"If I did deceive you I was goaded to it; but I do not excuse it. I intended to humble"——

"Humble? what? speak out! explain!" she asked, with a wild fury.

"Pride and insolence."

She sat down paralysed for a moment, and tried to shut out the dazzling lights of her brilliant apartment, and the knowledge of her situation; yet in his presence she felt compelled to face her own duplicity—the seriousness that she had deliberately played with his feelings.

“It is not true! you are not a scoundrel, though this looks like heartless villany.”

“I fought you with your own weapon,” he said. “Do you mean to tell me that your professions were not influenced by something—a mystery to me, but all-powerful to you?”

“The doggerel prophecy probably,” she ejaculated, endeavouring to laugh; “I am not so mad as that, although you may think me crazed that I stand speaking here—I who have as proud, and as justly proud, a heart as a Macalpine—to one who has abused me by the most savage attack I ever knew made upon one of my sex.”

“I know,” answered Macalpine, “that I can be hard. I have acknowledged my admiration where it is due, and my attack is made upon one who is by nature worthy of it, and can stand the shock.”

He turned to go. He felt all the hardness of his situation. The softness beneath the armour was visible to the woman who gazed

at him. He moved forward. With two steps her left hand was upon his arm, and she looked with a still, sad earnestness into his face. He dared not shake her off. Whatever was the first inducing cause, or the intervening obstacle, the woman loved as she was capable. "I would humble myself before no other man of this world, I know, as I have done to-night. Do not forsake me if I have loved the good things of life ; you will not even pity me, thinking my heart only hard. I will not die if you leave me, or pine away. I am strong enough to live, but you will embitter a life which would, with you, be prolonged for good. I bear you no malice if you go, as you bear me none—none now. You will think of me with more kindness when you leave me, I know—if you do leave me—but do not ; you have no tie elsewhere."

Alan started at the knowing look she here stole directly at him—"I know you have none," she repeated.

"I wish to heaven we had never met," was all Alan could say, as she paused.

"You will be left alone in the world," she continued ; "so will I. Why do we part when we had agreed to become one ? I showed once upon a time more love for myself than for you, and your retaliation has been ample. You owe me amends ; is it nothing, this deliberate violence upon my heart, to leave me wounded and bleeding, because I am not a perfect woman ?"

"Do not bring further curse upon yourself and me," pleaded Alan ; "it was none of my seeking. Let the proceedings of that foolish night drop for ever from remembrance : it was the false and hollow glitter of two beings jealous of each other."

With two steps he was at the door : she followed and held him back. "You accuse me of being deceptive. I tell you you are wrong, as I shall answer for it. With all my sins I swear it is as true as I believe I shall be judged, that you do me wrong—foul, hard,

cruel calumny and injustice. O, cold heart—that can prey upon the weakness of woman. Look me, Alan Macalpine, in the face, and say if you have not committed perjury in your soul? What Christian charity! Do you think me a stone, or a dog, or cat. You cannot surely treat me thus.”

Her form heaved in its beautiful pride, and in her indignation gave it a look almost noble. It was Greek meeting Greek. She had hold of his arm. He took her hand off with his, and led her back into the room. His voice was husky, and his dark eyes sparkled a fierce dignity which pressed down the rising anger of his accuser.

“I respect you too much to say another word but good-bye,” was all he said, and went out.

Her partial acting was over now, and the play of her keen and clever spirit was succeeded by the chagrin of failure. The grains of her true emotion fell, lost amid the chaff to which all her harvest had come.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DRIVEN by his shudder caught in the revelation of Ellen Lee, Macalpine had to revolt from the communication with Lucretia Mar.

Now rose out of the confused pains of his heart the clear sight of the truth, tenderness, and fine humour of Ellen. Most dear these to a suffering heart. How precious to him became these richest gifts of nature ; comparisons with the dignity of any name or the satisfactions of fortune not in his thoughts.

Had he been with Ellen that morning in the attitude of pure reason, undisturbed by the miserable surroundings of prejudice, in which he often delighted to think he could always sit ? Where was that imperious demand he had laid upon himself of meeting all human creation with the spirit of just equality ? Where, above all, was that nobler love—the

inheritance of Christianity ? He had again fallen ; he had sinned ; by the needs of his subdued heart, by the light of Heaven, he would gather up his soul again and be a true man.

There was more than time for Alan to walk to the trysting-place named by Ellen and himself close to Finzean House, and he started leisurely. He had proceeded but a few yards when a man emerged from the shrubbery. It was his drover-man, Donald ; he had been all day prowling in an excited state between the supposed haunts of the officers of the law and the places where he knew Alan to be.

“ Lord, Maister Alan, the deevils are drinkin’ i’ the kitchen. If ye are no aff like lichtnin’ they’ll hae the shangies on ye. I’ll wait and trip them up ; keep to the west till ye come to the sea ; awa’, awa’, my young laird, for a while.”

“ Why, Donald, man, you make me think myself some proscribed rebel a hundred years back.”

“There’s just as mickle gude stuff gangs the wrang road wi’ rascality i’ the days o’ order as o’ rebellion. Here they come; back, keep ye back.”

The two men had espied Macalpine and his servant, and, without being able to recognise them, one of the officers reeled and ran in a half-drunken energy past Donald after Macalpine, who had gone off into the plantation. They were followed by a third fellow, who, being taken by Donald for an assistant, and the drover’s wrath being excited by the two others eluding his grasp, was immediately set upon by him.

“Oot o’ my way, man,” cried the attacked person; “what the deil do ye mean by this? Are ye no Donald the drover? I’m a freend; keep aff, and I’ll help ye for the young laird; and, curse me, if ye dinna see his road clear this nicht for being Laird o’ Morven.”

Donald’s ears were tickled. It struck him he knew the voice. “If that be your end,

man, hoo hae ye your muffler and bonnet meetin' like a hangman's. Let's on." And they disengaged and strode after the others.

But Macalpine had already evaded for the nonce the gross, dirty grasp of the representatives of—he could feel only to be—injustice.

He took a circuitous route to Finzean to meet Ellen Lee. She was already at the trysting-tree, and came forth with a quiet readiness to meet Alan.

He put his arm gently upon her as he would have done without her revelations of that morning.

"Your heart has not changed towards me, Ellen, after our morning's work." He did not ask a question. She gave no answer; no answer was necessary.

" 'If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he is not, does wrong,
Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it.' "

Alan repeated the lines with a subdued sadness which Ellen thoroughly understood.

“We are free of the world of society,” Ellen said, with solemn sweetness, as Alan did not speak, but turned upon the bleak night upon the hills, where storms were already raging.

A merely soft, common-place woman would have been frightened at Macalpine. But the manifestations of his indignation drew Ellen all the closer to him. She loved even his errors, and saw these spring, so far, out of a greatness; while, too, after all the cry for perfection, we are called the rather to love, than to fear or envy, the subjects of those cold clear lights of reason—which we may have likened to the luminaries of the sky in the winter night, that they have been brightly distant—when we find these, like ourselves, possessed by the infirmities of the mundane sphere. She trusted him now as she did from the first—a true man, sorely tried.

“I was born with inordinate pride,” Alan said to her.

“You would not have spoken, Alan, as

you did to-day, on the day I knew you first," Ellen said, with a simplicity which was itself a charm to Alan, tired of stratagem.

He was understood. He knew her love grew by her knowledge of him—of the steadfast beneath the ephemeral. What higher can man seek for in woman, or woman in man?

"This is what I like," he answered, finding himself closer and closer to her; "a woman's love that can supply me even with myself. To-day I have acquired a new conquest."

She thought Alan unnaturally humble; she expressed a fear on that account.

"My breast these twenty-four hours, Ellen, has been torn by passion; it is not free. Dear girl, I would deceive you if I said now—I cannot say it—that I look in your face with the feeling of our best moments."

"Oh, I am very selfish," with simplicity admitting the unreasonable demand in her breast. "I am weary and fatigued myself,"

she continued, sympathetically ; “ to - morrow ”——

“ Do you remember, Ellen, how we once read from a French author. It was a fine passage that, which reminded us that ‘ the calm and peaceful moments of the solitary worshipper in the Temple of Nature are indispensable to the truest spirits for the recovery of strength.’ Yes, to-morrow we will return to the Falloch Bridge.”

“ That to-morrow will not find you yet struggling with enemies, will it, Alan ? ” she cried, clinging to his arm as if she would not part from him. He had forgotten that he would in all likelihood be in a cell !

“ It may ; but I will soon be back to Morven ; very soon ! very soon ! ”

They both made light of the circumstance, yet inwardly it was the chief cause of a knell that seemed at moments to toll in the heart of each. Both were trusting, and full of hope. But justice has rather to shake for her suitors ;

her suitors cannot repose in the strength of the arbiter.

Ellen's mind, now that the strain upon its best strength was over, fell. She sat down upon the cold grass, not well able to stand, as her delicate heart again feared for him who stood by her.

Alan was alarmed. Ellen yet could smile. His alarm renewed her strength. "Ellen, you are ill, with all this exertion in my cause," Alan said, sitting down beside her, and adjusting her fallen shawl.

"Not ill ; I have, I think, walked to-day more than I am accustomed to, though I rode to Sir Andrew's in a coach with a lady of your acquaintance," she added, with a laugh.

"You know Miss Mar, then ?" Alan asked.

She told the story of their meeting.

"We cannot go near her again," was all he said.

"Permit me," said Ellen, with a gayer spirit, struggling through her mental anxiety and

physical weakness, "to continue the acquaintance of her companion," and she drew forth and put to her head a flask, which, in the excitement of the minute at Sir Andrew's she had omitted to return to Miss Mar, from whom she got it, and had brought off with her, forgetting that she had done so till now.

"Keep away from her, and from Scoular, your uncle's wife's son—the man is a rascal," Alan said, with an inclination also to seize the flask.

"I pray that you may be as safe from the clutches of rascals, as I am from Miss Mar and Tam Scoular. Oh, Alan, the hawks are on you ; what is that noise ! hearken ! do you not hear some strange cry ?"

He was no one to tremble and start at the wagging of a straw, and was smiling at the "hawks" of Ellen's speech, but, as they spoke, a bright gleam rose from the ground over to the west. It was a fire, and the great lurid glow indicated one of no small material.

Their fears were at once naturally directed on Sir Andrew Cameron, whose buildings were the only ones of large extent in the direction of the fire. She thought of the revengeful work of an incendiary, maddened by the laird's exactions, and communicated her apprehension to Alan. This man, whose home she supposed to be on fire, and whose life might even now be sacrificed, how much was he to her?

"These men are too proud to be guilty of assassins' work," Alan said of the crofters. "But get you home, Ellen; the storm is on, it will be a wild night, and you must not be out longer. You will see me in three days, either here or elsewhere. It is but a paltry menace that separates us for a little."

"Do you see the fire, Alan, how it seems to spread?" and she seemed wishing to rush to the scene.

"The sight has excited you; there will be no lives lost at this hour; and as for property, the owner can bear the loss."

“He burns perhaps in the fire,” she cried, in her extremity and weakness.

Alan looked hard in the face of his companion, seeing nothing in the darkness. Her shriek sounded strangely in his ear. He was calm and even sternly still. “Who, Ellen?” he asked.

“Oh heaven!” struggling vainly to imitate his stern calm, which nothing then could shake; “Sir Andrew Cameron may be my own true father. Fly, Macalpine, fly; do not seek to face the scorn of the world with such as I am,” she cried, wildly and helplessly.

She receded from him; but Alan her in his embrace.

Flushed and fevered through every vein as Ellen had become, he recompensed for his former falling. “I will fly, Ellen, but to him whom you name, to watch that he is not hurt, and hear tidings of his safety. We will forget the subject for ever after this—as you will. Dear girl, I know more to-night than ever your value to me. I should have gone, with-

out you, sullen and revengeful to this prison ; but I am buoyant, cheerful, full of gladness."

Never was delicious balm poured into her spirit from her lover as now. She felt as he spoke the beginning of a strength stronger than all the world.

For half a minute he took her in his arms and led her a few steps towards the house. Never had lovers more pain at parting in the belief that it was but for a little time. But Alan was quickly on his way for his horse, and sped to the scene of the fire. He felt as if he had been in a long dream, so rapid and exciting were the events of hours after the external calm of his years.

Ellen could not yet enter her uncle's house. A strange sickness came over her as Alan left her ; the liquid she had swallowed had made her weaker, and she was dizzy and oppressed. She sat down on a stone, weak and heavy. The rain had fallen thickly in large drops for a time, but she did not feel the sharpening influence

of them upon her face and hands. All was dismally dark around her, but her eyes still bore reflected there the lurid light of the conflagration. She leant with her head buried in her hands, and fell into a benumbed state.

After Alan had gone, a man on horseback issued from the wood. He was a tall, powerfully built man, and the horse he rode seemed as strong and active. No sooner was Alan out of sight than the rider leapt the paling which separated the roadway from the thin plantation running down the side of the avenue to Finzean House. In a minute of time he reappeared about the middle of the latter some distance above where Ellen lay ; coming towards her he gagged her mouth, lifted her in his arms, and set her on the horse. She struggled, but her strength seemed to have fled from her, and the man was able to keep her on while he mounted himself. Taking an unfrequented and dangerous path by the side of the river, he rode as fast as his horse would go

with the double burden. The rain fell in torrents, and the river was already swollen by the water which had fallen for some time in the upper districts of the mountainous region. So rapid had been on occasions the gathering of water in that part of the country, that cottagers had been drowned in their beds in the night-time, not knowing of any danger. The horseman found ere long that his animal was wading in deep water overflown from the river, and he began to curse his own folly in undertaking his perilous task. But the reward was great, and he dashed the spurs into his horse's sides, in the seemingly vain hope of making his way to the sea-coast before daybreak ; he found himself deeper and deeper in the mud and water, and the rascal drew rein, finding himself in the midst of a great expanse of water, where on all sides he got into greater depth. Ellen was conscious, but it was the consciousness of helplessness. She felt the waters gurgle and swell, and thought in her dreamy condition that she

was floating, while she was yet in the grasp of the man. The name of him who had just parted with her, dearest to her glowing spirit through much sorrow, passed along the rising sheet of the waters, ere her last supplication for the coming of rest, for some of life's best, of which both had sighed but a few moments since, standing in innocence upon the verge of cruel extinction through the lusts of men.

The fire at Sir Andrew's mansion—for it was there—appeared to have originated in a room on the ground floor, but the wind had already borne the flames along, and upwards, the whole length of the eastern side of the mansion. Water, wet blankets, and other non-combustible material were thrown about in all directions amid a complete confusion of action and cries. As Alan reached the place the fury of the fire had passed away from the rooms seen from the front, and the lighted embers of the half-burned wood revealed the havoc which

had been made. Alan found that all human life was saved.

It was no part for him to play to be working now with Sir Andrew Cameron, and he turned to remount his horse, which he had tied to a tree close upon the avenue. He looked in at one of the windows, bare and open to the plashing rain, portions of the half-burned wood-work barring only slightly his view of the drowned apartment. It was a small room which jutted out from the main tenement. He could see that the strong oaken cabinet which had been its chief furniture, had stood well against the fury of the fire ; it was still standing, though charred. It was a dangerous place to be in, but Alan saw the figure of a man working opposite the window, and the light of the fire raging still enabling him to see through the smoke : the man was dashing in the front of the cabinet. Saviour or thief, it was an occupation which might in a moment bring the man to his burial, and Alan

cried to him to come out. Again, through the noise around, Alan heard a heavy thud upon the cabinet. Surely a robber this ; no man, except possessing the wildest of criminal imaginations, would seek to incur the fearful risk. Alan thought he saw the gleam of white metal fall down amid the debris. The man came towards him, but, probably fearful of being caught, he turned as if in search of a door or other window by which he might escape. Alan, thinking at the moment the robber might accomplish his escape, no sooner saw the man turn away, than with one leg over the window-sill he collared the object of his watch. The robber had forgot the metal box.

“Fool ; what do you here ?” shouted the man, shoving with all his might to the open.

“Account for this,” cried Alan, dragging him the way the man pushed. Both of them rolled upon the gravel without.

“You rascal,” Alan cried, as he fell beneath.

The man gave him a faint blow on the chest with the iron mallet, which he still strongly clutched; murder clearly was not his object. Alan felt sore with the blow, and rose. He thought himself a fool for his pains in this instance. He had at all events saved the box, which he found within the window, and he took it up and hurried off to the light to learn if there were contents after all, for it seemed very light. They consisted of but a few small papers bound with a string—a poor prize for all the thief's danger, he thought—probably the vouchers of some payments for seeds and manure. He read, "Certificate of Marriage between Andrew Cameron, Esq., and Ellen Arnot." It was enough. He returned the papers to the box, and digging as deep a hole as he could in the gravel, he buried it, and then went for his horse.

He had not taken more than a step or two when he was visible to a party of onlookers by the awful glow which now arose immedi-

ately above him by the fire's closing embrace of the entire side of the mansion. The officers whom he had foiled at Morven Castle had found their way to the fire, and no sooner did one of them catch sight of Macalpine than he was a prisoner.

“I will go with you now, but any indignity, and it will go hard with you,” he said, confronting the men of law. They offered none, and the party trudged away in the rain.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE tragic events of a day at Morven were enough for a whole kingdom. The morning after the fire saw the country in a great flood. That was a sufficiently large misfortune upon many whose dwellings lay near the river. Some of them had not only been flooded, but cattle and sheep, furniture and stocking, had been swept away ; and it was rumoured in the village that several lives had been lost. But the alleged murder of Ballatruim, the disappearance of the niece of the farmer of Finzean, the destruction of Sir Andrew Cameron's mansion, and the apprehension of young Macalpine, stood out plain, palpable facts, of mysterious calamity, staggering the people of Morven, so that they were literally breathless. No one knew what to think. The shopkeepers and

smaller farmers in comparatively comfortable circumstances began to shake their heads at Macalpine. "What had been done that day," they said, "cam' o' puttin' wrang notions in puir bodies' heads." This was believed the whole day; and man, woman, and boy, even those who had most participated in Macalpine's benefits, were for avoiding his advances in the future if he should manage to "get off." The forward benefactors of their fellows—especially of those whom society calls the "vulgar"—must expect a certain amount of martyrdom; but these, quick to accuse are quick to forgive. A legal apprehension is with some persons, even of higher knowledge than the rustic classes, an equivalent to guilt. The Morveners did not believe Macalpine had foully slain Ballatruim. But while they did not think for an instant he was not guilty, if he "got off" because of some clever management of a lawyer, they would come to think no more of the matter, and would believe in him again.

Some thought the crofters had been at the bottom of the whole work, and those who assisted Oliver Arnot in his unavailing search after his niece having communicated these beliefs to the authorities, the latter sought the poor Highlanders out, held them and examined them, tossed out and seized their scanty papers, and then let them go.

Oliver Arnot saw Alan in prison, and learned the particulars of his meeting and parting with Ellen close at her own door. Both of them were at first of opinion that she had gone upon some design of her own, which she had not communicated to her uncle, and that she would turn up very soon. Yet they feared for her, because of the floods ; she was weakened with exertion and excitement, and she might have turned away from the door to hear tidings of the fire, and been drowned.

Three days had passed away, and nothing further was yet known concerning the extraordinary occurrences which had set the country

in a state of wild excitement. The flood had subsided, and it did not appear that any lives had been lost ; and those whose effects had been swept away, were not bereft of their all. The public mind was therefore free to pause upon the other great events.

Alan had been examined by the Sheriff, according to rule of law, and made his declaration. The contents of that were now known. He admitted he had fought with the laird, but only in self defence, and had left him vanquished, but he thought without any real injury. The mystery, if any there was, as respects this event, was therefore cleared up. Alan's own story, so far as appeared, must be taken as true. There was not much sympathy for the knight, and even although the crofters were commonly believed to be guilty of his calamity, the people dismissed their appetite for revenge upon its authors. The interest came to be centred deeply upon the mystery which surrounded the disappearance of Ellen Lee.

The first suspicion, that the crofters were also at the bottom of her disappearance, was no longer tenable. Had not Arnot been their benefactor? Had not the young lady herself been most active in their cause, often visiting them with food and clothing?

Now, it was known, Tam Scoular had long had an eye to his stepfather's niece, and was "a sulky, ugly chap." Although he had occasionally to be away from home, there was nothing, so far as appeared, to take him off on the night of Ellen's disappearance, in such a fearful state of weather. Tam had done the deed, whate'er it was, now said public opinion; and Tam being blamed, others came in for their share. His mother was a woman whose wrath had not been restrained against the intimacy of her husband's niece with young Macalpine; might not she have had her hand in an abduction? Then it was known that Miss Mar had found a rival in this comparatively humble woman. Some thought her capable of putting

out of the way an obstacle to her love. Roderick Macalpine too, who was known bitterly to resent his son's preference for Ellen Lee, and eagerly to desire the accomplishment of a marriage with the heiress of Morven, came in for a full share of suspicion.

Alan Macalpine chafed bitterly under his imprisonment, particularly when a week had passed away without intelligence of Ellen, and no information was given him of the definite charge the legal authorities were to prefer against him. He could not be admitted to bail, and such was the state of the law, that he was not entitled to know even the rough outline of the evidence which authorised his detention. By the end of two months after he had taken proceedings under the Act of Queen Anne to hasten his trial, he would be entitled to know the definite charge which the Crown was to prefer against him. The slow, callous superciliousness of constituted authority has its own time and manner of operation, irre-

spective of immutable justice and individual right.

The time drew near in the month of May when Macalpine had to be tried or set at liberty; and the Crown had determined to try him for manslaughter; and a libel was accordingly served upon him. Alan listened again wistfully to the chirrup of the sparrow about his window, as cheerful to him now as the lark's song at heaven's gate. He was eager to be out to search after Ellen, and to see to the comforts of his father. But what would the former avail him? Oliver Arnot had exhausted all his efforts in the work of inquiry. Alan's own suspicions had fallen on Scoular, but Tam had soon returned to his home with a man at whose house he had stayed from the morning after Ellen's disappearance, and his story otherwise seemed to free him from any participation in it.

The farmer was at his wit's end. He tried to believe that, when Alan was out, his in-

genuity would be free to devise a thorough scheme for the discovery of her movements. One afternoon, when walking in his garden, a man dashed in upon him with the news that the body of a woman had been found in a pool some miles down the river. The farmer mounted his horse and was soon on the spot. It was not possible to identify the body, owing to its long exposure to the force of the running water. But Oliver Arnot held out that he did not believe his niece was drowned, and returned home telling all the people on the way that he had got an unnecessary fright, for he was sure the "queer lassie had gone upon some secret errand of which the gossips of Morven should know nothing." Yet it was but to cheer his own sad heart that he whispered forth the sickly words; the affectionate farmer of Finzean ceased now to hope. He for some days feared to go again to Alan, but at last he mustered courage, knowing that Macalpine would blame him for the least concealment of news. Alan

took refuge in the want of even circumstantial proof that this was the farmer's niece; he dreaded to ask if another woman of the neighbourhood had been for any time missing; but the silence of Arnot was ominous. He for the first time told Arnot what he knew of Ellen's thoughts concerning her parentage; he thought he was justified now in telling her uncle what she had said, though he would not, without this calamity of her long disappearance, have breathed of her revelations even to him.

“What if she be gone after the true story?” said Alan.

Arnot said nothing. The suggestion did not soothe him for a moment. The allusion brought extreme pain to him. And what needs he harrow his heart with these reminiscences of his own and his once dear sister's sorrow, when she who, in her innocence, had been the link between him and the happier days of youth was gone for ever!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE day of Alan's trial had now arrived. The Lords of Justiciary had on that day as president the Lord-Justice Clerk B——. The accused was defended by Mr Mac——, himself a Highlander, and taking a warm interest in the case, both from knowing Roderick Macalpine, and from a thorough conviction of young Macalpine's innocence. Alan was no foolish hero who pushes the aid of all trained men aside, and himself would enter unaided upon any difficult undertaking, from the command of a fleet to the pacification of a party of brawlers. He did not therefore attempt to cope with Solicitor-General C—— and his deputes. C——, as a man and lawyer equally celebrated for his high and genial character, no sooner saw young Macalpine than his leanings in the prisoner's favour were confirmed. He

had the day before admitted that the high character of Macalpine would, without the clearest evidence, warrant an acquittal, and that the case was brought on to trial mainly by the demand of the local magistracy, through their assertion that strong evidence would come out when the witnesses were put in the box. No great excitement was visible about or in the court-house. The public had come to believe somehow that the trial was a mockery. The only interest manifested came from the locality of Morven. Sir Andrew Cameron and Captain Hamilton were both present as witnesses for the Crown. Colonel Mar, who had visited Macalpine in prison, was, with his daughter, "accommodated with a seat in court." Oliver Arnot and Tam Scoular were walking together in the passages. Wat McTavish was likewise a witness in attendance, and occupied his time in imbuing as well as he could every witness present with the most favourable feeling towards Macalpine.

The first witness called was Captain Hamilton. The captain was cool and deliberate, concealing from the jury his anxiety to bear hard upon Macalpine. He had seen much of the connection between Ballatruim and Macalpine, he deposed, and gave the jury his account of it. He had seen the deceased speak to the prisoner on political subjects ; he knew the laird wanted to conciliate Macalpine, believing he had interest with many of the electors ; saw the deceased afterwards push by the prisoner, wishing to avoid him ; observed the angry scorn upon the face of Macalpine. He then described the scene in the church at Morven. Saw that Macalpine always endeavoured to treat the laird with a supercilious scorn, which wounded sorely the latter's pride. Macalpine never forgave the other for receding from the overtures, and the quarrel of the laird had been goaded on even by the very looks of the prisoner. Macalpine was embittered by misfortune, and was a deep

character, full of revenge against those who crossed his pride. He had himself cause of fear ; as an instance, his uncle and he had met the Macalpines, father and son, on the road, and having asked what was the price of Morven, then for sale, "the old man threatened to shoot me if I did not keep out of his sight for six months ; and the son, though he said nothing, looked to me the most likely one to put the threat into execution." From what he knew of Macalpine he was not surprised at the death of Ballatruim ; he often warned the deceased to be wary of the prisoner.

A cry ran through the court. The case looked serious. The effect of the evidence in chief was weakened, however, by two questions. "Do you think it the proper question of a gentleman to ask a Highland chief, upon his own land, what his creditor is selling that land at ?"

The witness was staggered ; "He had not thought of that."

“Were you a rival for the hand of a lady who it was afterwards reported was to be married to the prisoner?”

“What has that to do with the case?”

“Answer, sir, at once,” growled the judge, who saw the character of the man in the box.

He was compelled to admit that he had been.

Sir Andrew Cameron was next examined, and gave similar evidence as to what he had seen of Ballatruim and Macalpine when in the presence of each other. He had always considered the prisoner a very dangerous character, and though the latter had threatened him, he was more afraid of him when he did not threaten. No other man in the country round—and he knew it well—would have harmed the deceased.

The next witness was Captain Hamilton’s servant. He was going to inquire at Morven Castle for Colonel and Miss Mar, on their arrival from the South, when he met the

deceased in the avenue, coming down to the road. He carried a large stick, which he thrust about him. "I thought him merry, but sober enough to have all his wits at command. 'Who goes there,' he cried. I answered, 'A friend.' He told me that that devil, Macalpine, had threatened that day to take his life, and that he required to be on the look out. I laughed and went on."

Surprise was visible in the faces of the prosecutors at the fulness of this man's evidence. The prisoner's counsel failed to shake it. But the man admitted he had never told any one what evidence he could give. He had offered himself as a witness only at the last hour. Did not believe the prisoner could be guilty of such an offence when the laird spoke to him.

Evidence as to the deceased's condition when he went out of Morven Castle, and of the time of night, was given by Colonel Mar's butler. A farmer who had parted with Alan as the

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latter took his way along the drove-road, where he met Ballatruim, gave evidence as to that and the time of night. The night was clearer when they parted ; it had rained, and was wet again later in the morning. Macalpine was, so far as he knew, unarmed, but there was plenty of wood to arm himself with, all around.

Wat McTavish was then asked to narrate when and where he met the prisoner on the night referred to, and the condition Macalpine was in. Wat "had observed nothing unusual in his appearance or manner." He asked the prisoner to come quickly to see Cameron the crofter, who lay a-dying ; noticed then that the prisoner was affected deeply ; he appeared to think of nothing but the comforts of Cameron.

Upon cross-examination by Macalpine's counsel, the witness said he had known prisoner from boyhood ; had never known a man whose passions were so much under the control of his mind. Knew the deceased for a like time ; he

was of an opposite temper—his passions were uncontrolled, and his mind weak. Was present in the church when Ballatruim tried to throw a stool at Macalpine; could not have believed it possible for any man to have behaved so coolly under extreme provocation as prisoner did. Often spoke to him, and said that he should have the laird tried for the dangerous assault, which was close upon murder. Macalpine took high ground on the subject. Believed that he wished to treat the laird as beneath notice, and this may have given more offence than active resentment.

McTavish's evidence was generally accepted as a complete confutation of all that had gone before. Captain Hamilton, however, armed the prosecutors with a weapon to weaken it. It came out that Wat had been threatened with a prosecution for poaching, and that Macalpine had by his influence prevented it.

Ballatruim's men, who passed the scene of the struggle immediately after its occurrence, were

then examined. They were sure of the time they passed the side of the gravel-pit. It corresponded with the minute that Macalpine admitted he had left Ballatruim. They would have seen Ballatruim had he been lying on the road. The remaining witnesses were those who found the deceased dead in the pit; and medical men, who swore that the deceased's death had come from external injuries caused by blows and falls.

The prisoner's declaration was then read. It told the tale, as we already know it, fully and faithfully. Alan would have been safe had he refused to say anything.

The theory of the Crown militating against the narrative of the prisoner evidently was, that no explanation could be given for the deceased's sudden situation in the pit, looking to the prisoner's partial admissions, except by his having been thrown there by the prisoner to avert suspicion from himself.

The witnesses for the defence were Oliver

Arnot, Colonel Mar, and also medical men, the latter of whom swore that they were of opinion the death of Ballatruim was caused rather by commotion of the mind acting upon weakened blood-vessels and repletion, than by any outer physical agency.

Colonel Mar gave Macalpine the highest character, and, so far as necessary, contrasted with it the meanness of Ballatruim. The latter was a suitor for his daughter's hand ; had been refused that night he was found dead. Saw that the deceased had a deep hate for prisoner, increased by the rumoured preference of his daughter for prisoner. Deceased was worse of liquor when he called at Morven Castle the night referred to.

Strange as it may appear, the evidence of Colonel Mar and of Oliver Arnot, equally most favourable for the prisoner, had little effect with the jury. The hard-headed among them saw both of these amiable men carried away by their feelings and their passionate eagerness

to save their friend. Judge and jury are not on the outlook for scrupulous, truth-loving men, and the present jury did not recognise them as such.

It seemed, after all, as if the case might go hard with Alan, such strange turns do legal inquiries take in their generally tortuous twists. Once off the straight line of investigation, and all goes wrong. Which of the two men, from what was laid before the jury regarding their passions, motives, and conduct, was the likely aggressor?—Ballatruim, without doubt; but the jury, from the questions asked, were evidently balancing the probabilities of the root of the events occurring after both met on the night of the struggle only by what they actually saw of these events themselves.

A jurymen now rose, with all the pomposity of an untrained and fussy intellect attempting to feel overweighted with a load of problems.

“I wish to know why there is no evidence as to any marks which would indicate how the deceased came to the gravel-pit.”

Testimony had been already given that there were no signs visible of how the deceased came to the pit. This had been taken as unfavourable to the prisoner.

“ I should have liked to have had this,” said the juryman, “ the prisoner’s life may depend upon it.”

The audience rose at this. The judge put him right.

“ You forget, Sir, that the punishment, if any, rests with me. This is no trial for murder, however.”

“ I beg your Lordship’s pardon, but I think the jury ought to have had better evidence.”

“ It is all the prosecutor can offer, I suppose ; if you think it is insufficient, you must give the prisoner the benefit.”

“ But I winna, my Lord. My grandfather was killed by a Hielander ; what ane bears a grudge canna be canny ; and I ken these fellows hae nae great reverence for human blood, except o’ their ain clan.”

“Have you a spite against the prisoner, juryman? because, if so, you should not be there.”

“God forbid, my good Lord; I ken my Bible better, but I’ll gae the prisoner nae benefit.”

“I tell you you must, if you think the evidence of the Crown insufficient to bring home the guilt charged against the prisoner.”

“Where is the hat and cudgel of Ballatruim, my Lord? there’s nae sea i’ the north to drown them. Gin I could hear o’ them, maybe my mind would be made up to gie the prisoner a benefit. I’m thinking the way they were when found might tell a tale.”

“They were much sought for, but were never found,” said the Solicitor-General. This had been brought out, but not very distinctly.

A movement now took place in the court, at which all eyes were directed, and the juryman for a moment found the pride of his position of prominence deserting him. A lady came through the little crowd of the lawyers blocking up the passage to the seats of the counsel

and agents. In her hand she held a hat and an immense stick.

"Here they are, my Lord," said the lady, her erect form drawn to its full height, and her finely chiselled arm bared in the struggle of her entrance and the exertion of holding out the massive stick.

"What is this?" asked the judge, at once astonished and captivated by the rich half-daring glances towards him of the magnificent woman who appeared so mysteriously at the bar of the court.

"I found these on the night of Ballatruim's death. I now know them to have been his. I was not aware that they were not the prisoner's. I did not give them up because of the prisoner. I believed I was excused, before God and man, in not bringing him to trouble. He is innocent."

"Your name?" asked the judge.

"Lucretia Mar."

"You had better go into the witness-box and

be sworn. You are the daughter of Colonel Mar, and are the intended wife of the prisoner?" the judge continued, when she was in the box.

"The engagement terminated with himself," she answered.

The juryman, having made so great a discovery, would not leave the mine to be worked by another.

"How did you find these lying, my lady," asked the ruddy Scotchman. It requires a ruddy Scotchman to become the absolute victim of a pretty woman under most circumstances. This one was ruddy, and felt himself already giving way to whatever she desired. He knew he must be the champion of the prisoner, notwithstanding that his grandfather had been slain by a Highlander.

Miss Mar answered that she had found the stick without the palling, and the hat within.

"Was the stick lying or erect," asked the juryman, scarce knowing what he said. There

was a titter throughout the court ; but he had stumbled on the right track.

“ The stick was leaning upon the outside of the paling.”

“ As if placed by a man who was to get over it,” cried the juryman, bursting to see his point.

“ You are right, Sir ; it must have been so,” was the answer.

On both sides of the bar this created quite a balance of evidence favourable to the prisoner’s contention that the laird must have wandered into the pit himself.

The juryman saw the good work he had done, and was determined to go on. The prisoner’s counsel wished he might now sink beneath the floor.

But the witness was a knowing one. She did not over-do her part. The finding of the hat was but a commonplace finding. It was found like any other fallen hat—a little bruised, and lying, she thought, on its side.

“ No blood about ?” asked the juryman.

"I thought there was a little, but the ground was wet," said the sure-footed witness.

"Was it beside the hat, this blood?"

"It must have been immediately beside it. I looked no further. The thought of it sickened me."

The juryman sat down. The others were evidently annoyed at the success of a man they had regarded as a fool. The prisoner would be no better off by him than they could help. As Lucretia Mar stepped down from the box, a hum of enthusiastic appreciation passed through the court. Her beauty, her fashion—which added lustre only to her boldness of character, rather than dwindling that character, as too commonly the case, into inanity—the high spirit with which she was credited in coming forward as a champion of the man who must at least have wounded her natural vanity,—all gave her the chief place in the roll of the day's proceedings, and raised her in the estimation of the audience to the rank of a heroine.

“You must renew after this,” whispered Alan’s counsel gaily to him as she passed out.

Alan said nothing. But he would have been stone not to have been moved by her conduct.

The speech of the Solicitor-General was in a manner temperate. He left all to the jury, though he asked a verdict of guilty on the evidence. It was a case, he said, not without difficulty, and he was willing if the jury so viewed it that the evidence should be interpreted favourably for the prisoner; but there were elements in it unfavourable to him, which it was the duty of the prosecutors to press upon the jury’s consideration, and these he set forth. A lawyer discoursing of the unseen can take care not to make the darkness visible, and the illumination before, after, and around the fatal night made out the prisoner to have killed Ballatrium by an excess of the *moderamen inculpatæ tutelæ*.

Counsel for the prisoner addressed the jury with that force and precision for which he was

distinguished. He contrasted the character and history of the two men, and pointed out that the prisoner's story was worthy of the strictest credence. The case of the Crown really rested upon the candid and manly statement of his young friend at the bar of justice. The provocation that Macalpine had received, not only on the night of the death of Ballatrium, but previously, was such as no being only mortal, with all the inheritance of high passions, and in the full vigour of his strength, could have borne more nobly. The Crown should have long ago departed from the charge. Now it was the duty of the jury to set the prisoner free, and to restore him to a greater measure of respect than ever by the opportunity which had been given of showing the great forbearance of a man who might have been goaded into a deep revenge, and yet had not even called in the redress of the law.

The judge's charge was altogether favourable to the prisoner. The verdict of the jury

was "Not Proven." Manifestly the judge, and the whole court, with the exception of Sir Andrew Cameron and his nephew, were disgusted with their countrymen. How the verdict was not "Not Guilty" no one could see, not being behind the scenes. Alan left the bar sadly, that he was free only upon this equivocal interpretation of the evidence. Roderick Macalpine cursed the jurymen as a pack of ignorant carters.

"I don't blame them," Alan said. "They have been dragged to a position to which many of them are not equal by want of training."

Roderick would have liked to hear Alan curse them. He would have had more hope of his son. After thanking his counsel and agents, and also Colonel and Miss Mar, expressing to her particularly his gratitude, Alan went away in the company of his father and Oliver Arnot. The world he felt then was too strong for him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It would be profitless, in a narrative which aims at other interest than that which is derived by intricacy of plot, and surprises of detective machinery, to follow all the acts of Macalpine and Oliver Arnot in their endeavours to penetrate the mystery of Ellen Lee's disappearance. Suffice it to say that they were baffled in their search.

At the conclusion of the trial, Colonel Mar and his daughter returned to London. Sir Andrew Cameron and his nephew went also there, after their failure to discover the author of the supposed incendiarism. The knight was restless ; he decreased in size, and his few London friends whispered that he was breaking up. In the Morven country side Alan's name was at present little heard of. His own per-

sonal likings were rather for seclusion, and he rested in the daily labour of his farm, in the enjoyment of his books, and in scientific researches bearing upon his business. Oftentimes he visited the Falloch Bridge in the quiet nights of spring and summer, and looked wistfully upon the waters, or stood upon the bridge, and peered into the thicket. But no fairy form appeared ; no song broke upon his ear but that of the lark or the linnet.

The autumn returned again, and Morven received its few sportsmen. The Laird of Morven and his daughter returned : so did Sir Andrew and the Captain, to a shooting lodge close by. The nights grew long, and the gossips of the village and country side congregated in their various haunts to turn over how things went on among their greater neighbours, and again and again try their wisdom and penetration upon the unsolved mysteries.

One night in the Morven Arms, in the end of August, when the weather had been wet for

three days running, men of consideration drew closer with lesser brethren, to get out of each other's lips, aided by the contents of the tankard and the glass, an interest which the declining and obdurate season failed to engross. Our old friends Macnab the tailor and Cameron the game-dealer were there; as were also McTavish, John Macpherson o' the Mains, and his friend Inches, a farmer from the east of the county, and other persons of local consequence. The whole mystery of the disappearance of the niece of the farmer of Finzean, as usual, soon excited the party. Glasses were quaffed which did not add to the chances of revelation, though they promoted a hilarious playfulness of accusation against the various individuals who had been suspected, which might have worse effects than the cup.

“ It's the auld laird, as sure as my name's Alister Macnab; he's got the lassie clean aff that his son should marry the lady of Morven. Deevil burn me, Willie Tosh, will ye say hoo

ye can think Jess Arnot could perpetrate the depredation ? I kent the laird's leddie afore ye were i' the nest."

"What say you to Sir Andrew, lads ? I likena his looks ; I trem'le mysel' gin I pass his way in a dark nicht," said the game-dealer, taking a large pinch of snuff, and looking slily at the farmers in evident enjoyment of any hit at the knight, while conscious that his reputation for affording the supplies of Cameron game at many a serious risk, would not excite conviction of the absolute justice of his charge.

"Gin ye trem'le, Rab, it's wi' the load o' sin ye carry on your back," ejaculated a farmer.

"Eh, man ; I thocht it was the sinners I carried," said Tam.

"Na ; but I wish ye'd tak Pharaoh himsel', as weel as his locusts."

The laugh was loud and general.

McTavish stuck to the accusation of Cameron.

"He can preserve vermin, but if a woman

stops his way, he'll push her down. What say ye if he thocht to get the blame thrown upon Alan Macalpine ? ”

This was not a very clear case against the knight, but it led to further inquiry.

“ It's no weel kent, but I mind the day when Miss Arnot went abroad—it was only whispered—to marry Andrew Cameron. I was but a laddie, but I can mind my mother saying to my father that she was a fool to go to foreign parts for sic a man ; but she came hame married to a Doctor Lee, and lived quiet and retired, and was nae mair heard o' till the pretty lass Ellen came to her uncle.”

There might be something to begin with here, could it be found out, but none of the wiseacres could see the point of a thread to take hold of in the ravelled business, not even Macnab the tailor.

“ If it's no Jess Arnot, it's Tam Scoular,” cried Willie Tosh, the butcher—a fleshy, sanguine fellow, who would even in those days

have been probably challenged at a jury court by a prisoner's counsel. He had taken up a strong feeling in the case, and would not be content without one or more persons brought to the gallows.

"What proof hae ye o' that, Willie?" asked the farmer of the Mains, enraged. "An' here's my friend Inches can vouch for Tam bidin' the night wi' him. Dinna bring in the farmer, my man; your trade's mair like to cut throats."

The butcher stood up and confronted the farmer of the Mains in an attitude which looked threatening.

"Oot, man, it's a joke," cried the game-dealer, who held Tosh by the arm, while confusion arose among the others, all speaking and gesticulating at once.

A melancholy groan from Inches broke through the idle commotion. Inches looked sodden with potations; it was the prelude to his casting off a moral burden which bore him

to the earth, without relief in a dazed companionship with his fellows. Inches had never done any great work without the preliminary "wamble," out of which the creative powers of Glenlivet could only make a birth.

It seemed as if the mystery which overhung the whole matter was now to be revealed.

"Tam Scoular may be, or may not be, the guilty man, but he cam' to my farm-town the nicht after, no' the nicht before;" so saying, slowly and sadly, Inches drank again, and dashed his glass to pieces to give an emphasis.

The meeting was breathless with agitation: Scoular was the murderer.

"How did ye no' speak before, Inches?" asked his friend Macpherson, after the company had stared at each other and the revealer of the secret, half expecting that he would yet tell of bloody hands, of the sorry sight of a devil reeking from slaughter, and perhaps exhibit from his pocket the fatal knife, or a rag on which drops of gore were plainly marked.

“ I thocht it was for a bit poach for oor freend Cameron that he got me to keep my tongue. My conscience ’ll no’ stand oot langer. I canna sleep o’ nichts, and wander about disjacted.”

The party soon broke up, each vowing to keep what they had heard secret lest Scoular should hear of the charge and make off; but the whole story was through the village in half an hour, growing to dimensions which made Scoular an unmistakable Blue Beard ere the night had flown. McTavish took his way at once to Alan Macalpine, and they both hurried to Oliver Arnot. It shook the excellent man to the centre, this renewed blow—that the destroyer of his niece should be his own wife’s son.

“ I canna do the wark o’ informer here, sirs; but if the lad maun answer, he maun; do as ye like, sirs. Ellen was yours, Maister Alan—your betrothed spouse; ye maun see to her—to her death being avenged. I’m weary o’ this wark—weary, weary, weary.”

Alan and McTavish set out for the nearest justice's, and sent to secure a constable and inform the fiscal. Scoular was not to be found ; he had disappeared that morning.

Weeks were spent again, by Macalpine, in dogging the steps of the man he believed had waylaid and perhaps foully murdered his betrothed ; and when he returned to his cottage without any material success, he was thin and wan with his great exertions, rendered trebly harassing by his slender purse. Still he had held to the work until all traces of Scoular being lost, and his funds exhausted, he was compelled to return home. Here an attack had to be made elsewhere.

The night after Alan's return, in the end of September, found him at the door of Morven Castle. Miss Mar, for whom he asked, was engaged at the time. The Colonel was seated on a balcony which had been erected high on the front of the castle, where he was enjoying his cigar and the moonlight of an unusually

warm autumn night. He had given orders that upon Macalpine's return, he should be told of it.

Alan was asked to go up to him. Both men remarked a change upon the appearance of the other. The Colonel was fresher and stouter, Alan was pale and almost haggard.

Colonel Mar offered Alan a cigar, but the latter would not smoke. The former was in his best mood, and sat down to enjoy that calm hour of ease when body and mind are at peace with each other, and the worlds without and within are fair ; both looked forth without speaking upon the scene after Alan had sat down.

"Do you know, Macalpine, I am much better," said the valetudinarian, gaily ; "I see you have been overworking yourself chasing this chimera—a good woman, I believe. I have dreamt of those who can sacrifice themselves for love ; what do you say if she comes up to this ideal—gone off to avoid a step which keeps you down ?"

Alan did not believe this, nor did he wish to enter upon the subject even with Colonel Mar.

“Harshly as you may judge me for the observation, I don’t believe you will ever see her again,” the Colonel continued.

Alan held down his head and looked through the grating, down into the vacuity into which he almost wished to sink, so poignant at the moment was his bitter grief.

“I wished to see you on your return, Macalpine : Munro, the writer, is retiring, and I am to offer you the appointment of factor on Morven. I would not have offered every Highland chief the management of an estate which was but yesterday his own family’s ; but you will see how an acceptance of my offer will come to benefit yourself and other people in more ways than one.”

Macalpine’s feeling was one of admiration for, and gratitude to, the man beside him. Yet he could almost say nothing. How could he accept such an appointment !

“You know”—when he saw the effect his offer had upon Alan—“that I had hopes, from what took place between you and my daughter, that there would have been nearer relations ere now, between you and me, than factor and landlord; but that, it appears, is not to be—not yet. It would complete the happiness which I have begun recently to feel.”

Still Macalpine was not inclined for discussion; but Colonel Mar himself was more talkative than usual.

“Perhaps you sometimes wonder at our advances,” he said, with a smile.

“Yes, I have done so,” was the answer.

“You thought, if you believed your father, that there was some flaw in my title, which could be healed by an alliance with his heir.”

It was Alan’s turn to smile.

“It has occurred to you that we have been believers in doggerel prophecy centuries old, which gave Macalpine’s heir the lands lost by his sire, and that the prophecy would be best

fulfilled by my daughter's participation in it."

This was nonsense, yet the absurdity had flitted across Alan's mind.

"I—what! is that Lucretia in the room?"

There was no candle light in the antiquated chamber at their back, which was near the roof of the castle, and had not been changed in appearance since Alan's time; but he saw, by the aid of the bright moonlight, a figure standing near the window. It was not Miss Mar, but the figure of an emaciated woman, whose side was turned towards the window. Alan thought he had seen such a dress and figure before.

"Some of these old women—what are they doing there?" said the Colonel, petulantly.

He had scarcely spoken when the glass door of the small room leading to the balcony, and which divided two large chambers, suddenly opened.

Lucretia Mar was seemingly happy. She

hummed to herself, in tones not to be designated, the words of a Scotch air—"The Lass o' Gowrie."

As if taken aback when Alan rose, she retreated into the room. Colonel Mar gave Alan's name.

With her sweetest expression she offered her hand through the doorway.

"Sit you down here, Lucretia. It is getting chill for me. I must be careful. Sit only a few minutes longer, and come down stairs. We have a good deal to speak about, Mr Macalpine ;" and the Colonel shuffled away.

"I think we had better go down stairs, Miss Mar. I wish to speak to you alone, and this is scarcely the place," Alan said, with a tone which indicated business.

But Miss Mar had sat down. "If you are not chilled, I should prefer here. I see it is something disagreeable, and you will admit that both of us will keep truer to our better selves in the presence of this beautiful scene,

than huddled in a dark, close room. If the people of the world spoke and acted oftener with nature shining in their faces, their hearts would be nobler than they are."

Alan Macalpine for an instant thought that he might be doing this woman hard, rank injustice.

"I have not seen you since the trial, and your service to me there I shall ever remember gratefully. I could not then ask you the question which has, since the disappearance of Miss Lee, been continually with me, and the necessity of which has recently been doubly confirmed : Do you know anything about it ? I must have it answered now, and remember, with every measure of the truth and candour you profess."

He was aroused to a wild spirit of determination. Lucretia Mar wished she had denied herself, little of a coward as she was. She gave no answer, but wavered internally.

“Answer me,” he said, with a frowning sternness, which made her start away.

“What if I refuse to be questioned even by you?” she said, after a little, recovering something of her haughtiness.

“Witnesses are warned not to criminate themselves,” he rejoined, as haughtily.

“You are now playing the part of a detective.”

“No ; I come, as I have a right—by the the right of every member of the human family—to seek and to find justice where the laws have failed him.”

“Revenge again !”

“I alone in the world remain to avenge, if you will, this taking off ; and though he be my own father who has done the deed, I will give the assailant into the hands of the executioner. If you know nothing, say so ; of what you know, speak the whole truth, or remain silent.”

“Do you think to extract information out

of me by a course of terror? Beware how you conduct your cause."

"You admit knowledge, perhaps participation." Alan rose and raised his hands imploringly beneath the calm, clear heavens. "Woman! how could you, beneath this heaven which you extol, have aided in the destruction of one of the truest of your sex, who never did you harm; even held a high opinion of you while you plotted against her?"

"I have acknowledged no participation, no knowledge, concerning her disappearance. But I am not a coward, nor am I influenced by your passion when I tell you what I know. First, let me reveal to you my belief that your fancied love for this woman was no other than pride."

She did not stop to hear his objection to her renewal of such discussion.

"You were, and are, in your secret heart the proudest of men; you refused to receive material benefits with the hand of your wife, or

indeed from any man or woman whomsoever. Pride comes before a fall. You are down ; yet your character has drawn me, my father also, towards you ; and I have forgiven your harsh and unfeeling conduct—forgive it even now ; and do you dare to lash me still ? ”

“ I came not to speak of yourself nor myself. If you can tell me how fares the woman I seek, I will be thankful, even though you have committed wrong.”

“ I will speak. I wished her fairly out of the way. I even spoke to your own father on the subject. Such was my affection, if you will allow me to call it so, perhaps containing a measure of pride like your own, that I would have done anything short of crime to have seen you free of this person. I knew Tom Scoular wished to marry her ; I knew, moreover, that Sir Andrew Cameron wished to send her abroad ; and I communicated with both. I said to Scoular that the day he married her I should give him a thousand pounds.”

“You have murdered her!”

“Out of jealousy! Bah! The woman was beneath the notice of one like me.”

“Did you not incite Scoular to the horrid deed which has buried her probably until the day of judgment, when you will answer for the crime?”

“I incited Sir Andrew Cameron too, perhaps!” she cried derisively, as before.

“You bribed a villain, and knew a villain’s ways. You are guilty before God.” As Alan, weakened with long exertion, shook with rage and horror, and stamped restlessly on the balcony, his eyes rested again upon the chamber behind him.

The figure was still there; pale, emaciated, demented, it looked upon him; the face could not in its full contour be seen, but the height and dress—“by heaven! they are those of——,” and he stood paralysed.

“Who?” she cried; “you are mad!”

With one hand he seized her arm, and the

other he placed at the back of her neck. "Swear to the eternal God who watches us, that you know nothing more than your bribery?"

"You are mad, Macalpine; mad;" while she held firmly by her disengaged hand a pillar of the balcony, as if she feared he might think in his mad rage of hurling her below.

"Swear!"

"I know nothing more than I have told you."

"You have hid her from the sun, and she is perishing in your devilish enmity. Quick, follow me, with your keys! quick!" and he would have dragged her, while she held to the rail with the desperation of one who fears she is wrestling with madness.

He rushed upon the door of the chamber. It was open: the room was large and bare of furniture, and by the aid of the moonlight he saw that there was no person there. He asked himself whether it was an optical delusion, and hurried away from the place with the fury of

the wind. He flew down the creaking oaken stairs of the castle, and was out on the firm earth. He knew not what to think. His brain reeled like that of a drunken man, and he sank down exhausted, his sensitive soul worn like that of a fallen being who is done with the world. But Alan Macalpine was not done with it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

TOWARDS Christmas, a farmer in the neighbourhood of Morven had occasion to send his chief cattleman to the North of England to attend a show of stock. This man returned in the course of a few days, with the intelligence that he had seen Tam Scoular attending, in the guise of a common drover, to some cattle in the yard. The man came to Macalpine with the news, and the result was the apprehension of the fellow on the charge of abduction.

Now did all Morven wait in breathless expectation of the revelation of this great mystery. Scoular told his story, and the law officers confessed to each other that they thought the man was speaking the truth: so far as it was capable of confirmation they found it to be confirmed. The story was this:—"He

had always wanted to marry his stepfather's niece ; had proposed for her, and been rejected. When Laird Macalpine's son was to be married to the lady of Morven, he was told by his mother that Ellen Lee would marry him now. Miss Mar called for him immediately on her return from London in the spring, late in the night, to say that he should press his offer again, and she would give him a thousand pounds on their marriage. Next morning, a man he did not know called for him, and said Ellen Lee was to go to America with the crofters, and if he would meet them next morning early at C——, he would have a chance of getting her to consent to a marriage, and be off to America together. He was there at the time, but they never came ; and he went away to visit a farmer, whose house he arrived at that night. The night previous to his expected meeting with Ellen Lee, he spent at A——, in one of the low haunts of that very proper city."

Suspicious now fell upon Miss Mar and Sir Andrew Cameron, and Scoular was interrogated again. Miss Mar, he said, had not made any proposal for an abduction. She evidently thought, said Tam in his own way, that Ellen Lee was some poor lassie who was to be got rid of by a few bawbees. She had told him that Sir Andrew Cameron wished to get the girl off, and would give money. He went to see Miss Mar on the night of the day the mysterious man came to him. Saw her for a little. She said he did not come from her, but that he must have come from Ellen herself. He said he did not like the business. She said she had spoken to Ellen Lee that day for the first time; that she found her marriage with young Macalpine had been broken off; and that if ever there was a time for his ('Tam's) offer being accepted, it was then. She said Ellen was too good for him, and that she was altogether a different sort of woman from what she expected.

Miss Mar and Sir Andrew were likewise examined. The statement of the former corresponded with Scoular's declaration. So far, therefore, there was no ground for implicating her. Sir Andrew was examined, and denied having employed any one to take away Ellen. She was the offspring of his wife by another man, and he had wished her out of the place, but he would never have used force.

So Scoular was set at liberty, and the people thought now that the secret would remain one for ever.

Oliver Arnot recovered something of his spirits now that the evidence discharged his wife's son from what he had imagined a murderer's cell ; he even gave forth at last that his Yule feasts, which were the delight of the little world of Morven, were not yet over. He had hesitated, even with his great sorrow upon him, to disappoint so many ; and now Tam's freedom settled that there was to be

a feast—a quiet one, no doubt, at which good humour and song would however circulate, as in all of these entertainments during the past coursing years ; there would be no dance or clamour. While Alan sympathised with the breadth of his friend's heart, he wished himself to stay away ; but he could not withstand the entreaties of his warm friend, and he consented to be present.

The cajolery and attractions of the handsome heiress had far too powerful an influence over the honest farmer, and, unknown to Alan, she was to form one of the dinner-party.

In her recent experience of metropolitan gaiety Lucretia had been unfortunate. The graces of its refined society had no charm for her ; she had felt dull as ever beside men who mimicked the sentiments or the humours which are spontaneous in natural life ; she resented the presence, with a feeling almost of hate, of women who became, as she said, butterflies, that boys should chase them. She was not

content with the ends to which mostly all her own steadfast order of going hitherto necessarily brought her. The best men and women do not seek out even an heiress, whose features cannot conceal the intractable spirit which is bred of a mind powerless for enjoyment and reform in a region opposed at once to its healthier cravings and its own vanity. Those who would not veil before her the consciousness of a superiority, she hated. And with any others, less in material power and not greater in intellect than herself, Lucretia Mar would not meet. She was languid ; and longed to return to the free Grampian Hills, where the northern air braced her long dulled impulses into some life, and she met homage where she went a queen in influence and in personal feeling. She called those dangles who sought her out, and whose extra energies she believed to be spent in sickly and feverish flirtations or wasteful dissipations, merely idle vagrants ; and it

seemed to her informing mind that a husband who held the plough over a sweet field, or cut the hay in the smiling meadow—in serious play of course—was perhaps a finer, a nobler, and surely a safer fellow. Though she certainly did not practically indorse as a creed of life the sentiment—

“Twere better to be content and clever
In tending of cattle and tossing of clover,
In the grazing of cattle and the growing of grain,
Than a strong man striving for fame or gain.”

Some fine igneous particles of democracy had furnished her with the vision of education and leisure so extended that the wisest and greatest men were found working in the open fields, and delighted with the ideal broom gathered of this prospect. She longed to bring by it a corona to herself, and also sweep away mists and snowy fancies surrounding “tottering privilege and exclusiveness.”

She awoke, not many days in her sojourn in the dim and close atmosphere, after a morning of unvaried moves in society (hearing the dis-

tant peals of London bells, and waiting for the day going down), to wish she were back to listen, as she lay in the oaken bed, even to the sigh of the forest or the rush of the swollen river, which were in accord with her dissatisfied heart.

Returning to Morven under the dominion of these feelings, Miss Mar had set about being busy to her own and others' advantage. She pressed her visitations of the people, on her father's estates to the meanest of labourers, and took in hand all kinds of operations for their benefit. She became vastly interested in the vernacular languages, and the drolleries, humours, and poetic images which these conveyed. She denounced prior injustices; taking by the hand the solitary dotard widow Cameron, she almost paraded her as a spectacle of the results of Highland tyranny. She unbent; and the starched stiffness of her demeanour to people whose social position was superior to her own occasionally thawed into a pliant

geniality beside men whose diversions were tapping snuff "mulls," and women of unfeminine accomplishments.

Alan had recently had a story of her and Cameron the game-dealer, which, going the rounds, had pleased the farmers greatly.

"How comes it, Cameron," she asked, in passing his shop, "that although you have only a small barren moor from the Colonel, you have always got treble the game he has, with all his rich district?"

"'If Skiddaw hath a cap,
Scruffel wots full well o' that.'

We'll hae our share o' what's gaun, being sae near neighbours," answered the dealer, shyly, but not afraid.

"But the farmers, who see so much of the game, tell me you must have more than your share."

"Weel, my lady, the unwelcome guests soon gae to whaur they're better liked," was the answer, delivered out of the mouth's corner.

“ Ay, Cameron, we maun make the guests mair welcome, then ; Scruffel’s sympathy is so great, that Skiddaw is soon bare of her cap.”

Many a pot was consumed, and many a loud peal of laughter heard, in the Morven Arms and the farm-houses, over this anecdote.

If Miss Mar could, in sitting down at the farmer’s dinner, feel a sense of advancement upon the vacuity of fine ladyism which she saw, her spirit of indomitable perseverance had no doubt a personal object to serve. She was in the best ease of animation possible to her ; all seeming intelligence, aptness, and attention. Her eyes sparkled and glanced ; all the female arts of fascination, of which she had her share, and which she had resolved not to exert in society contemning any rivalry with such as this, finding an outlet now.

The host was restored to a fine ease and pawky humour ; Macpherson o’ the Mains forgot the extravagance of his wife, and was funny ; another had generous promptings, which elated

his spirits beyond his doubting of their propriety. All men who take pleasure when they can get it were glad.

Macalpine alone seemed unmoved, although what he had heard of her recent doings and sayings, the cruel injustice he considered he had himself recently done her, and her warm appearance now, had opened his heart, though he was determining not to be "cajoled."

"What indomitable perseverance is this?" Macalpine did not suffer himself in his natural modesty to think; but Miss Mar thought it for him. She did not conceal her designs for a final victory.

In an era engrossed with material progress, there may be less desirable media between the fair and the brave, to pass an influence on the heart, than quotations from the Statute-Book. She who once on a time descended from palfrey, or gave a falcon from her wrist to discuss in dulcet tones with her gallant the beauties of the classics or Spenser, now turns up the Acts

of the legislature, and prescribes the formal language of new enactments for every physical well-being.

Inquiry was made by Miss Mar as to how the Muickland crofters were progressing in their new sphere. She expressed her indignation at Sir Andrew's conduct to them with a concern which attracted the observation of every guest.

"Ah," she said, "I have been studying your history. Why! how little progress has the legislature made for you, when I find William the Lion giving the husbandmen and shepherds redress against the feudal lords for not living on their lands, and for 'wasting the country with multitude of sheep and beasts, thereby troubling God's people with scarceness, poverty, and other hardship.'" Not an error in the quotation.

There was great rapping of the table at this fervid reference to an Act eight hundred years old, which seemed to tally with the grievances of the farmers, great and small; all looked to hear what was to come next.

But only more legislative reference was to come. Miss Mar had not the instructions of her father to make an end of all the grievances of the parish.

“And then,” she continued, “how rich were the slaves of those days, if they could be fined occasionally a cow and sheep, which was permitted to their lords by statute of Alexander II. Your poor labourers are not so well off now.”

Miss Mar rarely laughed ; now she did so internally.

“Ay, that would hae ruined puir Tam Cameron at one blow,” remarked Arnot, amused.

“He wouldna thank ye for comparing him wi’ a slave, were he living. Faix, Tam thocht himsel’ a bit king ; and there hae been kings worse off. Nae doubt it’s no’ their natural condition to be bankrupt,” was the observation of honest John Macpherson.

“I should like to see you all proprietors of your own farms, founding many families steadfast to the nation ; but the Scottish people do

not seem to have been fortunate in the acquisition of their soil."

She looked with frank inquiry more than once at Alan. It was impossible he could remain longer silent.

"Not so fortunate as their brethren in England," he observed, while he waited to see if she would take up his observation. She languished for the continuation. "The 'rentallers' of Scotland," he then continued (in spite of lessening self-reproach, delighted to be piqued into discourse by the fair historian), "who possessed no written title, but were immemorial possessors, were gradually ejected by the feudal lords after the Reformation, consequent upon the revolution in land rights brought about by that event. Might was their right. Now-a-days these crofters had only moral justice, not law, with them. They had no written titles, relying only on their long services and their landlords' honour, and were liable to be removed at any time, without a farthing for the expenditure

of their entire means in buildings or improvements."

"How cruel," exclaimed Miss Mar. "I wonder those that feel the injustice so keenly seem to have made no effort to find a seat in Parliament to denounce and remedy it."

He felt the rebuke, but without resentment. At the moment it set him to dread that love of ease, intellectual as it was, and of sexual joys, refined as these might be, selfishly made up much of his intended living according to the truth.

And so, in the elements of his good nature and tender-heartedness, Macalpine was being taken rather a captive. Where is the vision of purer light beaming in a woman's eye, asks not Macalpine to-night, in the presence of this stirring spirit, capable of action, and with rather forced cravings for the natural.

He had not thoroughly recovered himself; but events do not wait upon the always desirable complement of strength to those who are

to be acted upon by them ; weakness, rather, often induces an unnecessary precipitancy.

“Colonel Mar,” said the lady, “is grown quite a Scotchman, and a convert to the expediency of re-peopling the Highlands. He thinks of laying out small holdings. I confess I have ever been of opinion that stalwart men and women are more desirable in the glens and straths than timid deer.”

A jolly farmer rose to his feet and delighted her with incense offered to her social freedom, her beauty, and her sense.

“You must make it up again with her,” whispered Oliver Arnot, as the men rose, after a longer sitting at the table than the ladies. “Now or never. I’ll never hae the happiness o’ seeing Ellen i’ this life. It was the puir girl that was drowned ;” and after the farmer’s tears were dashed aside, he took Alan by the hand, and was frisky as before. “Six months hence hae the bagpipes screechin’ again i’ the glen wi’ the Macalpine’s March : such a march

as has never been heard since the battle at which your great-grandfather tried to break the ear-drums o' the Southerners."

The return of the party down stairs to hear the music of the fiddlers and harpers, and songs from those so gifted, brought Macalpine again into prominence. The old minstrel who had on the previous year's feast sung the "Captive Chief," and conspicuously played a part betwixt the heir of the Macalpines and the Lady of Morven, was again present, and represented on his shaggy countenance the shrewd curiosity naturally excited at the situation of his hero and heroine towards each other. He had not sung his song in the halls of Morven Castle during the past year, as he had expected to do. Could he venture to repeat it now? He watched the meeting of the two in whom he saw patrons of his craft, and of all its accompaniments—the gay and spirited movements which the devotees of the emotional and the beautiful ever long after. But Macalpine's

expression was still. The old harper, however, struck in with a stirring song, and hoped to arouse the soul of his fallen lord :—

THE MEETING OF MACALPINE AND MACLEOD.

Hail, Lord of Morven ! welcome thy clan ;
On the night march we start to the hill ;
Mar is before us with thousands armed,
Calling his thousand warriors still.

Here a hundred banners greet thee, chief,
Waving 'neath thy castle's free response ;
Here, as one, a thousand lords contend
Who will earliest the cause advance.

The King is reigning in his Highlands,
This day the trumpets his proud name sound ;
Morrow forth we start for all domain ;
We and you the rightful head hath crowned.

Macalpine down stands beside Macleod ;
They hundred feuds loyally buried hath.
Forth upon the march, in hundreds come
Morven's sons, the proudest of the strath.

The music and the glittering arms,
The fond adieus waved from the castle,
The prancing horses of brave and fair,
Who part not soon, in thought of battle.

Stirred each breast with hopes divine and true ;
Unto the sky a loud huzza is pealed ;
Forth march the glowing bands to win
Honour, glory, on the righteous field.

Alan listened with a deep interest to a song which the minstrel had not sung in his

presence since his early boyhood, ere he knew of the dejected fortunes of his family. He saw it was repeated now because the minstrel chose to consider that these fortunes ought to be in the ascendant. He was not angry with the old man, though he would have been entitled to resent the introduction of a ballad which drew forth necessarily a contrast between the former grandeur of his family and its present fallen state. He went out when the singer had concluded.

When Macalpine returned, he was asked by the host to give his annual song of his own composition, which had already been inquired after. Alan complied, and taking the harp in his hands, sat down and gave a song he had written previous to Ellen's leaving her uncle's house, titled—

THE HIGHLAND MAID.

The clouds may come and go, and the day be dark and drear,
The rains fall unkindly, and the thunder rattle near,
Or snowdrift block the strath, and the frost nip all my yard,
And the world frown upon me, and times be going hard;

But in yonder glen there lives a maid of Highland name,
Richer than many kingdoms, and lovelier than fame ;
Clearer her brow than crystal, and eyes bright as the sun ;
Fair her hair, and flowing as her mirth that's never done.

And her steps deride the storm, and her warmth thaws the
chill ;

No evil can betide her whose heart doth fear no ill.
Auld nature loves her surely, and she loves in return ;—
The Highland Maid is true to the land where she was born.

And in her I view a world that is full rich to me ;
Care and count are vanished, and all day is glowing free :
High mountains frown between us! proud rocks roll on the path!
My Highland Maid is with me as if within my strath !

His audience was moved by his deep emotion.
He dared not trust himself to look up ; hastily
putting aside the harp, he disappeared without
to hide that sorrow which he could not conceal.

His vision rested in the night upon the
hills, upon the dense, mysterious forest, upon
the dark deep river, as if they secreted the
object of his love; and he called upon them to
set her free. With not an untranquil heart, he
was permitted for a moment to indulge his
poetic reverie.

A low, deep murmur of the evening wind,
which, blowing from the heights, penetrated

the forest below, awoke him. He started up. Somehow he imagined as if a year had not gone ; rising with the half-conceived prospect of Ellen's coming. He walked to the great barn where the crofters had been assembled : all was dark and noiseless.

"I am growing strange and absent again in my solitariness," he said ; "how much worse I may be, and still I am content—but content not surely which precedes apathy and rust ?"

He still wandered without. "Ellen will never return," he said. "If my life prove a failure without her, it will be due to misfortune, not to any weakness in my own purpose." He was compelled now to ask himself, "Was he then before a flood-tide which, not taken, would leave him to the dry rot of inaction ? Were the misgivings he had felt—as the best men will feel in their career, something of the weariness of an overstrained and yet unfilled heart—well-founded ?"

"The bloom of young desire and purple light

of love " being subject to many nipping experiences, a practical mind, seeing fruit elsewhere, after the first and delicate personal hopes are dashed aside, may do next best to become a steward—he might have argued.

He heard a carriage on the avenue beneath, and arose from the window-sill, where he leant. As he did so, he met Miss Mar in the arm of Oliver Arnot, who handed her over to Macalpine, with the remark, " We were looking for you," and went in.

She had to return thus early, Colonel Mar not being well.

" Have you not forgiven me yet ? " she asked, with a deep gentleness, observing his trepidation as she spoke.

" I have forgiven you ; I have done you more than one injustice. I might have given expression of my sense of my injustice to you before, but you will understand why I did not press forward with it."

" No ; it was my due."

He confessed to himself he had still retained a suspicion. Thinking of the injustice he himself had recently suffered, he hastened to give her the benefit of the lingering doubt. It was cruel, he felt, to retain it.

"You think me ill-tempered," he said, "considering alone what you have done for me. I have wronged you by suspicions : as they were rather justified by appearances I do not rush to your feet to fall upon my knees for your forgiveness. But I cast them away."

"You have not given me the measure of justice to which I am entitled. Ah, you owe—would give had I but been poor and humble, a very different reparation. That I am not such and such an one, a plotter of the worst dye, is but a sorry speech for me."

She spoke familiarly but sweetly, in the manner of a woman who will take no offence from the errors of a man she at the least esteems.

Surely now she was not false ; surely there

was truth living here after all in these soft plaintive tones of one he might naturally believe to have suffered and given him the victory. They were away some distance from the place where Alan had stood.

He would have pointed to the carriage which awaited her had he had the power. He had it not in his heart any longer to be hard.

"It must be for the last time, or for all time," she said in her throat as they reached the end of the walk.

He was a deliberate being this Scottish man, or he could not, at this moment, with his other qualities, have done else than declare himself now and for ever the victim of the siren.

There was no answer, and she proceeded :
"I have read of, but never known those poor women who cling the closer to cruel men ; with an hour's joy at the beginning, when her hopes are fair by the protestations of her captor, she is soon even spurned from the board of the man who has sated upon her in a day all the love

he ever possessed. Yet she loves him still in her lonely breast, because its sensitive soul has given her the belief that this man is the gift of God to her—the highest gift in her short, broken existence. God pardon me if I rate my own suffering too highly in likening it to that of this poor creature, who will yet know paradise in recompense for her pure, strong faith ; but I feel, rich as I am, above the world's common misery as I am, now like this poor woman.” Miss Mar stopped. Alan felt the wet tears upon his hand, as her head leant over him, and her voice became choked.

“ Miss Mar, I am not entitled to think of myself as the cause of this. If I am—I am not deserving. But do not think of me as harsh and unfeeling. I owe you much. I would approve my old words, but ”——

“ Now—now or never.”

Her eyes were yet dim. She held in her hand that lace handkerchief which had given wonder that night to the plain wives of the

farmers, and with its corners sucked up the water which lay upon her full, passionate eyes. But Alan knew she meant what she said, with a sternness which even smote him.

They had walked down to the carriage way out to the open road, and yet neither spoke. But Miss Mar's arm was in Macalpine's.

"There is a woman observing us," Miss Mar said.

Macalpine was sick at heart after a kind, stirred with contending emotions. He did not hear her ; at the moment his thoughts were far away o'er the billow. The name of Ellen Lee almost passed through his lips.

The woman, seeing them, seemed at first as if she were to hurry off, but stood still.

The circumstance, slight as it was, recalled Alan's thoughts from the world to which they had uneasily bounded.

It was clear—the myriad stars more brilliant in the advance of the sharp night. Quickly,

whether mechanically for no reason, or whether as a dumb answer to his companion's fervid demand, or that something in the appearance of the woman on the road startled him, he withdrew from Lucretia Mar's arm.

Free, it was but an instinct of his kindly heart, to ask the solitary-looking woman, be she gentle or simple, to partake something of the warm feast within the hospitable walls above.

He staggered back.

Miss Mar said, with a laugh, "I did not think you so nervous."

He thought he was again subject to the illusion of Morven Castle.

He was drawn with a greater kindliness to one who seemed to resemble in form her who had gone.

He approached again. The face of the lingering woman was turned away from him. Gently, and kindly, he asked her if she would come up to Finzean House and share

of its comfort ere she passed on in the cold night.

There was no answer for half a minute—a period of terrible suspense; the averted face and the silence were ominous to his imagination.

Her face was partly revealed ere she spoke.

That voice! He would have known it from the voices of thousands.

“It’s you, Ellen! it is you! keep me no longer on the rack!” Alan held her in his arms; she had almost fallen.

He was speechless, wondering as he sat down on the hard winter-withered bank of the roadside in that region of imagination and solitude,—cold when the hand or the heart is not actively in use,—if he dreamt not only, and held the unsubstantial vision beside him.

He looked up; Lucretia Mar was gone.

Ellen revived. The grasp of his strong arm, the breath of his restored heart cheered her spirits back to the place they had never truly quitted.

Their silence was bound with golden joy.

“In rare moments,” said Alan, as they walked to the house with the guard of the coach, for whom she had waited, “there has come to me a dream of this meeting ; we hoped—did not believe in it.”

“Oh, the sorrow, I have felt on your and my uncle’s account! But I have been preserved through it all : the carrying off by a rascal, bribed to get me across the sea, and the hardships of my escape from America. Yet they were not so very terrible. I would have shuddered more, I believe, to have read of them.” She wished to save Alan and her uncle, much as she had suffered, from the story ; and cold as she was, she was eager to enter with her happy heart to the hearth of her home, for a little until he whose image had sustained her should come and take her away.

It was a grand and glorious night at Finzean.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THERE was a joyful excitement in Morven that morning the news spread that Ellen Lee had returned safe and sound to Finzean. There were a few persons who were secretly annoyed by the event. Roderick Macalpine, as may be supposed, was one of them. He had gone to bed before Alan returned to the cottage from Finzean. His father, who was an early riser, was first in the parlour next morning, and, on Alan entering for breakfast, he communicated the news. Roderick dared not meet the eyes of his son.

“She is coming here this afternoon to be introduced to you, father ; don’t say anything you will bitterly regret. She comes here as my future wife. We are to be married in a

week. We will occupy the east upper room, and all of us the parlour as before."

The old man laid his head down on the table and sobbed aloud. Daily he had lived in expectation of the next day's news being the final conclusion of his son's engagement with the heiress of Morven. The blow had come at last which cast down for ever his golden hope; and now there was nothing—nothing more for him in this world to live for.

Roderick did not curse, and his son was moved.

"This throws burning ashes on my bare head. The Macalpines are among the worms now, boy; there's no hope for us; farther and deeper have we gone down i' the mud. O God Almighty! what have I done, beyond being an imprudent, unworldly-minded prodigal, to merit this? I thought Heaven was to have mercy on the auld house, that has done good in its day, when blackguards that

are standing yet were working with the devil's weapons ; but I'm deceived. The hour has come, and I must look for my piece of ground to rest in—the only remnant of the auld soil left to me," bemoaned the laird.

"No, no, father," cried Alan ; " I have done what you would have yourself done. When did ever the Macalpines marry an heiress when they might ? Did you ? Did you not prefer an excellent woman to the stickish daughter of Colin Grant of Glenballoch, with all her lands ?"

" By heavens, Alan, you're right !" his changing humour pleased for a moment with the picture of his own unselfishness.

" You forget," Alan continued, " that you have never seen Ellen Lee. Ah ! she will often remind you of my mother."

" God be praised, my boy, for all the good it may bring us ; we have need of some," cried the excited Highlander. His wife's memory was now hourly with him.

So Alan rather conciliated his father by this fortunate little touch. The softening influence of woman's coming was upon him.

They were near the door of their cottage, in the afternoon, when Ellen came along the road. The laird, when in the humour, was interested in the passers-by, and often came out and spoke to persons whose faces were any way familiar to him. He was now waiting, not without a little apprehension, the coming of their visitor. His sight was not now good, and when he thought he saw any one coming along that day, if Alan were by, he would start up and look at his son, and wear an expression as if he were suggesting to Alan this would be her. Alan was pleased with this; it was a sign that his father could be reconciled, and was not prepared to give his future wife a bad reception. Alan was in front a couple of yards when Ellen shook hands with him, and he at once took her and introduced

her to his father. Roderick had brought himself to a stand, and drawn his tall form up to its full height, when he saw who it was. Alan stood aside, not unamused at the reception which the gallant Highlander was giving to his bride; and he watched each as they bore themselves in an encounter which both had been concerned about. Roderick Macalpine's bonnet was in one hand as the other shook the hand Ellen extended to him. Alan himself had not had an opportunity till now of seeing whether there was any real alteration on Ellen by her adventure. Her complexion was darker, and an aspect of fatigue and anxiety mingled with its softness in repose. But there was there the living grace of form and expression, which told the natural vigour of her spirits. And her tenderness was above all when she looked into the face of Roderick Macalpine. He, this romantic chief of the Macalpines, could not then withstand the charm of this fair and smiling daughter before him in all

the elegance and sweetness which, in his own nature, he had loved. He placed his arm lightly on her waist and kissed her, and offering her his arm, led her away into the cottage, forgetting the presence of his son. Alan had to come, laughing, behind. Ellen could have laughed too, but she was concerned with the gallant laird.

Then Ellen had to go through the outline of her adventures, and tell something of her story. The incidents formed many a talk in the winter evenings hereafter.

Roderick Macalpine, when Ellen had finished her story, vowed that he would devote his day's time to discovering the black villain who had carried her to the ship on the sea-coast. He took down his gun again, rattled his pistols, and drew out his sword. He was all for a regular scouring of the land, and a terrible retribution. Alan, who had told Ellen what they had done in trying to discover what had become of her, was at a loss to know what to

do. Ellen knew no doubt the name of the ship and its captain, and the place of its landing in America ; but a deliberate planner would be able to render such knowledge of no efficacy in the discovery of himself. The detectives were not put upon Sir Andrew Cameron.

On Alan's return home with Ellen, as they reached the gate of Finzean House, an old woman hobbled on the gravel walk above them. She lifted up her arms in a wild amazement when they came near her, which drew their attention upon her.

"This is surely the lady, Ellen, I have been telling you about, that I mistook for you in the moonlighted chamber of Morven Castle. It is the old woman Cameron," Alan said.

"I had not thought I was so withered and worn as this," she rejoined, while she was occupied between the pleasantry of their badinage, and her sympathy with the sad old woman. "She wears the dress I gave her. She knows

me again, though her mind looks almost gone now."

It was skin and bone that stood before them, yet there was spirit sparkling through the eyes as she approached the pair. With better nurture, she had occasionally awakened to the knowledge of her situation, and bewailed in heart-rending ejaculations the death of her once stalwart son. By a strong effort she spoke as she held out her lean hand to Macalpine and his bride. So aroused, her emotions flickered between the memory of her own loss, and her greeting for the pair who had tended that son and her.

"He's gone, dear lady, but he's weel away. Ah! God be praised, you're back, and to your ain man, the fine young Laird o' Morven. God bless you baith; and ye'll be living at the Castle again? Ou ay; troth, the laird's no' dead; or, if he's livin he's out. But ye'll back. No Macalpine was ever lang i' the shade. Oh Tam, Tam, where be ye, man, that ye are no'

at your post welcoming the Laird o' Morven back to his ain ; they were aye the puir man's friend." Here the old dame stopped, and looked hard with a strange dreamy stare into the face of Ellen. "Are not ye a Cameron, lady, as I am ? and I married ane, and should ken them. Ye have the look o' my mither's cousin, Sir Andrew's mither, as fine and pretty woman as ever bore a cruel son. God take him in His ain shackles, and roast him i' the blackest furnace." The old woman's face was lighted with a savage fire which consumed the fuel of her frame. She trembled, and would have fallen had not Alan and Ellen held her. The strong spirit was not gone, the perturbed body had still its slumbers to live out in life : the old woman was led back to her cottage.

Great were the preparations at Finzean for the marriage ceremony and festivities. Oliver Arnot had provided his niece with an outfit which would certainly last till the next fashions penetrated the strath, and he pre-

pared a right royal entertainment for the marriage-day. It was in accordance with the feelings of the bridegroom that, under proper control, there should rather be numbers partaking with simple cheer the happiness of the occasion, than that there should be a costly feast for the few, to whom that would bring little pleasure. Accordingly, all who were associated, though in the humblest capacity, with Finzean or with the Macalpines, were invited.

There had been some letters from a few of the crofters received by Macalpine three days before his marriage, and he determined to visit Edinburgh with his wife, both for a marriage trip, and for the benefit of his correspondents. He had not visited the metropolis of his native Scotland since he left its cold grey stones with the bitter thought, that he himself would never repeat in his breast the heartless egotism which he then believed had, in the city, superseded the old feudal relations, and the kindly clanship of country. He wondered now how he should

feel in its solemn streets. He communicated his thoughts to Ellen. She had never been bitter. She longed to visit Martha with Alan as her husband. She wished again to wander in the streets, and see the sights which had given a world of unexpressed poetry to her tender sensibility. Alan seemed going out of his element when he spoke of going into the smoke and the din, and standing among the members of the conventional world. But he knew she wished to go there, and he could not make out to himself that it was the crofters altogether that called him. Ellen secretly enjoyed the prospect of a fine handsome Highlander, and a lithe figure of a lady, walking in stately enjoyment the grand street of the new city.

The Rev. Malcolm Alexander had done his duty, and our hero and heroine were united. Happy are the pair who have no history, has probably been more than once said before ; but life was only really begun with Alan Macalpine and Ellen Lee.

No sooner had Ellen and her husband got settled in their hotel in Princes Street, than the former hastened to embrace her dear friend, Mrs Macbean. Ellen had written immediately upon her arrival at Finzean, and she had had time to hear that the old lady was well. It was with much pride that the old dame received the son of Laird Macalpine and his bride into her house, to drink a cup of bohea, and eat a bit of Pitkaithly bannock. Some old stories concerning his father, and the people about Morven, told by the old residenter in that region, were new to Alan ; and he relished kindly the spirited flavour of romance which still ran through all the remaining blood of the Highland hostess. Mrs Macbean was in her element, and looked with a fond pride upon the handsome couple, rich with kindly warm sense and disposition towards herself, who passed the night talking of old times.

Mrs Macbean and Ellen were alone together for a time. Neither referred to that subject

which had formerly pained them both, and would have severed their friendship had it not been so deeply rooted. Ellen now felt she had no need to call forth again the desperate spirit of her inquiry. She had got probably as far as she could ; and Alan being satisfied, all the world else was nothing to her. So at least Ellen thought. Had she not been married she would perhaps have thought differently. Marriage has an exceedingly quieting effect upon woman's attitude to the world.

Walking in Princes Street of Edinburgh two days after their arrival, Sir Andrew Cameron, in the arm of Captain Hamilton, passed along. The knight was thin and wretched looking, and Hamilton himself, who first noticed Alan and his wife, tried to hide a start he received by putting on an angry countenance. Next day, when they were out again on the same street, where their hotel was situated, Macalpine felt his arm rudely tapped by Hamilton, who said he wished to speak to him. Alan said he would

be found at his hotel that afternoon in the course of an hour, and Hamilton retired discomfited by the reception he met with from one he considered of mean position.

Hamilton came alone. Alan had time to consider about this gentleman. Might not he be the scoundrel of whom he had been in quest? What true reason could his uncle have in sending Ellen away, if his object was to marry his nephew to Miss Mar, knowing that there was then more likelihood of his own marriage with that lady. Was it not possible that the nephew had reason to dread a father's affection for his child, and consequent risk of succession to the estates which Sir Andrew himself held? Was it not possible that the man with whom he struggled on the night of the fire was this Hamilton, endeavouring to procure the evidences of her birth? "By heaven," exclaimed Alan, upon whom new conceptions of his wife's rights (if she were not a natural child), and of his duty, were breaking, "am I right to

remain thus still and unconcerned? Yes, it is a paction with her. The subject is indelicate, and gives her extreme pain. She said rightly, 'We live in ourselves.'"

The Captain entered the hotel still writhing under imagined repulse. Macalpine could suit himself to his company, and looked more stern.

"I saw you alone about the front of the house on the night of the fire. Some papers have gone amissing from a cabinet which was preserved. Did you see anything of them?" the Captain said, in a nervous, mumbling, offensive manner.

The speaker could have been crushed in Macalpine's arms, and the latter came to the other's side, and indicated his power.

"If you mean to be disagreeable, sir, I will simply hustle you out of the door," Macalpine said. He was in no rage, but looked as if he would be equal to his word. Hamilton was cowed a little. Macalpine could cut with

a rankle. As it was, to-day he used the weapon by which he could best command the unscrupulous man of the world.

“I did collar a man working at a cabinet in one of the front rooms, about your size and figure.”

The Captain turned his back. Alan was assured the robber stood before him. Hamilton wheeled round, with anger again commanded to appear on his face. He had learned some play from his books, the Restoration dramatists.

“Sir, do you accuse me?” he cried, stamping his foot upon the floor.

“I accuse no one ; the abruptness of your query at me makes me suspicious, and if I describe the man further, and you find the likeness corresponds with your own, there is some temptation, you must admit, to believe so strange a thing.”

“You will not purchase your own immunity from question by charging me. But remem-

bering your own trial : you were dismissed with the case only ‘Not Proven,’ your evidence can be of little avail to us.

“ Captain Hamilton contemplates his trial on a charge of robbery, and myself as the chief witness there. Be it so ; meantime, as I have said all I intend saying to him, I wish him good-day. The less we meet the better.”

“ Is this a threat, sir ? ”

“ No threat.”

The Captain again stamped his foot on the floor ; it had become a custom with him, having first learned the practice from some “ character of the drama ” in angry mood. But he was never very demonstrative. Perhaps his silence was all concentrated on that one supreme grasp by which little minds appear great.

Alan determined now, though without the knowledge of his wife, to seek out the buried papers, which he would hitherto have let rot. After returning home, he took an opportunity

of seeking out the spot where he had buried the tin box. It was gone!

In the course of a few days more they learned of the death of Sir Andrew Cameron in Edinburgh. He had not recovered from the harsh effects of the extreme experience of the chilling evil of penury and dependence, as the child of fortune, Ballatruim, had never been able to cast off the moral sickness caught in the other extreme of a nursery of pampered vanity.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AND now some readers of this narrative—who, in a material age, have been educated to disbelieve in love in a cottage—now that Alan Macalpine and his bride are settled in their simple home, may think incredulously of their happiness. But discerners of human character must feel, without the picture, that Alan was happy. He had no unreasonable expectations of happiness to be derived by means without himself, while he loved Ellen deeply, as he did his own home, his occupations, and all their surroundings. His days went happily with him, and he slumbered not.

It would have grieved the tender heart of Ellen had she been lifted into happiness by some costly piece of fortune—for it is a consoling thought to a mind of truth and love, that

it is only receiving, in the fulness of joy, what all the worthy of the world may equally find. Ah! it was different from her former situation ; but the change was brought about by no call for banking-accounts, rent-rolls, and the consequent establishments of show. It came free. The happiness was not dear ; and it was of good quality.

In some of their leisure winter evenings, Ellen and Alan, who had each some knowledge of the German language, began to read together the works of Göthe ; and Alan was delighted to find how much of the design of his own way of life corresponded with that of the great philosopher—the desire for the preservation and use of all his faculties, and the necessity for leading a simple and plain course of life ; though the Scotchman was repelled by his want of patriotism, and interest in the political movements of his country and times. But they did not sit down to applaud their own way of living. They enjoyed it as it lay. The sounds

of the morning and evening formed pleasure to their senses ; the noon rejoiced their spirits. Her dairy and her household affairs she worked at with a delighted zest. Alan, returning from his morning labour, would sometimes watch her unseen, and still make some amusement to both out of a trifling awkwardness in one who was still in all the enjoyments of a learner. But Ellen had her revenge ere the night had come, when Alan would offer, laughingly, his assistance where it was not his due to interfere. They were not rich with the appurtenances of establishment—wealthy, though, in all the abilities which despise artificial wants. Young Macalpine would always have been the better of a few minds of his own growth, and situation in life, around him ; he had less need of these now. His wife was equal to him. This was the crowning event ; he had often experienced the dread of that manly desolation which can find no union with a woman reared with the capability of leading that simple but ambi-

tiously elevated life he desired for himself. They had both leisure, much as they had to do. Time was not consumed in drivelling talk, or in effecting senseless trifles. They were never fussily important ; they were without, away in other parts ; they associated with hearty people, though humble ; they sang the wild songs of their native land ; the echoing rocks heard their rich laughter.

The position of Alan was largely regained ; and by word and example neighbours were stirred to better things in several ways.

Captain Hamilton and the knight had been utterly set to rout in overture for the hand of the lady of Morven. Not now was a man of the stamp of that gallant officer sufficient for her. She had tasted of sweet juices, and of spices also ; the only tough and dry she rejected.

Is she to remain a spinster after all, to chafe at the poor spirit, or the blind insensibility, of man ? A willing failure in fashionable life, an

unwilling one in the far away regions of romance, she confessed occasionally to the signs of a bitter end. Her youth was gone.

Her solitariness drew a tear ; she was conscious of higher deserts than to be cast aside from the better world. Had not she rejected the frivolities, and sought to do substantial good ; and yet where was the reward ? the prospect of little else than cleaning the paws of peasant urchins after all !

But she would improve upon these selfish upbraidings of fate, and even thank Heaven for its kindness to herself ; fond of authority, of movement, of a full, luxuriant way of life—in a wild gallop over the improved roads, and in the fields, lonely though these were, she had yet to seek no altogether empty gratification. And in this spirit of thankfulness she would return with relish to add additional comfort to the cottager. It came to be done, however, in a forced, lofty way, different from her easy approach when she had the vision of a man before her

to whom the humour would give, she thought, delight, as it would bring her conquest : but good work was done.

It was after a day not ill-spent, the last sear and yellow leaf lying on the ground, and the Yule-like log blazing in the ample fireplace of the dining-hall of Morven Castle—Miss Mar sitting there in state and dignity, though no one came near her—that a letter was placed in her hands, whose superscription brought almost the blush to her cheek, and just a little trepidation.

Three minutes passed away until she opened the letter ; she, motionless as a statue, dreaming dreams. When it was opened her face did not fall, but showed amusement and interest ; and when it was concluded she read it again, and then again. Here it is :—

“ MY DEAR MISS MAR,—A gentleman of our acquaintance—‘ the Cock of the North,’ indeed, as you facetiously dubbed him after a greater

Gordon—informs me of your kind inquiry after my movements and health. But first of yourself, who had grown a northern Ceres before I left the land. If a Triptolemus had received your chariot, I have not heard of him from Stronach, where ‘roots and acorns’ form still the prevailing food. But the foundation of this epistle is not to upbraid you in connection with that ; I am forced to write, almost in spite of my reticent mind, for the smiles of the goddess have for me the property of providing convalescence far more than all the drugs of *Æsculapius*. In truth, modern men and women destroy the rarest of happiness in their ignorance of their innate capacities for giving and receiving it. Here have I been languishing for one ray of consolation in all these dull days and rounds of tame lights, seeking it by scuffles of various kinds on the floor, galleries of painted canvas, and the dreg-wares of printers’ devils, and found not so much as one faint effigy ; yet now comes the ‘Cock of

the North,' crowing with word and manner of yours concerning myself, to show me that there exists a real charm in the voice of the heart's strings of an old friend; old, I say, because it is many months—I was to say years—since I saw you. You remember how you smiled at my revelation of a genuine enthusiasm—my Jacobitish love, as you called it. Well, I could not have met you without resentment for long after that. Ah, you thought I was all a piece of insincere play; but I tell you that were there at this moment, even when I am scarce risen from a bed of sickness, a descendant of the Stewarts to unfurl the old standard, I would be the first to offer every drop of blood in the cause. This is my subject about which no man dare 'take a rise out of me.' Ah, my dear lady, had I but the opportunity, I think I could bring you round to the cause.

“Well, I was, even after a course of my favourite Byron (who would, doubtless, have

been of the true cause, although a Whig in these sad times), like his hero,

‘ Silent and pensive, idle, restless, slow,
His home deserted for the lonely wood,
Tormented with a wound ;
His, like all deep grief, plunged in solitude ;’

and I went abroad through the lands taken by that loving wight. I know that you will not more than smile ; why should not I go over the ground of any hero of our greatest poet after he of Stratford—because it does not sound respectable, forsooth ? The British matron can approve her sons and daughters taking a pleasing jolt in the regions of Roderick Dhu and Rob Roy, but if they had coin to leave at Missolonghi, they would see that ‘ Byron ’ was not stamped on it. Then I was in love with Haidee, you will surmise. Perhaps I was, until I got on board the steamer. But oh, the torture when I found that this ‘ only daughter ’—

‘ The greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles ’—

had auburn hair. I had only remembered that her eyes were 'black as death.' I rose up and bade adieu to my native land with less rapture. The interest of the land to which I hastened had well-nigh vanished; and I was rocked to slumber on the breast of the deep, as sullen and ill as when I left the 'rocks where the snow-flake reposes' unsacred to love, for those 'gay landscapes and gardens of roses' in which I vainly hoped to find a refuge. I would rather dilate now, if I could, upon the beauties of these sunny and historic lands; but I dare not trust myself. You will find all that better in print than in manuscript: of adventure I hope to tell you by word of mouth.

"I found no charm in their Donna Inez, Julia, Lolah, Katinka, Dudu, and the rest. You know that Flora M'Ivor is my heroine—her dark beauty only softened beside the haughty and stern regularity of her brother Vich Ian Vohr's; conscious of mental superiority, and pitying rather than envying those

who were struggling for any further distinction. Without I am reminded of her, I can see no merit. But I grow too serious ; the whip of the Eumenides has dealt hardly with me, I find, for my frivolity, and I now pass away into mourning on the least approach to the contemplative.

“ Thus I answer the sly suggestion which I rather thought I detected in our friend’s report ; yet, on second thoughts, ’twere likely but his own wit, or my idle humour, that I should fancy signs of raillery.

“ When I can bear the fatigue, I return to Stronach, and I have a great mind to make a Jacobite of you. Pooh, I say, for your retaliation about an effete cause. The cause of Divine Right is never dead. Do you remember the part of ‘ Rasselas ’ which Johnson gave to Boswell as a clincher in argument : that there was no other reason for the Western nations being greater than the Eastern, than that Providence had so settled it. Well, He has designed that

there should be kings and subjects, great men and small, rich and poor ; and also men and women ; and there's an end on 't. My divine rights are, I believe, not yet all accomplished.—Adieu, then, for the present, my dear Miss Mar, says

“Your sincere and obliged,

“CHARLES EDWARD OGILVIE.”

It was a month after the receipt of this epistle, one of unbroken calm to its recipient, schooled against impatient fancy, that a carriage drove hastily up to the door of Morven Castle, and as hastily made exit from it a very fair, palish gentleman, with a Scottish cast of features. He wanted the strong assured figure and step of the chiefest of his countrymen ; he was of the middle height, and though his figure gave no indication of great powers of endurance, it was straight, lithe, and easy in its movements. The silken moustache and beard drooped thinly ; but over his features, it could be seen, had played expression of gaiety and spirit.

He was wrapped in a large coat ; and when he drew it back, and lifted his great Highland bonnet to Miss Mar, who saw him from a window above, he revealed a sadness not at first observable. It was Ogilvie.

The longing, though strong, bosom of the heiress knew that a man had at last found her a heroine. She suspected this extent of admiration before, but only on receipt of his epistle. He had not given her "assurance of a man ;" and she had paid little heed to his signs of a self-distrusting admiration. Yet when she heard of his travel from his friend, she could not resist the temptation of "a cue for passion."

Charles Edward Ogilvie was far from a mercenary man.

He had paid silent devotion, a strong experience in his volatility ; but when the new passion was excited in him, the manner of it was also new.

He faltered in the hall, and dared not meet the eyes of his flame.

Her manner was cool and unconcerned. An answer to his facetious, but designing epistle, had not been given by her, although during the month she, in her rides, had called twice at Stronach to learn the progress of his recovery.

He thanked her for this kindness at considerable length, and with no choice of words, as they sat down at a table placed near the window of her large sitting-room—she on one side, he on the other—while he turned to the far-off blaze of the winter's fire, shivering rather at his reception than with bodily chill.

Charles Edward Ogilvie began to button his coat as if he prepared already for a departure. How hard and cruel was this enslaver of his heart—how poor a response to his warm epistle; he had been deceived by the “Cock of the North,” and the pride of his blood was roused, quarrelling with despairing love.

He had hastened to thank her, and he expected benefit from the drive—he was yet far from well. He looked as if he were not benefited.

She was not the least awkward—put on no ardent spirit of play ; but smiled at the victim in the person of a man whose company she had liked only because it was amusing.

“ You will remain now at Stronach till you are quite restored,” she said, smiling over to his drooping head.

“ No ; I think not ; that is, I have not made up my mind. You see, Miss Mar, when a fellow is ill he is restless, he cannot depend on himself. He takes fancies as quickly as he abandons them.”

“ So ; that will show her,” thought he.

“ Ho, ho,” exclaimed she, mentally.

“ I shall be exceedingly sorry if you leave soon ; I have no society here whatever.”

“ Indeed ! Of course Farmer Arnot and his wife have amused you only ; but—well—you have not made it up with Glenballoch and the others. I dare say not.”

“ No, indeed ; insufferable coxcombs I can-

not even tolerate! My temper is not fitted to brook their dull vanity."

"They are safer people than explosives." She must have understood "Ceres" and "Triptolemus." This was a harder hit. Ogilvie could be acrid; but the lady was not repelled when she struck humour out of men worth the striking.

"Yes; our epicurean sleep is less likely to be disturbed with them."

"You are less likely to be bored about the promotion of your own downfall."

"I used to like that, but have given the fancy up."

Ogilvie gave a laugh; it was his first for many months. The lady was still not angry. It was an odd wooing.

"Ah, then, I have some hopes of obtaining a disciple of the cause of divine right."

"I am quite open to conviction; but if it means only paying court to its representatives on earth, you need not trouble yourself," her

features relaxing into a lofty smile, such as had formerly smitten the young laird of Stornach with passion.

“It does not mean that,” answered Ogilvie, suddenly subdued. His heart was full with what he saw.

Both were silent for a little space, Miss Mar still with the smile on her face, Ogilvie restlessly anxious, his heart indeed full with the agony of suspense.

He unloosened his coat from the button, stroked his moustache, cleared his throat, and stood bolt upright, his thin shaking right hand resting on the table.

“By Heaven! I can stand this no longer. I come of the old cavaliers; but with you, Lucretia, I cannot be fine and gay. I have loved you as I thought never to love woman—there”—— and he stood, not able to go on.

He had seen in her beauty, and power, and a capacity for growing the lofty spirit of the heroine of his fancy. It is pleasing to

reflect that, in times of the calm of a material prosperousness, the human face reveals, or is thought to reveal, the possibilities of a loftier passion than its surroundings excite.

Miss Mar was not satisfied with this appearance. The pallid face, the poor, hesitating words, the almost trembling figure, gave no zest to her imagination.

She muttered an exclamation of surprise as she rose and went towards the fireplace.

“Miss Mar, do you leave me without a word for my hope?”

“I scarcely understand this from you; I do not recognise you at all.”

“Ah! I know I am not here; I have been wrecked with bitterness. And you—as I live and will die—you have been the cause, unconscious or not.”

“Ah! you take fancies as quickly as you abandon them.”

“This is no idle fancy.”

“I cannot tell.”

“I can do no more at the moment than say so.”

“I have always liked your society ; but this is another affair ; and I doubt the suitability of—of”——

She saw the wan, anxious countenance of this scion of an old chivalric family turn away from her—the unaggressive will of this descendant of Jacobites, which had been poor and tame to her, fallen to the level of his physical weakness ; she saw the melancholy heart of the recently gay, volatile being like to break ; and—her heart was at last moved by a new feeling aroused in her breast—sympathy. She now learned it in her own pangs of despised love.

Impulsively she went towards the window.

“I am but trying you : have you long wished me to be your wife ?” she asked, with grace.

“You have been the heroine of my dreams,”—prouder in his aroused hope.

She could have rejected him even then had

she been the woman she was when she came to Morven, but her heart was softened ; and she learned to feel even with a man whose love was not the cold, grand passion of an ancient hero, but the trembling aspiration of a modern breast, which had known for a real aspiration that one alone.

“ Order your coachman to put up for the day, then,” she said, after a pause. There was no love, no poetry, in her part of the wooing. She wished frankly to dispel the illusion of the heroine pure and simple, thinking that her life with Charles Edward Ogilvie would subside into ease, since there was no Stewart to contest the throne.

Thus she came to accept an offered hand, not obtaining one she had sought for herself.

The marriage was very soon afterwards celebrated.

From Finzean Alan and his wife saw the married pair drive off.

As the former observed the conveyance pass away into the distance, he turned to Ellen with an arch smile : “ You see, Ellen, she will have a Scotchman.”

“ Ay ; but why a Jacobite ? ”

“ As well a Jacobin,” returned Alan ;

“ ‘ Rodolpho broods, as restless as the sea,
To set up kings or fight for liberty.’ ”

By the aid of a cunning solicitor, Roderick Macalpine had actually discovered a tenable ground of challenge of the title of Colonel Mar, and an action of reduction with various conclusions had been brought ere Roderick himself almost knew what had been done in his name. These proceedings he had kept secret from his son, Alan learning of them from Oliver Arnot, to whom Colonel Mar had spoken on the subject. Roderick’s excitement knew no bounds when he heard, a day or two before Miss Mar’s marriage, of what had taken place ; it was even too much for him, and he got ill. Ellen was not disposed to leave him to the

care of the old woman this day she went to Finzean ; yet seeing him going about, and having spoken to Alan, who thought her apprehension groundless, she considered it might do more harm than good if she were to stay to look after the old man. She loved the old, gallant Highlander, with his humorous pleasantries, and really good-natured spirit at bottom. To be happy, and altogether hearty, with him, secured a good measure of his devotion. Both Alan and his mother were too sincere—over serious and earnest characters generally, to meet the necessity of his case. Ellen, on the other hand, seemed formed to please him ; and they were devoted to each other. They went arm and arm together, even around the cottage and over the little farm, Ellen calling him father, and laughing at his old stories. When he lay confined for a day, which he did occasionally, the neat and happy manner in which Ellen ministered to his ease, made his illness almost a thing to be desired,

her husband said. Roderick was now a happier man ; and, had he not meddled with the Morven title, he might have remained happy. But he began these few days back to shun Ellen a little, and get excited by himself, and he fell ill afterwards. To-night, when they got back from Finzean, he was in bed, and Ellen went in to see if he was asleep ; and if not, to ask for him. He was quite awake, and beckoned Ellen to come in and shut the door. His eyes were bright, and staring in his head.

“ You ’ll be mistress of Morven yet, Ellen, my love ; come near me, don’t let Alan hear, he must not know this. Two days ago I got word from my lawyer that assures me I ’ll be in Morven Castle before the year ’s out. Do you hear that ? Oh, curse the scoundrels that have defrauded me of my rights—my poor lands stolen from me. But I ’ll have the better of them. Not a whisper. You shall be lady of Morven, Ellen. What think you of that ? ”

Ellen had not much experience as a lawyer, but she knew that, as Roderick Macalpine could not pay the debt on Morven, he could not get the estate, even although the sale to Colonel Mar might be bad ; and she said so. But to the excited Roderick her objections were all stuff. He cared little for hard facts ; not “dinging the chields,” but refusing to acknowledge their presence.

She told Alan what had taken place, who was annoyed and saddened. Next day his father was worse in health, and, of course, he could say nothing to him. But he wrote to the solicitor, representing his father’s illness, and requesting him to delay the suit meantime. He went to Colonel Mar and told him what he had done. He observed a change for the worse upon the Colonel’s withered frame. The meeting was a dry one, at which nothing was said except in reference to the subject of Macalpine’s call. Nevertheless, the proprietor of Morven did not fail to appreciate the open

and fair character of the man whom he had wished to befriend, but who had repelled the advances made to bind them by the strongest ties.

The winter was almost gone ere Roderick Macalpine was better. A period of sharp frost revived his drooping frame and spirits, and he got out. Had it not been for the attentions of Ellen, which delighted the Highlander daily, he would not probably have recovered ; and he was profuse in his gratitude, and of promises to do something grand for her. He had always something uncommon in hand, and not being daring enough just now to renew his lawsuit, he pretended to engage in an armed hunt, for a considerable distance round, after the rascal who had carried his daughter-in-law off to the ship. He sallied forth daily with a pair of pistols in his pocket, and with descriptions from Ellen of the man, so far as she could give them ; more than once stopping short upon the approach of a wayfarer of

suspicious mein. Having nothing to do, thus he amused, in this odd, humorous prowling, his most energetic hours. One or two Morveners who, of course, saw or heard of these expeditions, were not slow to hint that the laird's shot made prisoners of the fowls of the air and beasts of the earth which came in his way.

One day he kept near the grounds of his old castle, where the crime had, he thought, been originated ; and he now ventured to walk down the wood at the east end of the avenue, in fervour of his mission, as he wished to think, yet really, under the wing of that fancy, to see his old home, upon which he had never looked since he left it. The visit excited his weakened frame, notwithstanding he pretended to search on all sides for some evidences which might lead to a discovery of the man he sought. The crackling of the brushwood, and the sweep of the tree-tops in the occasional gusts, alarmed his imaginative temper, and set him on to thinking hardly of the man who sat in his place.

As he came near to the house he heard a pistol shot. This made him as nervously apprehensive of an approaching adventure, to which he was called, as was Don Quixote at the sight of the windmill. He ran forward to the place from where the shot had proceeded ; it was the circular garden formed amid the trees, to which allusion was made at the opening of the narrative, in which the Chief found himself with loaded pistol in hand. There he beheld standing his old enemy, Colonel Mar or Marston.

Roderick Macalpine was not one to retire, even though he were unobserved. He never sought out the man ; brought by accident into his presence, he was no longer subject to the influence which had restrained him to stay away from it. He advanced upon him whose blood he had caused to run there more than a quarter of a century back, and had never seen since then.

The lover of Edith Marston saw her husband,

and knew him, and trembled ; but trembled as a sick, brave man trembles, for fear of his flesh giving way, not for his spirit.

For a minute neither spoke. There could be now no pent-up passions which were to break forth like the fury of a summer thunder-cloud ? Each saw at a glance the worn, broken frame of the other. Marston was away to a shadow. Macalpine was colossal, but in ruins. The sights sobered each. The madness, which was partly heroic temper dwelling in their veins, was gone for the moment, in so far as it was not heroic.

The surprise partly gone, they stood looking proudly at each other, though the winter air touched their grey withered locks. Had either held out his hand, the other would have seized and shook it ; the impulse was not without an existence in each. But the first defiant look carried both forward upon the path of war. They were back upon the scene enacted there in times of aspiration and hope which had altogether fled, and which had

been routed there in the estimation of one of them by the villany of the other. The scene was recalled with all its obligations. Pride would not let them go.

“Frederick Marston?” said the Highlander, without indicating any other emotion than his pride.

“Roderick Macalpine!” rejoined the Englishman, in a tone in which passionate hate was expressed.

“Have you had your revenge to the full?” asked Roderick, who was cognisant of the other’s hate.

“No!” was the answer which the hypochondriac cried, his eyes alive as with fire; “you were the ruin of my happiness. This moment has been the thought of my days. I have avoided you—upon my conscience lies heavy the dreadful oath I swore; but now that God has delivered you into my hands, I seek to consummate my oath. You are armed. You have sought me out. I am ready.”

"I have not sought you out; but I am ready," was the answer.

Both succumbed now to their passions. Neither thought of aught else than the work in hand. They examined their pistols, and stood the usual distance apart. The ground was marked off without speaking; both then walked forward to the middle and shook hands—as they joined their reverence of the invisible world, on which each for a moment felt he hovered, and to which both had often turned with awe, mostly through symbols in nature which rapt their imaginative spirits. Walking back with equal step, each was to fire on wheeling round at the end of the distance. They returned with slow, well-measured steps, and stood round face to face, firing at the same moment. Both fell.

Not a cry came from either, yet both were conscious enough to be able to reflect how foolish they had been not to have procured assistance. Life is sweet, and death awful,

when passion is low ; yet both of the men, lying bleeding, were too proud to cry out for help. Macalpine tried to rise, and failed ; he was wounded immediately under the groin. Colonel Mar, by the strength of an almost superhuman spirit, got upon his legs, and fell helpless, fainting away.

These pistol shots were often enough heard about the policies by the gardeners and others, who paid no heed to them ; and the wounded men might both lie and die there in front of the castle doors. Macalpine lost blood without altogether sickening ; he refreshed his mouth upon the small particles of ice about the herbage, and leant his fevered brow on the hoar-frosted border. Crawling along on the ground he got possession of a small pole, and by the aid of this, he, suffering intense agony, hobbled through the enclosure, and got to the open space in front of the house. He thought not of his own condition, it was of his antagonist's. Wherever there was a heroic

attitude, he was a hero and a true gentleman. For nearly a quarter of an hour he lay here swinging his stick and crying out now—knowing the condition of his antagonist: no one appeared. His voice was weak, and the pain and loss of blood began to make him very faint. At last he heard the sound of a horse's tread upon the avenue coming towards the house.

It was Oliver Arnot who emerged into the open space; and hearing some voice crying out, he turned round and saw Macalpine lying on the ground. He ran up and dismounted, speechless at the sight he witnessed.

“Oliver, man, there's sair wark been going on here,” moaned the old laird, trying to preserve a little humour in his prostration, his pale face besmeared with the dirt he melted while he lay with it towards the frozen ground.

“You've been robbed and half murdered,” cried the farmer, leaning over the prostrate

man, wiping his forehead, scarce knowing what to do ; but seeing the blood, he then commenced to try to bind the leg from which it oozed.

“Off—off with you to the castle, Oliver ; quick, man, quick—never mind me ; Colonel Mar lies dying at the harbour ; get brandy, men, and doctors. Quick, or he’s gone.”

Arnot knew now what had happened, and doing mechanically as he was asked, he leapt upon his horse, though he was no distance from the castle-door, through which he almost bolted horse and all.

Colonel Mar was found to be in a swoon—not dead, though at death’s point. Macalpine resolutely refused to be taken to the castle, and insisted on being driven in a cart filled with straw to his cottage. He fell into a sleep on his way, muttering now and again the names of his wife and his son.

But how much his affection rested on Ellen was seen by Alan and the others who bore him

out of the conveyance into the cottage. His dark countenance lighted for an instant as he recognised the soft touch of Ellen, wet with her tears, upon his forehead. The old laird, after all his sins, his struggles, his calamities, and last fight, was made happy in the presence of one young, tender heart, who, perhaps alone of all who ever lived, had really borne sweetly with his humours, and loved his odd, not altogether worldly ways.

When next day came, it was not expected that the Colonel would recover; in the case of Macalpine there were more hopes. In the evening Alan had a message from Morven Castle requesting his instant presence there.

Doctors and a lawyer were in the Colonel's room when Alan arrived. His daughter and her husband were in London. He could not conceal his sorrow at the sight of the stricken soldier, whose sensitive heart had kept him alive to much good, while it had also brought him to sin and suffering. Neither spoke of

the duel. Alan touched the palsied skeleton-hand that crept towards him, and expressed his hope of an early recovery. The prostrate man shook his head.

"It seems," he said, in a low, tremulous voice, "that I cannot make my will to stand if I do not live sixty days, according to your law—a very barbarous law.* You see me now, Alan;" here the speaker paused, and motioned those around him, except Macalpine, to go to the other end of the room, which they did.

"Do you think, from what you see of me, I am in my right mind? Perhaps you may think not, from what took place yesterday. Tell me truly what your thought is—take time—don't be in a hurry—I can wait."

"You will have no objection to tell me why you put such a question to me?" asked Macalpine, surprised, thinking the question some indication of the condition he seemed anxious to be satisfied against.

* Altered in the last Session of Parliament.

Colonel Mar reflected.

“Yes, I will tell you ; you have always been open and frank. I have done you injustice by the reservation.”

“Pardon me,” said Alan, “you have your answer before my query was put ; but the strangeness of your question led me at the moment to doubt whether your mind might not have been wandering.”

“Listen,” said the other, interrupting ; “you should know my reason first. I want you to say whether you think me capable of making a will ; you are the only person interested to say No.”

“Me,” cried Alan, with surprise.

“You are my heir-at-law. I dropped the last syllable of my name of Marston and became Mar. I wished to become a new man in every possible way. I have not succeeded.”

The dying man watched the features of the heir of the Macalpines as he made this announcement, and spoke on to give time for its

extraordinariness to work. Upon the face of Alan was a slight surprise, nothing more.

“But your daughter?” said Alan.

“She is a natural child. You,” continued Colonel Mar, “are the son of my nearest paternal uncle’s only child. You would succeed to Morven if my will is not made sixty days before my death.”

“And you wish my consent to your making it—my promise that I will not seek to disturb the clear expression of a man whose heart is sound, and wishes to leave his estate to his child. You have it now; I promise not to disturb it.”

Colonel Mar tried to rise a little, and drew himself closer to Macalpine. “My young friend, you will repent of this,” he said.

“Never; I will not take advantage of an iniquitous rule of law,” cried Alan.

“Well, well; I thought I would try you. You have done nobly. Suppose I leave no settlement of Morven. What then?”

“If you do not, I will take it, if it is mine. I will not disturb your will, not knowing it. I will take what the law gives me.”

“Oh,” groaned the other, “you will not make a present of it to my daughter?”

“I fear I would be selfish enough to keep it,” was the answer.

“But I will make a will,” cried the Colonel. “Sit down; we have seen little of each other for long. This does not excite me.” Yet he had to pause to draw breath, taking some liquid from a phial. Alan sat down, and the other turned his face upon him with a calmer, but even more kindly interest.

“You have chosen to make a romantic marriage of affection. Well, I don’t blame you for that. I sought that myself, and was lost. My spirit has been wrecked; by going after a strange god I have lived with a heart sick and drooping for ever. I was not bold enough perhaps at the outset, and then leapt into arms with the fury of Hector. I have

sold myself—not for gold; no, no, I did not sink so low as to wallow in the mire of love for filthy lucre. I have had no ambition for the fineries of existence. I seized upon the occupation because there was no heart with whom mine might beat in unison through this strange yet glowing world. I was mad for the fire of any strife; and I sought this, because it fed my days with the belief of revenging myself upon an enemy whom I knew to be on the road to ruin. What has been this consummation—to you, his son, I tell the tale—a desolate horror, a blank, foolish waste.” He was exhausted with the excitement which had come upon him; he lay breathing. The doctors noticed what had taken place, and came forward as Alan rose. His further presence disturbed the sick man, and he stepped forward to the door. Colonel Mar recovered. Alan turned and waved his hand. The occupant of the bed gave a smile of recognition. “You will come to-morrow,” he muttered, and Macalpine was told what he had

said. Alan nodded, and the other turned his face to the wall.

Alan went next morning ; Colonel Mar was dead. He died that morning early. That winter day Alan sat grievous in his cottage. He grieved for the sensitive heart that had ceased to beat, that had loved his mother, that had not ceased to have an affection for himself; and yet had never found the link to bind theirs fully with his own.

When the Colonel's daughter and her husband arrived from London the funeral took place. All the tenants of the property were invited ; and Alan, being one, was present. The Colonel wished to be buried in the Churchyard of the Hill. The last occasion of Alan's presence there was at the laying in the earth of the strong-willed Highlander, who died starved of the common necessities of existence upon the land which he would not leave for love of it. Again he came with another worn-out life with which he sympathised, which had been

richly supplied with the meats which satisfieth not.

The Colonel had left two wills : one conveyed his English means and estates to trustees for his daughter ; the other was a settlement in Scotch form, and conveyed Morven to Alan Macalpine and his heirs.

Mrs Ogilvie and her husband were chagrined and annoyed. Alan found that they succeeded to a sum more than the value of Morven.

At the conclusion of the reading of the wills he went home, not seeking the dinner-table to which he had been invited, fearing the rough congratulations which awaited him while the man who had honoured him was yet fresh in the tomb.

There was no hilarious joy visible about him when he returned, contrary to the expectation of his wife, to partake with her of the simple meal.

“ Ellen, there are news for you to-day.

Colonel Mar has left me Morven," was all he said, as he sat down.

She had been leaning on the table curious to know why her husband had come back so soon, and she now leant her face down without speaking. It was not to thank God for increased mercies, not to hide joy too full to speak ; she was sad, sorrowing that the simple life which she loved so fondly seemed broken in upon. She was supremely happy. Was this a blow which gradually would wean her from happiness ?

But she thought of the old laird ; she imagined he would thrive upon the news.

"Do you think I could tell father ? He's better to-day," was all she said, her expression alternating between the happiness of this idea and her own sadness.

"You can see," said Alan ; "don't tell him all at once ; break it gradually through a little time."

When Ellen went in upon Roderick in the

course of the afternoon, he asked mournfully after Colonel Mar. She gave an evasive answer. He had been told he was dead ; but she did not wish he should dwell upon the exciting subject.

“ I was dreaming, Ellen, that my boy was back to Morven : you know the auld sang—

‘ Macalpine’s heir will have his ain
Ere that lost bluid can run again.’

Well, I dreamt my blood was still frozen upon the grass ! There’s no thaw yet, Ellen, is there ? ”

“ I believe in the prophecy, father,” said Ellen, wishing only to please the fancy of the imaginative Gael, while something of its reality had struck her.

“ Do you—do you ? It’s not you that says anything without meaning it,” he muttered. “ Colonel Mar should be buried now,” said the laird, when Ellen returned to him after a little ; “ he would choose the Kirkyard-o’-the-Hill.”

“ Is there any hope, Ellen, love, for Macal-

pine's heir?" he asked next day, in his dreamy, visionary way.

"There is, father."

"Positively? do you say that? Oh, thank Heaven!"

"If you will keep quiet and get well, we will give you the whole story; we may all yet be in the castle; oh, how I will like it for your sake!" bringing the smile to his thin, withered cheek.

"Ellen, love, you are not deceiving me? I know you are not: Morven is our own again!" and he clung round her neck and kissed her, both choking with emotion.

The tears were in the old man's eyes as, hearing his son moving without, he cried, "Alan, Alan! quick, quick!" And Alan came running into the room.

"You are going back to the old castle—ah, I knew it. Heaven has not deserted us, my boy;" and he grasped and shook with great effort his son's hand with one of dark large-

framed leanness, while the other was placed on Alan's head.

"We cannot go without you, father," Alan said, hiding his head in the clothes.

There was no answer then; only were heard the hard breathing of the spent occupant of the bed, something that may have been a suppressed sob from Ellen, and the measured beat of the old eight-day clock.

"I'll never be there, Alan—never again."

"My father—nay, more than parent—my only friend, sole companion of my life, in the days of my boyish pleasures and dreams, in these years of struggle and pain; we, who would never part from each other, to be severed for ever at the moment of your own supreme triumph!" But Alan could not articulate these emotions, in which were forgotten all but the pain he had often given his father. How utterly helpless that father was now; how repentant without a chance of erring again; all his sins remembered by himself in his heart

and upon his lips ; the sweat standing on his withered brow, and the embers of the decaying fire within still visible in the eyes, which contrasted with the gaunt form of the stalwart son of the mountains ; in his love of these, and high impulsive generousities, silencing the tame, level philosophic walk of virtue. "Oh, God, dead ! Beside this simple-mindedness, who was he ?" cried the young heart, conscious of its sins.

"God bless you, father. I can have no hope to love the old lands without you," was all he could say.

"I will never see the promised land, my children. Are you there, Ellen ? Let me see you ; give me a kiss again now, to say you will not leave the old man." And then she kissed the forehead of the fallen chief, and thrust back his thin, grizzled hair, and saw the humour not yet altogether gone out of his wild eye, and told him she would never leave him in this world. She had loved daily

more and more this careless child of romance. Her tender heart, she had thought, would never grow weary at the work of caring for him.

“O, Morven, Morven! whom I have loved, though I forgot thee. My old lands back: O Heaven, thou hast been kind! I die content. Edith, I come to thee with joy—my love whom I wronged. God forgive me!”

The strong frame might rally: it never rose. Ere the spring flowers shook their fulfilled blossom in the winds, the massive form of the old laird was placed beneath the grass of the Kirkyard-o'-the-Hill.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

By the end of May, Alan Macalpine and his wife were in the castle of his fathers. In the common narratives of romance, such an event is the consummation of the whole design, when the hero and heroine leave off struggle and adventure, to rest, eat, drink, and be merry in their hall.

Example of such consummation was more than given by the laird of the property next to Morven. Captain Hamilton had no sooner succeeded, after struggle with dependence, to the estates of his uncle, than the sounds of revelry were heard day and night in his mansion-house, and a wide career of pleasure was embraced. But beyond the natural gratification at his restoration, which was but a fleeting sense, there was no jubilance with Macalpine,

as if he had only now come into possession of a happy kingdom from a barren land. Both Alan and his wife were occupied with the sense of new and vastly increased obligations—they went forward to them willingly and happily; nevertheless, their conscientious minds would not permit them to forget that they came not to a still life of loll and ease, amid the forms, the colours, and the odours—the deference of the vulgar, the court of the rich, and the mean obeisance of the poor—which minister to the senses and the vanity. They intended to live as they had done, making no change of social habits, living in temperance and sobriety always, while far from seclusion and dullness. There was nothing visible about them to show the great rise in worldly estate to which they had attained. While Hamilton and his guests filled all the roads with gay and rattling equipages, and crowds of vain servants, Macalpine and his wife were seen as formerly, walking by the river or paying a

visit to a tenant and his family. Men of pleasure "feasted royally" at the prodigal tables of Hamilton, while Macalpine's hospitality was almost confined to his friends, the farmers and their people.

The unexpected accession to wealth needed, even in the case of Macalpine, breathing time to think of its employment. If a man suddenly finds the figures of his income increased by two ciphers, the question is natural, "What will he do with it?" A gentleman of uncultivated tastes with little sense of trust will have no question; that has already been settled for him. Society has provided for these individuals an extensive set of harpies, male and female, who will quickly dispose of the richest succession, capital and revenue. Macalpine thought he already detected in the company of his neighbour the sinks to which hastened much more than all the value of the land the driven-out crofters of the uncle had held; the sight maddened

his heart, that the hard-earned revenues of his native soil should largely help to keep the stews and support the debaucheries of blacklegs.

Macalpine, after putting affairs at Morven in some order, set out with his wife on a tour of several weeks' duration through portions of Scotland and England. The object of the travel was to acquire a knowledge of the conditions of agriculture and its people, as these existed in other localities.

In the productiveness of the soil in crops, and in the rearing of cattle, signs were here and there visible of that intelligent and wide progress which has been made during the last twenty years. But the labourers trudged, as they largely trudge now, their weary way, to congregate in hovels, compared to many of which the Muickland hovels were desirable dwellings, and to live on in immorality and meanness. For the Highland crofter, with whose cause Alan had more immediately concerned himself, he found existing sympathy

where there was an arm powerless for assistance. To sink into apathy or be driven from the soil seemed the fate of this people ; and so it has proved.

This travel led to the acquaintance of a man of genius, whose strong Conservative tendencies, and deep Christian principles, could not prevent him, in his practical experience of the long-suffering wrongs of these Highlanders, afterwards writing in his Journal that "the Irish were buying guns, and Parliament will, in consequence, do a great deal for them ; but the poor Highlanders will shoot no one, and so they will be left to perish unregarded in their hovels." Wildly indignant must have been that mind which could seemingly approach the approval of the philosophy of Cobbett : "If you want to have your wrongs redressed, go out and burn ricks ; Government will yield nothing to justice, but a great deal to fear." How largely are these words verified now. Is the great deliberative assembly of the nation not beyond

that frail mortality which gives soft heed rather to the voice of the turbulent, and originates no troublesome observation upon the unobtrusive—deserving of kindness. In a city where Celts congregate, a Chief who is also a Member of Parliament declares that the fire of patriotism and clanship glows as strongly as ever—that with the abolition of the Entail Law, more capital, and legislative attention, as has been conferred on Ireland, a large population would find happiness and comfort to enliven the glens.

But Macalpine then returned from the sight to the nigh desolate places around himself, from which most of their splendid fellows had gone, with almost the cry in his heart : “The deed is done.” His own people now were not Celts ; but he would treat them, migratory though they were, as if they were to remain the companions of his life, and his cares, and of his people’s who were to follow.

Macalpine arranged a banquet to be given

by him to the proprietors and tenants around on the occasion of his succession to his ancestral estates. All came, expecting a handsome entertainment of fine foods and wines, and the usual platitudes of congratulation and about excellent feeling existing between landlord and tenantry. They had the foods and the wines as they wished ; but most there got more than they bargained for with respect to the speech of the host. None of the tenantry dared to remind Alan, beyond the merest touch, of his Radical tenets when a poor man, though he would have thought the more of the man who called boldly on him to carry into practice the general principles he had enunciated. When the moment came for his reply to the toast of his welcome to Morven, Oliver Arnot, and the few then present who had also heard Alan in the church years back, saw that he arose in possession of all his former enthusiasm. He said he had been called a Radical ; it might therefore surprise some of those present if he were to

say that he was a true Conservative. He wished the adjustment of the interdependence of the bodies of the community on terms of equal justice, and for promotion of the national strength. The feudal relations had passed away; and they were now without system. Formerly the chief depended on his vassals for services in war and peace, the vassals on their chiefs for their holdings and protection. Mutual affection was the consequence. Now, in these times of a feeling of easy security, men only looked upon each other as the instruments of commercial profit; those who came in the place of lord and vassal supposed themselves independent of every consideration except the money value—the owner often, with a view to its increase, clearing the land of many families to make way for one. But the holders of the soil had other obligations than those of the trafficker in perishable commodities. If feudalism was abolished, nobility still lived, and its theoretic function was still the hereditary leadership of

its community in war, and in social duties. He longed to see the glens stirring with the old clansmen, not for the chief's glorification, but as warriors of the nation, there by a wise and patriotic system of localisation of armies. But how could leadership be performed by chiefs on their own land with the existing conditions to which he referred ?—chiefs not only without followers, but without people ; recipients of profits without community. And the owner of the soil, treating it as a mere marketable commodity, bereft himself of the bones and sinews of his own standing. Everywhere solitude or isolation, where were his supports in case of those attacks which fail not to come in the age of reason as of plunder ? A strong and numerous peasantry, truly participating in the benefits of the soil by a just and patriotic management of it, had an interest to protect the administration. A true Conservative he only who preserves the community whole by the endeavour to promote indi-

vidual and national strength; everybody who carelessly sacrificed the feeling brought their own fall, while they destroyed the weal of the nation. He wished to see the country strong as the towns; the large towns possessed a power liable to become pregnant with wrong were not they subjected to the influence of the rest of the community. Their successes in the struggle after material prosperity had weakened the place of the cultivators of the soil, so impoverished in numbers. As large a body as possible should always follow the quiet, and, with education, toning pursuit of agriculture. To these, morals, love of country, and of peace, yet of sturdy independence and physical hardihood and capacity for war, were realities which the too often degenerate and distracted townsmen could possess but weakly. And in destroying the Celtic peasantry rich elements of a national completeness were depressed.

And then he explained what he was to do

on his own lands. His income from the land was to go much to the enlargement of the arable surface, and in increase of its productiveness ; that was a duty of the holders of the soil. He was to ensure the comforts of the labourers, and to attach to their cottages land, increasing with their deserts. He would provide additional means of education ; there would be at once afforded a popular acquaintance with the music and song of their own native land, of its literature, and of instruction in agricultural affairs, and, to young women, in portions of their domestic work. He would introduce a system of co-operation, by which the industrious and intelligent labourer would benefit in the profits of the farm, and reap thereby not only a sufficiency for his material needs, but a sense of futurity and of reward, and an enlightenment which should make his toil not (as often) a dull, unvarying round, but a cheerful piece of duty, endowing him with capacity for enjoying some of the

relaxations and refinements of life. The tenants and their people would, under certain restrictions, to prevent the extermination of animals, sport over their own farms. A library, concert and ball-room, would be established ; the old Highland games would be renewed with treble vigour, to take place twice a year ; while he would endeavour himself to promote generally, as far as lay in his power, a social and kindly communion among all the people. As a prize to the most deserving, he would gradually give off land in perpetual rights, burdened with the annual payment (according to present value) and the necessity of personal residence. In return for his own labours, he would look for temperance, frugality, industry, and morality. He was no over-stern moralist ; but he was aware of much waste, improvidence, and imprudence among those who had most cause to avoid these sins. The honest and industrious only he would see to being rewarded ; he would see to have

punished scoundrelism and rascality with no feeble hand.

The speech was listened to with rapt attention—the silence was ominous. Neither landlords nor tenants liked it; indeed, all were afraid; some were angry, and others trembled. Argument was out of the question. A few cried to the young laird, “It would never do; that, for the sake of heaven, he should give it up.” Alan only said, “I am resolved.” Then many of them left; and he found himself in a very short time sitting with Oliver Arnot and two or three farmers alone. Of course they all said the young laird was mad, though they secretly confessed there was method in his madness.

The inroads of a fresh original mind are to comfortable people especially painful: with faculties at no time screwed up a single tone to the pitch-note of a Rousseau or a Condorcet, or even a Bentham or Mill, or by time or over-playing, hopelessly loose in the high strings,

we have not the consolation of embracing an invigorating idea, but feel blankly at the best, often as a sheep at the shearing. There is no real pain, however ; after the lightening labour is accomplished, the flesh and blood are probably livelier than before, and the wool grows as of yore.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AND now we come to the last chapter of our history, which arises out of a visit paid by Alan and his wife to America, to see how the crofters of Muickland were progressing. They had often been in the minds of the laird and Ellen, and when that March day came round, the year after Alan's restoration, that he had taken the crofters out of Morven, they two sitting at the window looking out upon the winding road, the scene upon which, that day, had so thrilled Alan's patriotic and indignant heart, he asked Ellen if she would care to go to Canada for a few weeks, and see if they were doing well. He had before his succession given an account of his commissionership. Ellen was delighted. She was full of spirits, and was animated with

all the patriotic action and daring of her husband.

And so in July following they were in the far West ; and amid those scenes of nature in the vast, to read of which had delighted Macalpine when a boy, he came upon the chief portion of his old Muickland crofters. What a change ! Most of the old were already dead, but the young were hardy, buoyant, and independent looking. "Why could not auld Scotland keep some thus ?" were Alan's first words to Ellen, as he turned aside deeply moved after the hearty congratulations of the first group he found. He was welcomed to a comfortable dwelling, well provided with all the necessities of life, and it was late in the evening till he returned to the dwelling of the farmer friend, to an introduction to whom he owed his lodgings during his stay. The crofters dropped in, one, two, three, at a time, until Macalpine found the place so full, that he set the whole laughing with his intimation that some would

require to be turned away from the doors, and that he would return next night, while he promised to stay a week beside them. How dearly they still loved the old home, he saw, much as that home had cruelly used them ; Gaelic was heard in the far West that night, and Caledonia's music and song disturbed the rafters of primeval birth. Macalpine offered, to all who chose, land on his own estate, if they cared to come back. But having braved all the cruelty and hardships of their leaving and early sojourn, none would return.

The night before Alan left he was going his rounds, bidding his adieu to his old friends, when he came in one of the houses upon a lad he had not yet seen. He remembered him as a son of old Elshie's, who was known to be not altogether "richt,"—he was silly after a fashion, although able to work. When he saw Alan he ran away, but soon returned with a tin box in his hand ; it was the box with the marriage certificate and other papers. Alan

could only gather that the lad had gone to the fire, not having been at home when the crofters set off; and having seen him bury the box, had supposed it contained gold; but when the lad had carried it off his conscience had smote him, and he never had looked into it, or had been disappointed. Alan said nothing of the subject to Ellen; she was engaged with others, when the lad accosted him, and he got rid of her curiosity by telling her it was a present of a tin box from poor Wattie Elshie.

Upon their return to Morven, their first visitor in the autumn of this year, as she had been in the last, was Mrs Macbean. Alan knew she was in the possession of some secret concerning Ellen's birth, and he thought he had better satisfy himself on that head if he could.

"I have discovered the certificate of the marriage of Ellen's mother with Sir Andrew Cameron, Mrs Macbean," Alan said to her.

“She must be the daughter of this marriage;” and Alan handed her the writing which she read.

“Oh, it’s a joyful, happy discovery, for me as for you,” said the excitable Martha. “It would have killed any ordinary woman to keep it all this time. It is true, Mr Macalpine; true as heaven, she’s Sir Andrew’s only child. I can speak out noo. I daredna by a sacred binding oath till Ellen found it for herself. Ellen Arnot was never married to Dr Lee, though she wished her daughter never to ken the name o’ Cameron.”

Without telling the story in Mrs Macbean’s own words, as it came to be known by Alan and Ellen, it was this : Reginald Lee, who was some relation of the Camerons, had on a visit to them come to know Ellen Arnot, and been smitten with her grace and beauty. The feeling was returned. The fine though thin person of the ardent young scholar was just the attraction of the rustic belle. Her father, on

the other hand, had views of a marriage with the laird's nephew, who he knew admired his daughter ; and having found out something like plighting troth between young Lee and Ellen, Arnot drove him from the house in such a manner as to embitter the youth even in his faith in the mistress of his heart. Miss Arnot grieved sadly ; years passed away, and she had no communication from young Lee. Cameron meanwhile achieved a success in Calcutta, and he wrote home a business-like letter, referring to Arnot's former kindness to him, and that, hearing his daughter, for whom he had an affection, was not married, she could not do better than come out to him. He was well off ; and besides, he yet looked to be laird of entailed lands not far from Finzean. Ellen Arnot was almost driven from her father's house, amid the tears of her mother, whom the event perhaps brought to an early death. Upon reaching Calcutta, the marriage did not come off at once. Indeed, she thought he had changed his mind.

Walking in the street one evening she had received a shock in (as she imagined) the sight of her old lover Reginald Lee, in the uniform of an army surgeon. She had asked Cameron immediately after her arrival if he was in India, the place he had told her when at Finzean he intended himself for ; but she was told by Cameron that he was dead. Now she went to him, and threw herself upon the mercy of the man she had come to marry. "We were engaged," she said ; "I cannot marry you if he lives until he breaks the engagement." She was back again, back to that day when she said she would marry him, come weal, come woe. "I tell you he's dead, woman," cried Cameron ; and she could hear nothing of Reginald Lee. So the marriage took place. It was never a happy one. Cameron was altogether immersed in mercantile pursuits, and cared not truly for his wife, although he was not positively cruel to her. Her romantic temper, however, made demands which were not the least fulfilled.

She became quite unhappy ; the climate became unsuitable, and her husband was angry with her, for not being like other women, as he put it. Soon after their marriage, as she walked solitary in the cool, for her husband seldom was with her, she was accosted by a gentleman who asked if she was Mrs Cameron. "Dr Lee, who knows you, has been for some time lying at —— ill of a wound, received in a recent engagement, and wishes to see you much. Could you come now?" She went. It was a meeting of warm greeting. "I wished to forgive you—I may die," he said to her ; and then she found that his heart had been embittered by something which her father had done, in which she appeared to be implicated. 'It was false—false as Cameron's statement of his death ; for he knew that Lee lived. Dr Lee found out she was unhappy ; and as she considered she had been deceived into her marriage, both by her father and her husband, in a fatal moment she eloped with her old lover, to lead some

Platonic life which suited the spiritual nature of the thin, hero-loving physician. They went to Australia ; but that country not suiting the health of Mrs Lee, by which name she was now called, they came to her mountain land, where it was soon restored. But it was a life not unmixed with a deep misery. Mrs Lee in her secret heart regretted her defiance of the social law, though she loved the romantic gentleman who had early won her love. She wished to think she could blot out the memory of Andrew Cameron ; and she called upon Mrs Macbean, to whom alone had been entrusted the secret of her daughter's birth, by an oath never to reveal it, unless it were positively discovered for or by Ellen without a doubt that she had lawfully married Andrew Cameron. Ellen had been born five months after the elopement, of which proof could be got.

Armed with these evidences of his wife's birth, Macalpine resolved to remove Captain Hamilton. Hamilton had become the subject

for some time of various ugly rumours concerning his intimacy with a dissipated trooper, who was said to have some hold upon him. Macalpine saw the man, whose size and general appearance corresponded with his wife's description of the rascal who had carried her off. Alan was again in communication with the legal authorities. They, however, failed to make a discovery implicating any person. He then went to Hamilton himself. The latter was told by Alan what was the nature of his wife's claim, and that the papers were in his own hands for inspection ; he further said that he would allow Hamilton a yearly stated sum of considerable amount, if he gave up the estate without a litigation, which could only end in one way. Hamilton swore, of course, that he would not give it up till the last moment of his life, and every arm of the law were exhausted.

"There is another condition," said Alan, not heeding his rage, "which I attach to your re-

ceiving this allowance; should it be proved that you had any hand, as suspected, in the abduction of Miss Lee, now my wife, it will cease to be paid."

The Captain was again in terrible wrath; he had, Alan thought, been accustomed to threats, for he received the accusation without trepidation.

Hamilton got four days to make up his mind as to his course. What he did was to disappear from Her Majesty's dominions with the Martinmas rents of the estates, which had just been collected. And Mr and Mrs Macalpine entered into peaceful possession. One of their first acts was to settle the old claims of the Muickland crofters.

The goddess Fortune, it is said, is a jade, the readier to bestow her favours when not over-courted; and indifferent lovers are more likely to deal generously with them. But to conscientious spirits, the acquisition calls them to see the hand of Providence, sending them

to labour; if all, too, goes merry as a marriage bell.

These two who united their solitary hearts on the Falloch Bridge, in all the simplicity of honest love, could come to rejoice also in extended spheres of creating and finding happiness; and so ends for the present this history of aspirations and of baffled lives; and the former will, I trust, never cease with Macalpine, or on Scottish ground.

THE END.

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