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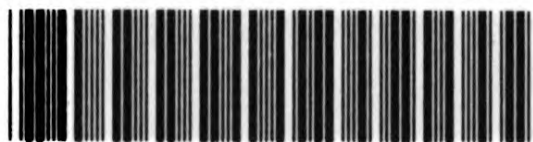
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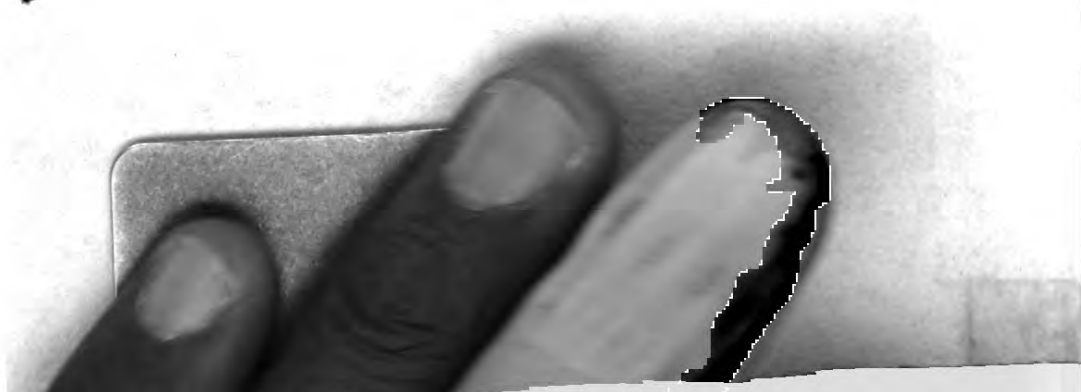


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SIR GERVASE GREY.

CHAPTER I.

THE SISTERS OF AUCHMITHIE.

No part of the day, in a pleasant country house, is more agreeable than the meeting at the breakfast-table, and in no house could it have been more agreeable than in Glenandaroch. That social meal was served in the dining-room; each one of whose deep, open windows, with their dark panels, and heavy, overhanging crimson draperies, seemed as it

were a frame, enclosing a picture of the loch, with its sparkling waters, and its magnificent girdle of mountain, rock, and glen. A sweet, soft breeze entered at them, tempering the heat of the sun, and bringing with it a delicious sensation of life and freshness, suited to the morning hour, and to the renovated energies of those who had just assembled, recruited by the night's rest, and all prepared to encounter the pleasing toils of a new day, such as a new day is to the young, the happy, and the prosperous.

An animated discussion took place during breakfast, respecting various arrangements connected with the important Twelfth of August, of which they were now within three days; and previous to which a considerable reinforcement of visitors was expected. Every house in the neighbourhood—a term comprehending a circuit of thirty miles—was to be full of sportsmen; and there were, besides, one or two places within reach, let as shooting quar-

ters, whose tenants were mutual acquaintances of the Chief and Sir William Clavering. A grand muster, or review, of gillies, dogs, and guns, was announced as about to take place that morning, at which all the gentlemen were solemnly invited to assist, so soon as breakfast should be over.

“And then,” said Glenandaroch, “I must leave you all to follow your own devices, for I have an appointment to keep at one o’clock, at Clachan an Duich—that village at the foot of the loch, Grey, where we met you yesterday.”

“An assignation with John Cook?” enquired Lady Anne, with an arch smile.

“Even so, Annie. An assignation with that favorite aversion of yours, touching various matters connected with the farms beyond there.”

“Who in the world is John Cook?” asked Lady Clavering.

“A dear friend of Kenneth’s, Margaret.

You will not live long here without hearing enough of John Cook."

"A very useful person, I assure you, Margaret," followed up Glenandarroch. "I suppose I shall best describe him in the Baron of Bradwardine's words as—'my Baron-baillie and doer.' He is a respectable Lowland steward, or something analagous to a steward, who has been here in that capacity these three years back, ever since the death of the person whom my late guardian, Mr. Monro, had appointed to the office. I assure you, I should get on very badly without John Cook."

"Well, I think I should get on much better without him," said Lady Anne. "He is my bug-a-boo, Margaret. Kenneth makes use of him to frighten the naughty child into good behaviour. Whenever I want anything that he does not choose to let me have, he threatens me with John Cook."

"Poor, dear, ill-treated Annie!" exclaimed

Sir William, laughing. "How little do they dream of this at home, Elrington."

"Come back home with me, Annie," said Lord Elrington; "and we'll see if we can't protect you from this Highland Bluebeard."

"No, no, Elrington; I don't mean to give in quite so easily as that would come to."

"That's right, Annie," returned her husband. "Stay and try conclusions with John Cook. I warn you, though, you will find him a tough opponent."

"Nay, but you know the fact is, Margaret," pursued Lady Anne, addressing her sister, "that it is not John Cook at all, very often—only Kenneth Mackenzie taking shelter behind his name."

"Sharpshooting—eh, Annie?" laughed the Chief.

"To be sure. One can't mistake it. When I want to build a green-house, I am told that John Cook declares there are half-a-dozen farm-houses in a ruinous condition, that must be

built up first. When I talk of new-furnishing these rooms—and I am sure they want it—and of new hanging the walls, and fifty other things that speak for themselves, and of contriving an addition to the house—(for really we have not bed-rooms enough)—immediately I am met by the information that John Cook has declared it indispensable that so many fields should be drained, and so many other improvements carried out, that the ornamental must give place for a little to the useful. And so on it goes. John Cook would not be half so difficult to deal with as he is made to be, I am convinced of it, if I could only meet him myself on fair terms.”

“Well, I should not like to have you for an adversary, Anne,” said Alwyne, “I must confess. I think you would very soon get the better of me. But Kenneth’s ally may be more obdurate. I did not know, however, Kenneth, that John Cook’s passion for improvement included the *rebuilding* of farm-houses. I am glad to hear that. It gives me

a better opinion of him than I was inclined to have."

"Thank you, Alwyne," exclaimed Lady Anne. "I knew I should have you on my side. I knew you hated him."

"No, no, not quite so bad as that, Annie, I hope. But I do not pretend to be much in love with him. This lowland factor of my brother's," pursued Alwyne, addressing Herbert Grey, beside whom he sat, "is one of those hard, practical, utilitarians, who are most particularly repulsive to my feelings, as a man, and especially as a Highlander—a being with whom feudal ties, and hereditary affections are matter for jeering and disbelief; and who sees more beauty in a desolated track of country, covered with sheep, and inhabited by no human creature, save one or two solitary lowland shepherds, than in the smoking cottages in a hundred glens, with all the worth, and humble happiness, and devoted, enthusiastic loyalty of attachment to their Chief that they

may contain. Under his auspices, the property of the last employer he served was depopulated."

"I have heard something of those proceedings in the Highlands," said Grey, "things that make one's very heart sicken to think of."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Lady Clavering. "I begin to share Anne's feelings with regard to your friend, Kenneth."

"And welcome, Margaret," said her brother-in-law, "whenever he offers to propound such maxims of utility to me. But I should like to see the fellow," pursued the young Chief, looking round with a kindling eye, "who should venture to advise me to turn out my people, and surround myself with a wilderness of sheep, instead of their leal hearts and stout hands."

"Right, Glenandarroch," emphatically pronounced Sir William Clavering. The dark eye of Alwyne Mackenzie reflected the light in

his brother's, and a bright smile, for one instant, illuminated his countenance ; but almost as suddenly passed away. Lady Clavering looked intently, first on him, then on her brother-in-law, and finally rested her eyes on the lovely, girlish face of her sister. Then raising them from that silent gaze, they encountered those of Alwyne ; and, in that one brief glance, it seemed as if a whole volume of unspoken confidences, of mutual fears, and shadowy questionings of the future, were exchanged between them.

In the meanwhile, Sir William was enquiring of the Chief whether any compulsory emigration had ever taken place from any part of his estate ; and was told, in reply, that during his minority, something of the kind, though in its most lenient form, had occurred on a distant portion of the property.

“There were some heavy encumbrances to be cleared off,” said he, “and Mr. Monro, although in himself totally averse to the

measure, did not consider himself entitled to hold out against the representations of my other 'guardians, and reject the prodigious increase of rent offered to him for the land to be cleared of the small tenants. All that was in the power of man to do was done to soften the cruelty of the measure, and facilitate their settlement in Canada; but he has often told me that few actions of his life had ever weighed upon his conscience like that one. It was, and shall remain, a solitary instance of the kind. My family have always lived here, surrounded by their kinsmen and dependents, and so I hope to do."

The party now rose from the breakfast-table, and prepared to disperse; the other gentlemen agreeing that when the important business of the morning was over, and their host departed on his errand down the loch, they should proceed in the large boat towards its head, taking their fishing-rods with them, and, landing at a spot, to which they were to be conducted by

Colin Ban, cross a hill, and explore a glen celebrated for the abundance and fine quality of the trout to be found in the stream which traversed it. This matter settled, they proceeded to disperse. Herbert Grey, however, was, with little difficulty, persuaded by Lady Clavering, to give up the idea of joining the fishing-party, for whose fatigues it appeared to her from his looks that he was very unfit.

"After the grand review is over, Mr. Grey," she said, "you will, perhaps, join my sister and me, and escort us to pay a visit to Mrs. Monro?"

"Do, Mr. Grey," added Lady Anne. "You don't look nearly so strong as when we saw you last in London; and it would be such a pity to knock yourself up before the Twelfth. Come with Margaret and me, and we shall walk down to Auchmithie, Mrs. Monro's house, before luncheon, and see if the young ladies will return with us."

Herbert gave a ready assent; and repairing,

accordingly, to the drawing-room about twelve o'clock, found the lovely sisters engaged in the inner apartment, in practising a harp and piano-forte duet, at whose conclusion they went to get ready for their walk, and returned equipped in the large umbrella-like hats, which he had thought so becoming on the previous day, and which looked not less so now. Within a few minutes after, they had reached the gateway at the foot of the avenue, and turned into the road which led down the side of the lake. It was a very picturesque and very solitary one, shaded by the oak and birch-trees, which grew on either side, and which, opening at intervals on that next the loch, disclosed many beautiful glimpses of its waters at a considerable depth below; the steep banks between, in some parts, clothed with heather, fern, and blue hare-bells, and in others, having great grey crags standing out in naked sternness from their sides.

A walk of about half a mile in length

brought them, at last, to a gateway on the right-hand side of the road, opening on a somewhat steep avenue between two rows of fine old oak trees. Into this avenue they turned.

"This is Auchmithie," said Lady Anne, as Herbert closed the gate behind the party. "It is, you must know, Mr. Grey, a sort of jointure-house, or appanage of that description, belonging to the castle. My husband was born here, and so was your friend Francis."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Herbert. "I fancied they had lived until their father's death at the castle."

"They did," returned she; "but they did not go to reside there until some few months after Francis's birth, on the death of their grandfather, who lived to be a very old man. Kenneth's father and mother resided here after their marriage until that period. During his minority, Auchmithie House used to be let to the sportsmen who rented the shooting and

fishing here. Then, when he came of age, he took his moors into his own hands, of course; and, for the last four years, since her husband died, Mrs. Monro has occupied the house."

"A lonely residence it must have been," exclaimed Lady Clavering. "And yet I could imagine getting warmly attached to this place."

They found themselves, as she spoke, in front of the house: the avenue, perfectly straight for a little way, taking a sudden turn near its termination, where the trees opened out upon a space of level ground, and the avenue swept round a circular plat of turf, with a great old yew-tree in the centre, whose gnarled trunk was surrounded by a rustic-seat. This seat was, at the present moment, occupied by two female figures, or rather one was sitting on it, with a book in her lap, from which the other, who sat on the grass at her feet, one arm across her knee, appeared to be reading along with her. Their straw-bonnets,

thrown off in the pleasant shade, lay beside them. The form of her who occupied the seat Herbert had no difficulty in recognising. That graceful contour—that stately head, a little inclined towards her book, so as to let the rich fall of sunny ringlets shade her face, belonged to one remembered with too much of admiration and interest ever to be forgotten; and wherever he had seen her, he would have known Florence Monro long before he was near enough to perceive her countenance.

That radiant countenance was now suddenly uplifted at the sound of approaching voices and footsteps—all beaming and sparkling with its brightest smile; and both sisters, rising, advanced towards the visitors.

Florence, ever foremost, flew to meet Lady Anne, between whom and herself an affectionate embrace was exchanged. Then, after greeting Lady Clavering in a manner equally affectionate, if less demonstrative, she turned to

welcome our hero, and congratulate him on his arrival in the Highlands.

“And I must make you acquainted with my sister, Mr. Grey, whom you know so well by name—Eva dear—Mr. Grey.”

The younger girl replied to Herbert's bow, only by a timid, yet graceful curtesy; nor did his eyes rest long upon her countenance at that moment; but although of a different and less striking character than that of Florence, it was not one to be passed over and forgotten; and repeatedly, in the course of the conversation which ensued, ere the party adjourned to the house, did he find himself attracted to gaze upon it, and take in the details of a whole which gained upon him with every fresh glance.

The appearance of Eva Monro was in many respects totally opposite to that of her sister. Less in height by nearly half a head, she was altogether of a slighter, more girlish, and

undeveloped form. Nor was there in her case any of the brilliant colouring, which formed so important an adjunct to the beauty of Florence. At first sight, she gave the impression only of a pale, slender, youthful looking creature, remarkable for nothing so much as an air of extreme innocence and simplicity. But by degrees, the more and the longer the countenance was inspected, the more did its loveliness grow upon the eye. The colouring was subdued, it is true, but it was exquisite of its kind. The complexion was clear, fair, transparent to a degree; and the slightest emotion, the very act of speaking, or of being spoken to, sent a tinge of the faintest rose colour over the sweet, soft cheek, like a momentary sunbeam. The features were delicate, the lovely lips a trifle less full than those of her sister, but of an equally bright red, and disclosing teeth equally pearly. The large, long cut eyes, of a darker shade of blue than Florence's, had somewhat more of a

pensive and downcast glance, and like hers, were fringed by long, black lashes. But at times, a sudden change would come over their aspect, and sparkling under the influence of some pleasant word or thought, they would half close in a laughing ellipse, which told what capacities for enjoyment, and what quick sense of the ludicrous withal, lay concealed beneath that quiet exterior. But the strongest dissimilarity between the sisters, otherwise resembling each other, in point of family likeness, though not in any individual feature, was in the forehead. We have elsewhere described that of Florence, as broad and full, but not high; the style of forehead which indicates more of quick talent, than of profound thought; and which is usually found to belong to persons in whom the artist-temperament is predominant, whether taking the form of music, or painting, or both; combined with that craving after pleasurable excitement, that keen sense of enjoyment, and that vivid

excitability, characteristic of those similarly endowed. The brow of Eva was of a totally different type; high, as well as broad, and largely developed in the regions of intellect, it imparted a lofty and meditative character to the upper part of her face, which very beautifully contrasted, and yet was enhanced by, the girlish innocence of the lower. This calm, white brow was shaded by a profusion of ringlets, of the same sunny brown with her sister's, only a little darker. An air of indescribable sweetness and candour, a visible atmosphere, as it were, of purity, seemed to surround her, as she stood beneath the old yew tree, whose dark green boughs, and rugged, writhen branches, formed a background, on which were gracefully relieved the young and lovely figures now grouped beneath it.

"This is a charming bower for a hot day, Florence," said Lady Anne, looking up into the nearly impervious canopy over-head, "and

I see you and Eva have not been enjoying it in utter idleness."

"Miss Monro is no votary of the *dolce far niente*, I think," remarked Herbert, smiling.

"No, Mr. Grey; do you remember, in our London mornings, when I was half dead, after the night's fatigue, how provoking it used to be sometimes, to see Florence all alive and indefatigable, working, or drawing, or singing, just if she had been doing nothing extraordinary the evening before."

"I remember, I used to feel it quite a reproach for my own idleness," said Herbert.

"Nay, but you were privileged to be idle, Mr. Grey," replied Florence, "and you were very inoffensive as an idle man. No friend of mine who values peace and comfort, should ever wish me to be so, for I am always most agreeable company, when I am most fully occupied."

"I can only say then, Miss Monroe," returned Herbert, "that I must always have had the pleasure of seeing you under a great press of occupation."

"Thank you, Mr. Grey, you are very polite. Shall we go into the house, Lady Clavering? Mamma will be charmed to see you all. Eva, dear, don't forget our book."

"Dante, Eva?" said Lady Clavering, looking over the shoulder of the younger sister, as she lifted the volume which both had been reading, from the seat. "*La Vita Nuova*? How do you get on with that?"

"Florence has been reading Italian with me every day since she came home," replied Eva, in a voice, whose low, sweet, clear tones, were well-suited to the lips whence they issued. "You know she, and occasionally Alwyne, have been the only teachers I ever had in that, and many other things. I do not find '*La Vita Nuova*' quite so difficult as I expected. But we have not long begun it."

"Alwyne gave it me just before I left London," said Florence, "but I never had time to read it until I came here. It is very beautiful. Do you know it, Lady Clavering?"

"I do," replied that lady, a shade of strange and mournful thought coming over her countenance. "That is, I once began, and read it about half-way through, and then was interrupted, and I never resumed it again."

She took the volume as she spoke, from Eva's hands, and opened it somewhere near the middle. "Curious enough!" she then exclaimed, "I have just cast my eyes on the very passage, which I well remember to have been the last I read."

Eva bent forward to read where Lady Clavering's finger pointed. Her eyes took in only the words before them; but more, far more, presented itself to the eyes of her companion. That book had been the last she had ever read with Ernest! the volume had been

lying on the table by her side, open at that very passage, on that morning at Lorton Priors, when their projected Italian reading had been so terribly put an end to ! And as she gazed upon it, the whole scene seemed to shape itself out so vividly on her sight—the form of Ernest—with his face so deadly pale, his eyes filled with such ineffable anguish—stood for an instant so life like, and so distinctly before her, that she was only recalled, almost with a start, to the recollection of where she really was, by the movement of the rest of the party towards the house. She pressed her hand for a moment on her eyes, and endeavoured to dismiss the memory, which had presented itself thus unbidden.

“ What business had it there at such a time ? ”

They now stood in front of the old house of Auchmithie, which was indeed, as Florence had once told Herbert Grey, situated in the

midst of a romantic and beautiful scene. In front, as we have seen, the surrounding ground was level ; but immediately behind the house, a large, low, and somewhat rambling one of grey stone, only two stories high, it descended very rapidly ; and an addition to the building, which had been made after its first erection, and which projected from it behind at one side, looked right down into a deep tangled glen, far below in whose dark cleft, a little stream, which a few hour's rain among the hills, was wont to swell into a raging torrent, hurried over its rocky channel, on its way to the Lake. In its passage thither, it was crossed by a stone bridge, built across the road beneath. Here, behind the house, a few feet below the window of that room where we once beheld Eva Monro in her sleep, a bridge of lighter and more fragile materials was thrown across the narrowest part of the glen, connecting one precipitous bank with the other. The unhewn trunks of trees formed the substratum of this

aërial pass; and the footing which they afforded was rendered more secure by sods of turf laid across, while a slender railing lent some shew of support to the adventurous wight, who should attempt the transit. But, familiar though the feat was to the inhabitants of the place, it was one requiring some steadiness of eye, and coolness of nerve, to witness, much less to perform, in a person unaccustomed to it; so great was the height, so sheer the descent beneath, so dark and impervious to the eye, the wooded depths of the ravine, amongst which the stream was heard, not seen, to chafe and thunder, far down below. Sundry paths had been cut out in the steep banks on either side, whence many striking points of view were visible; and that opposite the house, ascending higher and higher, had its loftiest wooded heights at last over-topped by the bare, craggy peaks of some more distant mountains.

From one side of the house-front a low ivy-

covered wall extending a little way, enclosed and screened its offices; on the other, two magnificent yew hedges, running parallel with each other, formed a walk, warm and sheltered in, the coldest winter day, and from the innermost of which hedges a natural doorway gave access to the garden, extending along the side of the house; behind it, as far as the rapid slope of the ground permitted, and all down the back to the utmost limit where cultivation had been found possible, fenced all round by those hedges, or rather walls of yew, cut into terraces, and rich in vegetables, small fruit and borders of fragrant flowers.

An ancient porch of dark grey stone, overhung with honey-suckle, and double Ayrshire roses, afforded access to the house. Entering from it upon a low square matted hall, the visitors, conducted by Florence and Eva, crossed it towards a door at its farther side, which admitted them to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER II.

FAIR-HAIRED COLIN.

THE apartment which Lady Anne Mackenzie and her party now entered, was a long, low-roofed room, somewhat narrow in proportion to its length, and having its door-way defended by a large Indian screen. Opposite to it were three windows, or rather one window on either side of a sashed-door, opening into the garden. The large old-fashioned fire-place, with its lofty mantel-piece, elaborately carved in wood, was at one extremity of the room, and even at this season, and in such warm weather, had a small fire burning in its grate. The sashed door, however, stood open, admitting the sweet air, blent with the odours of the garden, so

that the atmosphere was not oppressive. The furniture was plain and simple, but abundantly comfortable ; many books lay about the tables, which were also adorned by glasses of freshly-gathered flowers ; and a harp, piano-forte, and music-stand, stood at the end of the room, opposite the fire-place, where were likewise two large deep recesses in the wall, fitted up with book-shelves, completely filled with volumes.

Mrs. Monro, who was seated at work in an arm chair, near the sashed window, now arose to greet her visitors with unaffected cordiality and kindness ; and presented them, in turn, to her friend Miss Marjory Brodie, a tall, erect, and somewhat stately old lady, with a countenance strongly characteristic of mingled sense, shrewdness, humour, and good feeling ; attired in a stiff grey silk gown, somewhat open in front, so as to display a delicately fine and white lace handkerchief, whose folds stood out from the dress, after the fashion called in former days, "*gorge de pigeon*," and a marvellously

high cap of the choicest lace, beneath which appeared the bands of her snow-white hair.

Herbert Grey was conscious of some curiosity to see the mother of the two lovely sisters whom he had been regarding with such admiration; and he now found himself so placed as be able to gratify this desire without the rudeness of staring. There was something very interesting in the aspect of Mrs. Monro, although she might be a year or two turned of fifty; and in spite of the widow's cap which she had never laid aside—still more—of that expression of countenance which tells so plainly of bye-gone grief and suffering—she scarcely looked her age. She was tall, as tall as her eldest daughter, but lost some of her height by a bend forward, the species of stoop which conveys an impression of having been caused by a weight of dejection and care, rendering its oppressive effect visible, even upon the bodily frame. In the features of her pale calm face, especially in the eyes and mouth, might be

traced a resemblance to both her daughters, but to Florence more than Eva ; only that few things could be less alike than the expression of the two countenances. Hers was sweet, notwithstanding its look of sorrow ; there was no trace of discontent or peevishness in it ; yet it conveyed an impression scarcely to be defined, so Herbert felt, in words, but which, as he gazed, kept shaping itself more and more clearly out to his eye, till at last he decided it to be the aspect of one who had at some, probably a distant period, been exposed to some great distress or shock, from which her spirit had never fully arisen. Something which had stilled and quelled it, and which, uncalled, would still force itself upon her recollection, so as well nigh to banish the present. There was, at times, an almost dreamy look in her eyes, and an expression of fixed abstraction in her countenance, as of one whose thoughts were far away. This, however, was only when silent, at a time when some one else was talk-

ing; for when she spoke, there was much animation, and a great degree of charm in her manner. This was not difficult to account for, as soon as the ear had detected in her speech, that slight trace of the Hibernian accent, so sweet and so piquant in the mouth of that most charming of human beings, a thoroughbred Irish gentlewoman. And this discovery of their mother's native country at once accounted for what had already struck Herbert, that neither Florence, nor Eva, in whom, as never having left the North, it was the more remarkable, spoke with the least inflection of what is in general the most ineradicable of national accents.

That broad and quaint Doric hung upon the tongue of Mrs. Monro's friend, Miss Brodie, yet in no vulgar or offensive tone, no more than might once universally be heard from the well-born and well-bred north-country lady of the last century. In Herbert's English ears it seemed to impart much originality to what

he could understand of her discourse, which was, much of it, directed to Lady Anne, while the party were awaiting the two sisters. They, having their mother's consent, had gladly accepted the invitation to come up to the castle for luncheon, and were now gone to get ready for the walk, and to give orders for having their evening dresses sent after them.

"I should be so charmed, Mrs. Monroe, and so I know would Kenneth," said Lady Anne, "if Miss Brodie and you would join our dinner party to-day? Would you allow me to send down the phaeton for you at seven o'clock? Miss Brodie, will you not second my request?"

"You are very kind, dear Lady Anne," replied Mrs. Monroe; "but you know I never go out anywhere, else I should be most happy to join you. And Miss Brodie—"

"Miss Brodie, my dear," interrupted that old lady, "would be thinking lang for her tea afore she got her denner, I doot. It's just amazin' to me, Leddy Anne, your new-fangled

names for a' thing! What would Glenandar-roch's worthy grandfather say, if he could rise frae the dead, to see folk sitting doon to their denner at eicht o'clock at nicht in his ha' hoose."

"Call it supper, Miss Brodie," laughed Lady Anne; "and it will come to the same thing. And come at seven, and you shall have a cup of green tea, and some bread and butter, before dinner—before supper, I mean. My sister and I have some every day. Have we not, Margaret?"

"In that case, my dear leddy, if I might make sae free as to advise," solemnly responded Miss Brodie; "if I was you, I would e'en pit aff my denner till the neist day."

In the midst of the laughter excited by this speech, Florence and Eva re-entered the room. But although Lady Anne speedily enlisted their advocacy to enforce her request, it appeared that neither Mrs. Monro nor Miss Marjory Brodie was inclined to accede to it; and

the party accordingly had nothing more for it but to take leave.

“Florence’s maid comes up, I suppose, before dinner?” said Lady Anne. “Pray tell her, Mrs. Monro, that she need not wait for the girls. I shall send them home, of course.”

“Is Kenneth enacting the Captain of Knockdunder to-day, Anne?” enquired Florence, as they were proceeding down the avenue.

“Do you hear the impertinent creature, Mr. Grey?” demanded Lady Anne of Herbert, on whose arm she was leaning. “What do you mean, Florence?”

“Why, don’t you know that I have dubbed him the Captain of Knockdunder, whenever he goes out on the loch in his ‘coach-and-six?’ Has he taken it, or the ‘gig,’ the small boat, to-day?”

“Oh! the gig, I think. Has he, Mr. Grey?”

“Yes,” replied Herbert, “he has, with two oars. Alwyne is Captain of Knockdunder to-day, Miss Monro, for his fishing-party is in the ‘coach-and-six.’ Gallant fellows the six are too. I have not seen finer-looking men.”

“And since Alwyne Dhu is of the party,” pursued Florence, “I need not ask whether he has been followed by Colin Ban?”

“That you need not, Florence,” returned Lady Anne. “Shadow and substance never were more inseparable. Besides, as I understand, they required Colin for a guide to the stream where they meant to fish.”

“There was some demur, previous to their starting,” added Herbert, “whether or not your friend, Mr. Cook, Lady Anne, might stand in need of Colin’s services, why, I did not clearly make out. But after an animated Gaelic colloquy between Glenandarroch and him, it was finally carried that he should go with the anglers.”

“Which is rather more in his way than

carrying an ink-horn after John Cook," said Lady Anne, smiling.

"And what, then, if I may ask, is the tie between these personages?"

"You may well ask, Mr. Grey," replied Florence, "what can be the tie between a Saxon factor, whose soul is in his account-book, and a Celtic poet. Never was there a more incongruous couple linked together."

"You can tell Mr. Grey Colin's history better than I can, Florence," said Lady Anne.

"There is not much to tell," said Florence, in answer to Herbert's enquiring look. "You know, I dare say, Mr. Grey, how very strong the tie is, in the Highlands, between foster-brothers and sisters? Every Englishman, thanks to Sir Walter Scott, and Mrs. Grant of Laggan, knows at least so much of our customs now."

Herbert intimated that he was aware of this one. And Florence proceeded to tell him that

Colin, whose surname was Mackenzie, was descended from a race who had emigrated to Glenandarroch from the Ross-shire property of the family, previous to its sale, and one of whom had always been Henchman to the Chief. His mother, Morag Mackenzie, having been left a widow about the time when the death of the late Glenandarroch had consigned his three sons to the guardianship of his first cousin, Mr. Monro, had been prevailed upon by that gentleman to accompany her foster-child to his residence, Castle-Stennis; for Alwyne, at that time under three years old, had never known any other mother, his own having died at his birth. At Castle-Stennis, then, Morag Mackenzie remained during the rest of her life, a beloved and valued dependent; and her only child, Colin, partook, with the little Chief and his brothers, of the instructions of their tutor, until Alwyne, the youngest, was sent to school; and grew up the playmate and companion of themselves and

their cousins. Subsequent to the departure of his beloved foster-brother from his guardian's roof, Colin, who was nearly heartbroken at the separation, attended the grammar school at Saltounburgh, a town near to Castle-Stennis, and afterwards was sent by his patron to the University of Aberdeen. The late Chief had left him by his will a small independence; and Mr. Monro fancied that his peculiar bent of mind might be directed towards the Church.

"But," pursued Florence, "I can't tell how it is—there is a dash of eccentricity about our friend Colin, which always comes between him and the possibility of settling himself to any pursuit. He completed his—what *do* they call it?—oh! *Curriculum* at Aberdeen very creditably—only that he was always more fond of writing Gaelic poetry than of construing Homer or Virgil. But he finally declared that he had no vocation for the Church. Then he entered a counting-house in Aberdeen; but, as you may easily suppose, that was ten times

worse. He did not remain long there. He came back here to Glenandarroch's country, just about the time when Lady Anne and my cousin were married; and while Alwyne, who was on a visit to mamma, remained here, he adhered to him as faithfully as usual, and used to wander about the hills with him, and me and Eva—or haunt the glens and waterfalls, and, above all, the Fairy Well, alone, composing poetry. I wish you understood Gaelic, that I might shew you some of it, for it is very beautiful. But, before Alwyne returned to Oxford, he earnestly entreated Colin to apply himself to some occupation—less for the sake of a livelihood, as his father had provided for that, than in order to save him from a life of idle dreaming. So, as he declared that he could not exist apart from Glenandarroch—he was haunted wherever he went by the music of its streams, and heard a voice borne upon the wind when he left it, calling him back again—Kenneth hit upon the expedient of

employing him as a sort of accountant or secretary, to give it a higher sounding name, to his Factor, *Bhalie* Cook, whose accounts are very extensive and complicated. And this is the origin of that very singular combination of Celt and Sassenach, poet and arithmetician, which, if you knew both parties, might well puzzle you to discover for yourself."

"And I believe they hate each other," said Lady Anne.

"With a perfect hatred," replied Florence. "At least, I can answer for the poet. I am not so intimately acquainted with the arithmetician's feelings; but I have not the least doubt that the emotion is fully reciprocal. How could it be otherwise, in the nature of things?"

"And how in the world," asked Herbert, "does such a combination prosper, so far as business is concerned?"

"Why, as to that," answered Florence, "tolerably well, I fancy—for Colin is a good

accountant. Tolerably well, that is, so long as Alwyne is not here, and that matters are quiet at the castle. Then Colin contrives to get through his tasks, with the periodical relief of coming to mamma and Eva—if Kenneth is also from home—to pour forth his narrative of wrath and grievance. Indeed, it is only occasionally that the *Bhalie* gives him much to do. But, in circumstances like the present, as you observed to-day, he is more erratic; and then it is well for him that he is a privileged person.”

They had now reached the castle, which they did just in time for luncheon. That meal over, they lingered some little space in pleasant conversation in the drawing room. Then an Irish jaunting-car, one of the apparently innumerable vehicles which was ever ready to be summoned obedient to a wish at Glenandarroch, carried the ladies of the party, with Grey acting as *charioteer*, and Tom, the English groom, in attendance on horseback, some miles

up beyond the castle, on a sketching excursion, which proved a long and devious one; and during which, Eva Monro, who, as she informed Herbert, with a vivid blush, "was so stupid that she could not sketch from nature, though Florence had often tried to teach her," found herself very frequently left to a *tête-à-tête* with him, when the artists became rapt in contemplation of the respective points of view which they had selected. And as her first reserve and shyness wore off, their conversation became so mutually interesting, that to them the hours passed unheeded by.

But it was time, at last, to think of returning home; the slant shadows of evening were beginning to fall, and "the sun was westering down the dell." They retraced their steps to the spot where Tom and his "'osses," less agreeably occupied than they, were beginning to wax, not a little weary of the artistic enthusiasm which had so long detained them on the spot. A down hill progress, more rapid than that

which had brought them to their present elevation, speedily landed them at the castle gate ; almost at the very moment that the band of somewhat weary anglers, with their escort of gillies, appeared ascending the steep banks from the pier, at which their coach and six had just arrived.

“ Well met, ladies,” said the foremost of the ascending party, Sir William Clavering, who now came towards them, his rod in his hand, and a fishing-basket slung across his shoulder, his fine face glowing with exercise, and beaming with its brightest smile. “ Why, Margaret, how came Anne and you to seduce Grey to leave us in the lurch? You don’t know what you have missed, Grey.”

“ I know what I have found,” replied Herbert, smiling, “ and that renders me very easy as to what I have missed.”

“ We have spent such a charming afternoon, William,” said Lady Clavering.

"And Margaret has taken such lovely sketches," added Lady Anne.

"You have been sketching, have you, Margaret? Let me see—ha! very good, admirable—really."

His eyes were raised from the sketch-book to the lovely face of his wife with a glance of so much blended admiration and tenderness, as to bring a sudden rush of colour, a glow, almost a radiance, over it, which told, more plainly than any words could have done, how much more precious to her heart was a word of approbation from him, than any other meed which the world could bestow upon her.

While Sir William was examining the sketches, Alwyne Mackenzie, followed in a minute after by Lord Elrington, had come up, and was talking to his cousins; when the same young man, whom Grey had seen with him on the previous evening, approached the group. He held in his hand a bunch of wild-flowers—the

delicate purple blossoms of the bell-heather, white everlasting, blue and white hare-bells, mingled, in a tasteful manner, with sprigs of the bog-myrtle—or sweet-gale, as it is called in Scotland—which, pulling off his bonnet, he offered to Florence Monro, with a bow that would not have disgraced the most courtly drawing-room. And as she, with beaming smiles and graceful thanks, received the nosegay, and admired its beauty and the mode of its arrangement, while the youth stood by with the air of one listening to a superior being, the eyes of Herbert Grey were attracted by his appearance, and he drew near to observe him more minutely.

“Mr. Grey,” said Florence, “this is Colin Mackenzie, of whom you have heard us all speak; Alwyne’s foster-brother and a poet, I assure you, of no small power in his own language, which I wish you understood, that you might judge for yourself of his verses. Colin, this gentleman is Francis’s English

friend, Mr. Grey, who arrived yesterday—you know.”

“The gentleman is heartily welcome to Glenandarroch,” answered the youth, in a deep, low voice, and with a fervent grasp of the hand which Herbert held out to him, “as well for the sake of Francis as for his own.”

Colin Ban, as his designation implied, was a young man of naturally fair complexion, though embrowned by exposure to the weather, of middle height and size, clean-limbed, and light in figure, and with a countenance too strongly marked by the national characteristics to be handsome; yet a countenance at which it was impossible to look and not perceive that the owner was something different from the common run of his fellows. Its most striking peculiarity was in the large, light-blue eye, sparkling, at times, with an almost wild brilliancy, at others, clouded as it were with a dim shadow, as if its vision were fixed on something within, or something too far away to be

taken in by means of its natural functions. His hair, of a very light, almost yellow, flaxen tint, streamed away in long locks from either side of a forehead, whose whiteness, where it was protected by the bonnet, shewed what his real complexion would have been but for the influence of sun and storm. The forehead, in the eye of a phrenologist, would have borne out all that had been said of the flightiness of its possessor, developed, as it was, into remarkable breadth and fulness in the imaginative regions, but by no means equally so in those of thought and reasoning; not to mention that there was a depression in the hinder portion of the head, which always indicates a tendency to unsteadiness of purpose. Altogether, it was a singular countenance; and strongly attracted the eye of Herbert, as did its owner's conversation his fancy.

There was something peculiar and original in all the young man said, during the little

space that they stood talking together; owing in part, no doubt, to the tone of his mind; and partly to the circumstance of his thinking in Gaelic, and translating his thoughts into English as he spoke, which gave them the character less of colloquial language than of that in books; and books of a poetical and fanciful cast.

But now the party was hailed by Glenandaroch himself, who appeared issuing from the gateway, followed by a short, squat, consequential-looking personage, equipped in a grey riding-coat and top-boots, his broad, weather-beaten, self-satisfied countenance, surmounted, as in proud defiance of all the Highland bonnets around him, by a white hat, which, however, he reverently doffed on perceiving the ladies of the party, and in so doing displayed the under garniture of his head, a brown scratch wig.

“There is Anne’s *bête noire*, John Cook, in

propria personá, I imagine," observed Sir William, as the burly apparition became visible.

"So he is, I declare. He must have returned with Kenneth; and I see he has had his pony sent after him." As a lad now appeared from the stables, leading a pony as broad and sturdy as its master. "Well," pursued Lady Anne, "I do not mean to remain here to be 'ma-leddyed,' and 'yer leddy-shipped,' for an hour together; for he always finds so many things to say, and so many objections to every plan that I propose, that I never can get away from him when we begin talking; and it is time to dress. Remember that, gentlemen all. Come, Margaret—Eva—Florence—come along."

And as she spoke, her fairy ladyship tripped lightly away at the head of her female division; and with a "How do you do, Mr. Cook?" in answer to the functionary's obsequious bow, exchanged a little squeeze of the hand with

her husband, in the act of ascending the door-steps which he had just descended.

“If ye please, ma leddy,” interposed Mr. Cook. (Lady Anne stopped and looked round with a despairing shrug.) “If ye please,” pursued the relentless factor—“if it was no for deteenin’, yer leddyship, I had a bit plan to let ye see.”

And diving into the recesses of a huge pocket, he produced a pocket-book of dimensions suited to its receptacle, filled to repletion, and secured by red tape.

“It’s the plan,” proceeded he, as opening the aforesaid pocket-book, he began leisurely turning over its multifarious contents—“for the new boat-hoos, yer leddyship, wants at the fit o’ the brae doon bye, I took the liberty—”

“Why, Mr. Cook,” interrupted Lady Anne, “I made a drawing for that boat-house myself. Kenneth, did you not give my drawing to Mr. Cook?”

Receiving no answer, she looked round, and

perceived that her husband had walked on to meet the other gentlemen.

“Who in the world has been altering it?” she exclaimed, in a tone of infinite disgust, receiving from the hand which now extended it to her, an amended edition of her own drawing; and regarding it with a rising colour, and indignant glance, while the author of the amendment stood calmly by, a self-complacent smile upon his lips, and a twinkle of satisfaction in his eye. “Really, Mr. Cook, you have given yourself some very unnecessary trouble.”

“Ye’ll excuse the freedom, ma leddy,” responded the imperturbable Mr. Cook; “but ye see, it was a pretty plan, and a braw plan; but, yer leddyship’s, no to be thocht to understand thae things like a stane-mason; and that bonny-dye o’ a hoos wadna’ hae bidden the blasts o’ ane o’ the winters in this Hieland wilderness; sae I e’en took it upon me to gie’t a when scarts wi’ my pen to mak’ it

mair wise-like, always wi' yer leddyship's approbation."

And pointing to the drawing with a broad, red forefinger, he proceeded to explain to the offended and perplexed Lady Anne, who did not comprehend one word in ten that he uttered, the various architectural demerits of her very pretty plan for a boat-house; enlarging on them, and on the superiority of his own emendation, in language which, through the energy of his feelings on the subject, assumed yet more and more of the broad vernacular, until it became utterly unintelligible to the hearer. Lady Anne could only gather that her projected boat-house seemed destined to share the fate of everything else that she had projected at Glenandarroch—namely, to be discovered to be impracticable, by her enemy, John Cook; and passing through the alembic of his brain, to assume a new and much less picturesque shape in the process.

At last, in anger and despair, she was obliged to call for the assistance of her hus-

band, who, being aware of the subject under discussion, was standing apart with Sir William, laughing over this specimen of his lady's ability to deal with John Cook, of which she had boasted in the morning.

"The fellow," he said, "is imbued with the most perfect belief in himself, the most profound conviction of his own infallibility, and possessed with the most determined resolution that everything shall, if possible, be done in his own way, that you can imagine. I scarcely think any power could persuade him that he had ever done wrong in his life; so you may fancy what chance Anne has with him. He is a clever, shrewd fellow, too, I must confess, and generally right in his views, always excepting his sheep-farming crotchets."

"Take care, Glenandarroch," said Sir William, "that if he is the positive character you say, he do not bring you round to those crotchets too, in process of time."

"Not much chance of that, Clavering. But I must really go to the rescue there."

And the Chief, interposing his mediatorial authority, announced a compromise between Lady Anne's plan, and that of the Factor, and commanded the latter to bring the disputed drawing to the castle on the following morning, when a committee of taste and expediency should sit upon it, and consider how the building might be modified to stand the climate better, without injuring its appearance so much as his alterations would have done. This matter settled, Lady Anne retired to dress for dinner, as her friends had long since done, her spirit chafing under its augmented sensations of dislike to Mr. Cook.

The latter worthy, meanwhile, taking leave of his master, climbed to the saddle of his pony, and was in the act of turning its head down the avenue, when he became aware of Colin Ban, who, with folded arms, and eyes cast upwards to the sky, stood leaning against the trunk of a tree.

"Ye're there, are ye?" quoth Mr. Cook.

“If I durst be so bauld as to spier the question, I would like to ken, Colin Mackinyie, what cam o’ you this day, when I had a’ the accounts lyin’ at the office, waitin’ your pleeshur to redd up.”

Without taking the slightest notice of the so designed biting sarcasm of this address, Colin fixed his eyes full upon the speaker, and calmly answering, “I could not be at the office, Bhalie; Glenandarroch and Alwyne had need of me elsewhere,” turned round with the air of a prince, and walked away towards the house.

Mr. Cook remained for a second or two, transfixed on his pony’s back, with distended eyes and open mouth, gazing after the retiring—not retreating—figure of his secretary; then, lifting his riding whip, he emphatically shook it, in symbolical action, at the back of the proudly unconscious Colin.

“Ye Hieland loon!” thus he apostrophised him. “Ye struttin’, blawin’, bletherin’, cork-

headed Hieland ne'er-do-weel! Wae be to them has to mak' or mell wi' you, and the like o' you! What ill wind blew a man like me here, to wash Ethiopians, an' fecht wild beasts at Ephesus, trying to turn daft, idle, leein' seannachies, into douce, sober men o' business? Colin Ban, quo' he! He's weel-named in troth! Gude kens its fit to gar ane baith ban, and swear to be mistrysted wi' him! And my gentlemans's far aboon a word frae me, wi' his Chiefs and his Alwynes. Od! an' they wad tak him, and keep him a' thegither, I ken wha wad mak' sma' mane."

And therewith, having emptied the vials of his wrath, Mr. Cook righted himself in his saddle, and trotted leisurely down the avenue.

To the party in the castle, meanwhile, above all to one of its members—the evening which succeeded this happy day, flew by on fairy wings, till at last, at a late hour, Lady Anne Mackenzie's covered phaeton stood at the door,

to take the sisters home to Auchmithie. Herbert Grey, as he re-entered the house, in company with the other gentlemen, after seeing it drive off, the last tones of Eva Monro's silvery "good-night," still vibrating in his ears, and still more, as ere retiring to rest, he stood leaning on his turret-window, and gazing out upon the lovely loch, dimly visible by the light of the setting moon—again, and yet again, repeated to himself, "this day seems to me an era in my life."

CHAPTER III.

THE LADY OF CASTLE-STENNIS.

“TELL me something of Mrs. Monro’s history, Alwyne. I am sure she has a history connected with her. How comes she to reside here? I want to know more of her, for she greatly interests me.”

Thus spoke Herbert Grey, as Alwyne and he found themselves, with their fishing rods, on the banks of one of the many streams of the neighbourhood, in the afternoon of the following day. He had accompanied Alwyne to Auchmithie immediately after breakfast, ostensibly for a call of a few minutes duration, on their way to Glen Creran, the spot where

they now were; and there they had spent the entire morning, sitting in the drawing room, and beneath the yew tree, or sauntering in the garden, and the picturesque paths cut through the glen; had remained to luncheon, and finally had torn themselves away, because they could find no pretext for farther prolonging their visit.

"There has been a great deal of sorrow in Mrs. Monro's history," replied Alwyne, in answer to the question of his companion. "Her early years were spent in a stormy scene. Her father was an Irish gentleman of very ancient family, and was, I have always understood, deeply implicated in the rebellion of —98. I have heard her describe some fearful scenes of that period, as having occurred under her own eyes. He was forced to escape to Belgium to save his life, and there his wife and daughters joined him. His wife was a Scotchwoman, and thus, although he himself was a Roman Catholic, the daughters were

brought up members of our Reformed Apostolic Church, to which she belonged. There was a son, but he died young. The family property was dilapidated, and finally sold, and Mr. O'Moore, the father, died shortly after his exile. There was a cousin, who had been adopted by him, and who accompanied the two sisters to Scotland after their mother died, Maurice O'Moore by name, and they were the last of the race."

"O'Moore?" said Herbert. "I took up a volume of music to-day in Mrs. Monro's drawing-room, with the name of 'Eva O'Moore' upon it. Mrs. Monro's, I suppose?"

"No, Mrs. Monro's name is Florence. Eva O'Moore was her only sister, who has been many years dead; but of whom I never heard her speak without shedding tears. Some particularly mournful memory is connected with her death; but I do not know what. None of us know. We have often tried to form conjectures respecting her—Florence in particular,

who is prone to curiosity after any thing approaching to a mystery. She must have been a very lovely creature; judging from a small portrait of her which always hangs in Mrs. Monro's own room. We have stood before it, Florence and I, many and many a time in days of old, weaving all manner of fantastic histories for its original. It is very like Florence too—strikingly so.”

“Really? I should like to see it!” exclaimed Herbert; whose fancy was caught by the mention of a family-incident so nearly resembling one already alluded to in his own household. “And how then, Alwyne,” pursued he, “did these sisters come to this country?”

“I told you that their mother was Scotch,” was the answer, “and on her death, soon after their father's, they were consigned to the guardianship of a distant relative, but the only one they had left, on either side, in a position to assume that charge. This was Mr. Brodie, a gentleman of large property in Aberdeenshire,

and the father of that old lady now visiting Mrs. Monro. They and their cousin Maurice came to reside with him ; and from his house the elder sister was married to Mr. Monro, of Castle Stennis, my father's first cousin, somewhere about one-and-thirty years ago."

"So long ago ! And Miss Monro only twenty ?"

"Yes, there was a gap of nine years between her and her brother, now dead."

"Ah !" exclaimed Herbert. "Miss Eva Monro told me, yesterday, that she had lost a brother."

"Poor fellow !" said Alwyne, "they seldom speak of him. It is a mournful history ; and I can only give you a mere outline of it, after all. There are strange tragedies hidden, sometimes, beneath the apparently quiet current of domestic life ; and something of the sort is connected with the birth of that brother of theirs, Edward Monro ; but it occurred long before any of our times, and is a subject on

which delicacy as well as affection forbade any of us even to make enquiries, so that we, none of us, knew the story accurately. He—he was born—poor fellow—not quite—not exactly—like other people—deficient in short—”

“In mind you mean?” asked Herbert.

“In mind—yes. There was something amiss. He was a singularly handsome creature, only for a retreating forehead and wild wandering eye; but, at first sight, you would not have guessed his deficiency; not till you tried to talk to him. He was perfectly gentle and manageable, indeed timid to a degree. It was in his extreme timidity, and his incapacity for fixing his mind to anything continuously, that the weakness of his intellect showed itself.”

“And—and this deficiency,” said Herbert, with some effort, and becoming very pale as he spoke, “could it in any way be accounted for, or is there any—any hereditary predisposition?”

“To insanity? No—thank God!” and Alwyne reverently lifted his bonnet and bowed his head.

“No. A race more free from any hereditary taint, on either side, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not exist. The melancholy circumstances preceding poor Edward’s birth were always considered, as I have understood, quite sufficient to account for his mental peculiarities. But into these particulars, as I have already said, I cannot enter. I never heard them. I only know that his mother sustained some terrific shock, which nearly unsettled her reason—would have done so in fact, had there been any predisposition of that sort in her case, and from the effects of which I fancy she never has entirely recovered.”

“Strange!” exclaimed Herbert, “how instinctively that idea was suggested to me, almost from the first sight I had of Mrs. Monro; she gave me so completely the impression of a person, who had met with

something unusually sad and terrible at some period. And of what nature? But I forget, you say you do not know what it was?"

"No, I do not; except that it was in some way connected with her husband. Mr. Monro, when she married him, was, as as I have heard, a very different person, from what my earliest recollections picture him. I cannot recall him as anything else, than a grave, melancholy man, kind, considerate, and fatherly towards us all; one whom we most sincerely loved, and to whom, notwithstanding his habitual silence and sadness, we never found it difficult to confide our feelings, even our faults and failings. A better, or more faithful guardian, a truer or more paternal friend, could not be. But he always had an appearance of melancholy—a look as of one upon whom some heavy secret burden lay. And this, I have reason to think, was the case. Some history of an early and indelible fault, committed in the heat of blood, but never to be either re-

paired or forgotten, hung over his past life, and darkened it in his memory. I told you that none of us ever heard the particulars of this. We never did, or ever thought it right or honourable to enquire into them, of any one who could satisfy our curiosity; but fragments of the tale of course have reached us, from which it is very possible that I could patch up a narrative, comprising much of the truth. This, however, I am sure you would not wish, or think the better of me for doing."

"Certainly not," replied Herbert.

"Only this I may add, and it is only justice to all parties to add," pursued Alwyne. "Whatever it was which had cast so dark a shadow over my Guardian's life, the circumstance was one that in no way affected his honour, and the high estimation in which he was held by all his friends and neighbours in the county. He was universally looked up to and respected; of which one convincing proof, amongst many, was the circumstance of my

father committing to him the sole guardianship of my brothers and myself, as well as the principal charge of his property. And well and faithfully were both trusts discharged. His management of the estate was admirable, for he was a man of great prudence and ability, and especially skilful in country matters; and as he said to me, a few months before his death, the responsibilities of such a charge, entrusted to him at the time it was, seemed to have given him a new motive in life."

"One can imagine," said Herbert, "if his mind was oppressed by painful recollections, that he would devote himself to a task of the kind, as, in some sort, an expiation for what was past."

"Yes, he led me to infer as much," replied Alwyne. "The occasion which I named was the only one on which he ever made any allusion to his private sorrows in my hearing. It was in the course of a long and confidential conversation which we had together, just pre-

vious to my return to the private tutor's, with whom I was preparing for Oxford. His health, at that time, was failing fast, and he had not long before met with a severe pecuniary loss, which, for the sake of his family, weighed heavily on his mind ; but he bore it, as he bore everything, with a degree of humble resignation, which testified to the sincerity of his words, when he told me that day, that he trusted he had been enabled to acquiesce, without a murmur, in the merciful chastisements of the Almighty. I never saw Mr. Monro in life after that conversation, which seemed to give me a deeper insight into his character and feelings than I had ever possessed before, boy as I was then. He felt, he said, most grateful that he had been spared to see my eldest brother reach his majority, and to deliver over the estate into his keeping—grateful that, thus far, the work committed to him was done. The rest he must leave in higher hands. The work *was* done, and well.

It is not for his pecuniary management of the property that our deepest debt of gratitude is due to Mr. Monro. He spared no pains to inculcate the duties and responsibilities attached to the possession of landed property, as well as its rights; and to keep up in our hearts that degree of nationality, which Highland gentlemen educated in England are apt to lose."

"Yes," said Herbert, smiling. "You are, all of you, thorough Highlanders, as your brother Frank has so often told me. And you, Alwyne, are the most so of all, I should say."

"I dare say I am," replied Alwyne. "I have been more and longer in the Highlands than either Kenneth or Frank, for one reason. But Mr. Monro made us all Celts, from our boyhood. During our holidays, whenever any thing occurred, as was perpetually the case, requiring his presence at Glenandarroch, he used to bring us boys here with him; and

having lived a great deal here as a young man, in the days of our grandfather, as well as during our father's short period of possession, being also, on one side, one of the clan, he felt as much pride in the place, and knew it and the people as thoroughly as if he had been born and brought up amongst them. What happy days those were, pre-eminently so in a happy boyhood, that we used to spend here !”

“Your cousins were talking yesterday,” said Herbert, “of your early days together, and of your foster-mother.”

“Ah ! yes, we often talk of them, and of her, dear Morag,” exclaimed Alwyne. “She and Mrs. Monro were the only mothers I ever knew ; and Mrs. Monro I regard with a son's affection still.”

“There is something peculiarly gentle and loveable about her, certainly,” exclaimed Herbert.

“There is indeed. And the longer you know her, the more you will feel it. And her

trials added so much to the interest and affection she inspired. Her evident participation in her husband's private sources of grief—the vague impression of peculiar mournfulness belonging to the fate of her only sister—the romance and the tragedy of her early history, and the abiding affliction connected with her son, whom she loved—as women always love the helpless, with such devoted tenderness—altogether invested one's feelings for her with a very peculiar character.”

“Yes, that trial must have been a very severe one to both parents,” said Herbert.

“It was, of course. Their only son, and heir to so ancient a property. But his father regarded poor Edward, too, with a melancholy depth of affection, which was very touching, and which I have learned to connect with the remorseful associations that belonged to the period preceding his birth. From that time, until Florence was born, he was their only living child; and a gentle, loving, dependent

creature, in whom there was nothing of the repulsiveness often attendant on mental incapacity. We all used to love Edward, as boys, and enjoy being able to entice him to play with us. But that we could very seldom do, from his excessive nervous timidity, though he liked to sit, holding his mother's hand, or with his arm round one of his sisters, watching us. He loved the two girls dearly; but his mother was the passion of his heart. He rather dreaded his father, gentle though Mr. Monro always was to him; but he never seemed thoroughly at his ease or safe in his own estimation except beside his mother. And she was so fond of him. His death was a bitter grief to her."

"And he died six years ago, his sister told me."

"He did, of a gradual decline. And as he grew weaker and weaker, poor fellow, he clung with more and more of the helpless, undoubting trust and confidence of infancy to the love

and protection of his mother. The very expression of his countenance, and the whole appearance of his wasted frame, as I saw him last, lying on a couch, with her arm round him, and his head resting on her shoulders, were less like those of a young man than of an innocent child. And so he was; shielded by his infirmity from all contact with the evil of the world—a spirit returning to God, pure as when first washed in the waters of its Baptism. It was with such consolation that the good Bishop, who had been his mother's unfailing friend in all her sorrows, endeavoured to soothe this heavy one. And she fully acknowledged its value, and gratefully owned with what sure and certain hope, this first-born child, whom she had so loved and cherished, could be committed to the grave. But you may fancy how she missed the object of such long and constant care and tenderness—how she misses him still. The girls, too, lamented

him bitterly, Eva in particular, as having seen more of him."

"Owing to her sister's not living at home?" asked Herbert. "How does it come about, Alwyne, that Miss Monro does not reside with her mother? I remember, on the first occasion of our meeting, hearing her talk of the distress of her first parting with her sister, as a child; but I never clearly understood why the parting took place."

"Why," returned Alwyne, a shade coming over his brow, "it happened at the earnest entreaty of her aunt, Lady Brooke, Mr. Monro's only sister, the widow of an eminent barrister, many years recorder at ———. He left her a considerable fortune at her own disposal; and she returned home and established herself at a villa in the immediate neighbourhood of Edinburgh. She had no children; and paying a visit to her brother at Castle Stennis, when Florence was about twelve years old, she conceived the most violent affection for

her, and implored leave to adopt and bring her up as her own. Mr. and Mrs. Monro could not endure the idea of it, and held out a long while against every argument and entreaty. But at last they were wrought upon to yield; I cannot tell how, for it was against their better reason, and I am very sure that neither of them ever ceased to regret it."

"And yet," said Herbert, "Miss Monro's affection for her mother and sister, and her home, seems in no way weakened by the separation. I think I have seldom seen any one whose domestic feelings are warmer."

"It is very true," replied Alwyne. "And the advantages too were, and are very great. Lady Brooke has devoted herself to Florence's education, not only letting her have the benefit of the first-rate masters who abound in Edinburgh, but even taking her, a year or two ago, to reside for a good many months in Paris, for a similar purpose. She has also settled everything in her power to leave upon her niece,

and in fact spares nothing to render her happy and independent. And yet, withal, Grey, I cannot but own that I concur in the sentiments of her father and mother. I think that nothing can justify a parent's giving up his child to another, and wilfully severing—which, to a certain extent, he must in so doing—the ties which God himself has formed. I do not wonder that they reproached themselves for having acted thus, however little apparent harm may have ensued. And even now—even under the altered worldly circumstances, which would seem to many persons to point out the arrangement as a providential one—I am aware that Mrs. Monro laments it still.”

“ And those circumstances—?”

“ You heard me, a few minutes ago,” replied Alwyne, “ allude to a severe pecuniary loss which Mr. Monro had sustained not long before his death ; this was through the sudden failure of an old established banking house in the north here, in which his father had had—and

he retained—a share. But the full liabilities of the establishment did not come to light until he was on his death-bed; and I am happy to think that he died in ignorance of the extent of his ruin. It appeared that one of the partners, and one most highly respected, had been guilty of an extensive and long-continued system of fraud; by whose results many landed proprietors, and persons of inferior note, were most seriously injured in fortune, and which nearly swamped the Castle Stennis property, already encumbered to a certain extent, as most estates are in Scotland. Not to trouble you with technical details, the state of matters was finally discovered to be such, that in place of Mr. Monro's daughters inheriting his property as co-heiresses, it became necessary to bring the whole, burdened with their mother's jointure, into the market. It was not long in finding a purchaser, though so greatly has land of late years fallen in

value, that it sold considerably under the price originally set upon it. An inconsiderable reversion was all that remained over after the debt was paid ; and to this Florence, with the full consent and approbation of Lady Brooke, has announced her intention of relinquishing all claim, as soon as she has the legal power to do so, on coming of age."

"Just what one would have expected of Miss Monroe !" exclaimed Herbert. "No, Alwyne, I confess I cannot agree with you in the present instance, as to its being matter of regret that she should have been adopted by her aunt, just though your ideas may be on the subject in an abstract point of view. To me it does appear a most fortunate thing for all parties."

"Well," replied Alwyne, "I hope you may prove right, Grey. At all events it has caused no estrangement between them."

“ And then Mrs. Monro came to reside here, after the sale of the property ?” asked Herbert.

“ She did ; as soon as it appeared inevitable that she must leave Castle Stennis, my brother pressed Auchmithie upon her as a residence, and would hear of no denial. It stood untenanted, and he begged her as a favor to accept it.”

“ I see,” said Herbert. “ And it is a beautiful spot, but still a lonely one, in the winter especially, for the residence of females.”

“ No doubt it is ; and Mrs. Monro was not without inducements to go elsewhere. Lady Brooke, who is a very warm-hearted person, urged her to remove to Edinburgh, in order to be near her ; but not to mention that she must, of course, feel it a great object to live at small expense, on her daughter’s account, all her ties in life are in this part of the

country, with the solitary exception of Florence. And I could imagine that she must feel even Florence more her own, during her annual visit home, than she would do residing near her, and seeing her belong to another. At all events, she did not hesitate in her choice ; and here she has resided during the last four years, an incalculable blessing to the poor people in the Clachan and all around. She and Eva are regarded as angels of mercy among them. They have never been so cared for since my mother died. You cannot imagine how much they do for them, or how gratefully their warm Highland hearts open to the kindness they experience. Mrs. Monro's is no wasted life, though a secluded one ; and I am sure Eva is happier here than she could be in the gayest scenes, whose gaiety centred in self."

"I am sure Clavering would say so!" thought Herbert, as he recalled the innocent purity and peace of Eva's aspect, and then

fixed his eyes on Alwyne Mackenzie's thoughtful and abstracted countenance, where he stood in silence, after saying this, casting his line upon a deep pool, whose brink they had approached in the course of their conversation.

CHAPTER IV.

AMONG THE MOORS.

THE 12th of August, 1837, fell upon a Saturday, on which account the party from Glenandarroch were compelled so to arrange matters as to return that same evening from the distant moors on which their campaign against the grouse was destined to begin; instead of remaining all night at the shooting-lodge belonging to the Chief, which was to be their place of rendezvous. To this shooting-lodge a general emigration of all the sportsmen took place on the eve of the important day. Mounted on ponies of various sizes, and some



of the more hardy, amongst whom were Alwyne Mackenzie and Sir William Clavering, preferring to cross the hills on foot, they issued forth, attended by a band of gillies conducting the dogs, as eager and full of excitement as their masters, early on Friday the 11th, leaving the drawing-room regions of the castle, literally destitute of a single male inhabitant. Lady Anne and her female companions—for the original party had received several additions since the arrival of Herbert Grey—having dined at the usual luncheon-hour, repaired in a body, about seven o'clock in the evening, to drink tea at Auchmithie, where an elegant and varied repast, under that name, was prepared for them; seasoned by much dry humour on the part of Miss Marjory Brodie, respecting this enforced change in the habits of the visitors, and some enquiries as to whether this "four-hours" would be followed by a dinner at midnight of that same day, or before breakfast next morning.

The deserted ladies, the while, contrived to find Mrs. Monro's tea-table a very pleasant substitute for dinner; and having done due honor to its contents, spent a very agreeable evening in music, singing, and a little waltzing, ostensibly for the benefit of Eva, whose secluded life had afforded her little opportunity for practising that style of dancing; in which, as in so many other things, Florence had been her sole instructress. There were also occasional sorties to the garden, by the glass-door, to admire the lovely moonlight, and to prognosticate a fine day to-morrow; and many conjectures as to which of the sportsmen would bag most grouse, and who would knock up first amongst the moors. Some of the party awarded this undesirable pre-eminence to Lord Elrington, whose slender, boyish figure did not augur much for his powers of walking waist-deep in heather, under a burning sun. But in this supposition, Lady Anne and her sister assured them all that they were quite mistaken.

Their brother, they said, was one of those persons, whose appearance affords no indication of their real bodily strength.

“For my part,” said Lady Anne, “I give it hollow in favor of Mr. Grey. He has no stamina for such work. I scarcely expect to see him return alive from the moors.”

In this opinion Lady Clavering and Florence fully concurred; and the gentle, motherly heart of Mrs. Monro, already greatly interested in the appearance and manners of Grey, became full of real distress and anxiety on his account; till Florence laughingly declared, that Lady Anne must send down a special message from the Castle on the next evening, as soon as the shooting-party returned, to satisfy her mother of his being still in life and limb.

The morning of the long-looked-for day dawned among the lonely moors as still, and crystal clear as the previous evening had closed in; and with the first blush of dawn uprose

dogs and gillies, and eager sportsmen ; and long ere mid-day, " the daughter of the voice in the hollow rock," to use Colin Ban's periphrastic phrase, had given back the sound of many a shot ; and many " a bright-eyed mountain king," had found a bloody bed amongst the heather.

It was not till towards the afternoon, however, that Lady Anne's predictions began to be verified ; and that the excitement of sport proved insufficient any longer to enable Herbert Grey to sustain the enormous fatigue which he had been undergoing during so many hours.

The party being, of course, broken up into many small divisions, he had, for some time, found himself the companion of Sir William Clavering, whose elastic limbs seemed incapable of weariness, and whose spirits were excited to the highest pitch by the invigorating mountain air, and the successful sports of the day.

But even their infection at last failed with Grey, and sinking at the foot of a heathery slope, he was forced to acknowledge that he felt unable to proceed a step farther.

It was manifestly no imaginary indisposition ; and Sir William, laying down his gun just as the old sagacious pointer, who preceded him, made a dead set a few yards in advance, allowed the watchful covey, so indicated, to spring free into the air, as he knelt down beside his companion.

“My dear fellow,” he exclaimed, “I have been very thoughtless, to hurry on like this, and forget that you are not so strong as myself. Here Eachan—Nial !” to a pair of gillies, who were following—“fetch some water as fast as you can. Sweyn Beg, run back to the lodge for a couple of plaids, will you ?”

It was not until he had seen Grey in some measure recovered from the faintness which had come over him, that he could be persuaded

to pursue his own sport, by a promise from him that he would not attempt leaving that spot until his return. Satisfied at last with this assurance, Sir William proceeded on his way, while Herbert remained behind, reclining on a comfortable pillow, composed of the plaids, which Sweyn Beg, light of foot as a deer, had started off to bring thither from the shooting lodge; and too much exhausted by fatigue, to be able even to regret his loss of the remaining hours of the day.

Alone, however he did not remain, for Colin Ban, who had now come up, stayed by him, and after some little time, as he began to revive, they entered into conversation together; and Herbert, incited by the particulars which he had learned from Alwyne Mackenzie and Florence Monro, drew the young man on to speak of his early days, and of the obligations to the father of the latter, which he—nor he alone—but the whole of Glenandarroch's people, lay under. This he did with a poetical warmth

of enthusiasm, under whose inspiring glow he seemed like a new being. His eye kindled and dilated, and his cheek flushed, as he dwelt on the unwearied interest, which Mr. Monro, "the father of the clan," had shown in its well-being, and contrasted his paternal sway, with the heartless inhumanity of some Highland proprietors at no great distance, towards the people whom they had driven from their homes and country. Then, moved by the evident sympathy of his auditor, Colin went on to speak of the bye-gone days of the castle, and of the legends connected with it, every one of which seemed familiar to him; and many a stirring tale did he pour forth, in language equally picturesque with the circumstances he detailed; of the wars and the feuds of its inhabitants, till coming to more recent times, whose memory seemed impressed upon him with a life-like vividness, as distinct as though they had formed some of his own personal reminiscences, he proceeded to give a

graphic account of the last sending of the Fiery Cross through the clan, on occasion of the muster for Glenfinnan in the Forty-five. In that noble, but disastrous rising, the armament from Glenandaroch, and from the Ross-shire property, had not been led out by the Chief in person, for he was then a very old man, but by his son, the grandfather of the present Chief; who subsequently, after passing some years in foreign service, had procured his pardon from Government, and returned to the property, which after his father's death had been faithfully managed for him by a kinsman. On the subject of his long period of hiding, after the fatal day at Culloden, amongst the woods and hills of his native place; ere he could find an opportunity of flight to France, Colin had many strange tales to tell; many of his hair-breadth perils from the Sidieran Ruadhe—the Red soldiers of the brutal Cumberland's army—down to the last and narrowest of all, from which the young Roderick Grant

Mackenzie had only been extricated by the courage and self-devotion of his foster brother, who, personating him, and thus affording him time for escape, sacrificed his own life in the cause.

“And an honour it was for his father’s son!” said Colin. “He was the brother of my grandfather, and his mother thanked God on her bended knees, that he had died, as became him, for the son of his Chief, and his own foster brother to boot.”

“You would do the same yourself for yours any day, Colin, that I can well believe,” replied Herbert.

A flash kindled in the light blue eye of Colin, and an air of noble, almost heroic daring, diffused itself over his whole aspect, as, raising his head erect, he answered—

“It is not for me to say what I would do for Alwyne Dhu. But no forefather of his ever went to the feast or the fray but what a forefather of mine attended on him. And the

same mother's breast nursed him and me. It is no silken twine, but a three-fold chain of iron that binds me to Alwyne Dhu."

"He is a happy man to have such a faithful friend," exclaimed Herbert. "Miss Monro told me of your love for him—and also of your hereditary title to attend upon the Chief's person. She—"

"Did the Lady Florence tell you that?" eagerly interrupted Colin, a deep glow suffusing his sun-burnt countenance, and a still brighter light flashing from his eye. "Did she? Blessings on her!"

"She did, and a great deal more," replied Herbert; "and she has promised to make translations for me of some of your poetry. She sang two of your songs to her harp the other night, that I might hear them; and beautiful they sounded, though I could not follow the words."

"*Her* harp," said Colin, in his low deep voice, "would cause any words to sound beau-

tiful. The breeze that should sweep across its strings, and waken their slumbering music, would still be no more than a wandering breeze. The music is not in it, but in the chords it touches. The breeze passes by, and is forgotten. The music remains."

Thus spoke the *Bhairdh*—his eye fixed on the deep blue sky above him, unconsciously echoing the very words of Moore to the "dear harp of his country"—

If the heart of the patriot, soldier or lover,
Have thrilled at our lay, 'tis thy glory alone,
I was but as the wind, passing heedlessly over,
And all the wild sweetness I waked was thine own.

While the eyes of Herbert, on his part, were bent, with still increasing curiosity and interest, on his singular companion, their colloquy was interrupted by the approach of the brothers, Kenneth and Alwyne Dhu himself, followed, at short intervals, by the rest of the sportsmen, and then again by many a

heavy-laden gillie. Much kindly regret was expressed by Glenandarroch and Alwyne for the indisposition of Grey, who, however, was now so much recovered as to be able to rise, and walk back to the lodge amongst the others; and who assured Alwyne that he considered it a fortunate accident, as having enabled him to prosecute an acquaintance so original as that with his foster-brother. In this opinion, Sir William Clavering fully concurred. He had been captivated by Colin's enthusiasm and poetic fancy; and now, as they proceeded on their way, fell behind the rest, for the purpose of drawing him out still farther—which, however, he did not find it so easy to do in the presence of others. Colin, like many sensitive sons of genius, feeling a restraint in talking before witnesses, and being most accessible in a *tête-à-tête*.

The radiance of a glorious full moon had long been poured forth upon the castle, the oak woods, and the lake of Glenandarroch, ere the

party of weary sportsmen alighted from their steeds at the gateway. It was, in fact, very late ; and there was little time for more than a mere exchange of greeting with the fair friends who were expecting them, ere the latter retired for the night.

“ Who is bound for the parish Church, to-day ? ” enquired Lady Anne next morning, during breakfast.

“ You are not, I should say, Mr. Grey ? ” observed Lady Clavering, in a low voice to Herbert. She was seated beside him, and after her husband’s account of his illness the previous day, her attention had been attracted by his pale and languid looks, and by the fact that he had tasted nothing at breakfast but a cup of tea.

“ I am afraid you are not feeling well,” she continued. “ Indeed, Mr. Grey, it was unwise to leave your room this morning.”

Herbert assured her that he felt tolerably

well, and should be much the better for the open air.

“ But,” he added, a shade of color returning to his face as he spoke, “ I am not going to join the party at the parish Church. I mean to accompany Alwyne, who tells me that he will read the Church Service at Mrs. Monro’s, to-day.”

“ I observed that he had laid aside his Highland dress, and appeared in black,” said Lady Clavering. “ It strikes me that Mr. Alwyne Mackenzie has a strong proclivity to the church. But I fancied there was always service at the *chapel*, as I find one is expected to call it in Scotland, where we went last Sunday. Why does Anne talk of going to the parish Church, I wonder ?”

Lady Clavering appealed for an explanation to Alwyne, who informed her that the Church services were celebrated only on alternate Sundays at the chapel in question, a humble

building some two miles from the castle. Although the great majority of the natives of the district were members of the Church, yet from the extreme poverty of that small diocese, the clergyman who did duty there officiated also at another chapel twenty miles off, near to which was his residence.

“It would be the greatest of blessings to our poor people,” added he, “if they had a resident clergyman amongst them. The one of whom I speak, Mr. Ogilvy, whose services you attended last Sunday, is an excellent man, and visits them as regularly as he can. But his cure extends over an immense Highland district; and now that our venerable Bishop is no longer able to come amongst us, as he used to do, the people are inevitably subjected to many privations, of privileges which they would value very highly. There are no better Churchmen than are to be found amongst Highlanders.”

“And so you do what you can for them,

when you are here, Mr. Mackenzie?" said Lady Clavering.

"Being as I am, it is little that I can do," replied Alwyne, checking a sigh. "The will is not wanting."

"And the will leads you away from the kirk, eh, Alwyne?" asked Glenandarroch; who did not much like the track on which his brother's thoughts were evidently running. "Well, I own I think it a duty to support the Establishment, so far as I can do it without neglecting my own church; and the minister, here, Mr. Duncanson, is a very worthy man, I am sure you can't deny that."

"I am sure I never pretended to deny it," returned Alwyne, with a smile. "I have the greatest regard and respect for Mr. Duncanson."

"Then why not go with Anne and me, and the rest of us, to the kirk, and persuade Mrs. Monro and the girls to do the same?"

"That is quite another thing," said Alwyne, "I would rather try to persuade Mr. Cook and

his sister, Miss Mysie, or any of the other Presbyterians in the Clachan, to go with us to chapel, at Tomhan na Crosh, if I could."

"Thank you," replied his brother, "I am not fond of proselytising. I like to leave people as I find them."

"Then may you and I and all of us, not be permitted to leave ourselves as we found ourselves. Why should we set the example of halting between two opinions?"

"Well, I think it is a very proper thing to support the Establishment," repeated the young Chief.

"And I want so much to see the Presbyterian form of worship, I think I must go for once," said Lady Clavering, "but in my heart I am disposed to agree with you, Mr. Mackenzie. Don't you think, Mr. Grey, that my brother Ernest would do so?"

"Yes, I am quite sure he would," replied Herbert.

While the array of carriages was mustering

in front of the castle, to convey the party who were about to visit the parish church, Alwyne Mackenzie, attended, as usual, by Colin, was quietly sauntering down the road towards Auchmithie with Herbert Grey. And as the foremost equipage swept past them on the narrow road, and the face of Lady Anne appeared at the side nearest them, sparkling with its brightest smiles, while she waved a gay adieu, they turned in at the gateway, and proceeded up the avenue towards that secluded abode.

The day was a very beautiful one, bright and warm, with a sky of deep blue above—flecked here and there by a few masses of white motionless clouds. It was a day for out-door life; and so the lovely sisters of Auchmithie seemed to feel it; for, as the two gentlemen approached the house, they descried them in their favorite spot, seated beneath the old yew tree; whence, rising on their approach, both advanced to meet them. And, perhaps, neither of the sisters, in the eyes at that mo-



ment, so admirably bent upon them, had ever looked more beautiful.

They were dressed, as Florence generally contrived that they should be, when together, exactly alike, in simple morning gowns of blue muslin, with ribbons of the same colour, fastening the small white collars and delicate frilled cuffs which completed their costume.

Having merely stepped from the house-door to the seat beneath the yew-tree, they had no bonnets on; their long rich ringlets, in all the beautiful smoothness and order of a morning toilette, formed the only covering of their heads; and an air of freshness like that of the morning itself, the indescribable influence of youth, innocence, and happiness, invested them with a charm irresistible by either of those now receiving and returning their frank and kindly greetings.

"Colin has anticipated me, Florence," observed Alwyne, with a smile, as his foster-brother, with his usual lowly, almost adoring, reverence, presented his cousin with an ex-

quisite bouquet of honeysuckle, heath, and briar rose-buds; then, having received her thanks with an air of the profoundest homage, fell back behind the party, following them at some little distance, with folded arms and downcast eyes.

"I intended to have brought you a bouquet," added Alwyne, drawing her arm within his, "but—"

"No—did you, Alwyne? Nonsense. Eva, do you hear him? Fancy Alwyne Dhu troubling his wise head with bouquets. You, who don't know one flower from another, too."

"Florence, you are really very ungrateful," said Eva.

"And grossly unjust," added Alwyne. "I appeal to Mr. Grey, since you won't take my word for it. Grey, did you not hear me say, when I saw you gathering those flowers, that I really dared not collect a bouquet for Miss Monro, much though I should like to do it because it would break my foster-brother's

heart to find himself superseded in his self-appointed duty of flower-purveyor to her?"

"He did say so, I do assure you, Miss Monro," replied Herbert, turning to Florence. "And moreover I can vouch for it, that he knows a honey-suckle by name; for he gave me one at the time to add to my stock. Might I venture to offer these to you?" added Herbert, presenting to Eva the little bunch of flowers which he held in his hand. "They are not arranged with Colin's unapproachable taste; but that you will excuse, I hope."

"They need no excuse, Mr. Grey—many thanks," replied Eva, a deep blush suffusing her innocent face, as she received the flowers from his hands, and met the glance which accompanied them. At this juncture the figures of Mrs. Monro and Miss Marjory Brodie appeared beneath the porch, issuing from the open house door, and advanced to welcome the visitors.

"You are a good Churchman, too, Mr. Grey, I am happy to find," said Mrs. Monro,

as, after a few minutes' conversation, they were about to proceed into the house ; "not to be enticed into attending strange places of worship."

"I am afraid," replied Grey, ingenuously, "that I do not deserve much credit for that in the present instance. Under any other circumstances, I don't know what curiosity might not have led me to do along with the others ; and my conscience will not allow me to let you suppose, Mrs. Monro, that it was being a good Churchman brought me here to-day. In fact, I am not a good Churchman, or a good anything else, I fear."

"You are, at least, no hypocrite, Mr. Grey ; and therein lies the foundation of all that is good," replied Mrs. Monro, as her tender motherly eye dwelt on the glowing face of the young man, towards whom she had, from the first, experienced a singular attraction of her heart. "And you will allow me to feel very glad to see you under my roof, whatever it was that brought you."

The heart of Grey swelled at these words ; but farther manifestation of his feelings was prevented, as they had now reached the drawing-room, which was prepared by an orderly disposition of seats, as much as might be, for morning service. And hither, in a few minutes, the ringing of a bell summoned the household of Mrs. Monro, which, in its normal state, consisted of two maids, the little damsel whose name, Shelas, had so puzzled Lady Anne Mackenzie, and an ancient Highlander, whose office it was to superintend the garden and grounds, and take care of the two ponies belonging to Florence and Eva. At present, its numbers were augmented by the addition of a tall, stiff, antiquated, north-country attendant of Miss Brodie ; and by the smart, dressy Edinburgh maid, who always accompanied Florence on her visit home. The latter, however, by no means choosing so far to mis-spend the Sunday as not to enlighten the inhabitants of the Clachan by the sight of her

best dress and bonnet, as well as to derive fresh inspiration for herself from those of the London ladies and their abigails—being, moreover, a Presbyterian—which latter reason we take leave to place in the order which it actually occupied amongst the fair damsel's impelling motives, had set off betimes to the parish church, thereby giving rise to a strong sense of virtuous self-satisfaction in the soul of Mrs. Hannah Duff, Miss Brodie's maid.

"*She* had muckle reason tee be thankfu', she ne'er saa the inside o' ane o' their kirks! Fat wad the Bishop say, she wad like tee ken," (in answer to a recommendation that she should also go) "till hear tell that ane o' his fock had been at the kirk? Na, na! How could ever she look the Bishop i' the face again if she gaed there. She wad gang nane."

"Set her up wi' her Bishops!" had been the offended ejaculation of the younger maiden, as, shaking out her gay plumage, she flounced scornfully from the door. "Bonny-like Bishops. Puir rags of Rome, in troth, as Maister Cook

said yesterday. And as muckle pride—and as muckle upsettin'! Just downright Popery, and waur. The kirk, quo' she! It wad, maybe, be tellen' her if she did gang to the kirk by times."

And in a mood as little suited to the day, or to her purpose, as Mrs. Hannah's own, all alive and bristling with self-righteousness, and convinced that whoever else might be wrong, she at least was all right; the fair Lydia Jamieson walked off to church to exhibit her garments, hear the news, and give what portion of her thoughts might be to spare to the minister, in order to be able to decide whether his preaching was, or was not, equal to that of *her* minister in Edinburgh—a question on which she had already found herself somewhat puzzled to pronounce.

The morning-service of the Church, meanwhile, was read in Mrs. Monro's drawing-room by Alwyne Mackenzie, in a manner and tone so devout, so solemnly and profoundly reverential, as forcibly to remind Herbert Grey of

Clavering. Since he last had listened to him, he had not heard those divine prayers uttered in a way which so irresistibly enchained attention, and carried away the spirit from the things of earth and time. The hymns and psalms were chanted, the singing led by Alwyne, whose voice was a particularly fine one, and admirably supported by Florence's masterly imitation of the organ-accompaniment on the piano-forte, as well as by the blended voices of the sisters. That of Colin was likewise no ordinary one, and guided by no ordinary degree of taste and feeling. The voices too of the female servants were very good, for almost every Highlander is more or less musical ; and altogether, many a regular place of worship could scarce have boasted of such a choir.

The service was concluded by the reading of a sermon, selected by Alwyne from a volume recently published at Oxford ; and written in plain, simple, forcible language, but displaying the most wonderful knowledge of the human

heart, as well as reasoning powers of the most remarkable order. A sermon it was which commanded the attention, and carried the heart and intellect irresistibly along with it; and probably not one of the auditory but was sensible of an emotion of regret, when the finely-modulated voice of the reader had brought it to the final close.

“Alwyne, I hope you all mean to remain and partake our early dinner?” enquired Mrs. Monro, a little while after the service was over.

“Surely, dear madam, unless you turn us out,” was her young kinsman’s reply.

“If Mr. Grey can dine at three o’clock, for once in his life?” said Mrs. Monro, smiling.

“Mr. Grey will only be too happy to dine at three, or at any hour that suits you, Mrs. Monro,” returned the young man, “since you are so very kind as to ask him.”

“And then, Alwyne, you will read the Evening Service, as usual, after tea?” said Mrs. Monro.

“Of course I will, with the greatest pleasure. And now I think it wants more than an hour to dinner-time. What say you to a stroll in the glen, Grey?”

Mrs. Monro's observant eye had not failed to detect that her new visitor looked very much fatigued; and mindful of all that she had heard of his state of health, she hastened to interpose.

“I think, my dear Alwyne, that you and the girls had better go and walk, and leave Mr. Grey in my quiet company. Mr. Grey, you have not been well lately, and you ought not to over-tax your strength; you will be all the fitter for a pleasant evening walk, if you remain in doors, and rest now.”

Much though Grey wished to be out of doors, and in Eva Monro's company, he could not but acknowledge that her mother was in the right; for the languor and weariness which now began to oppress him were such as almost to incapacitate him from enjoying anything; and the kind and gentle Mrs. Monro

did not find it difficult to persuade him to lie down upon a large, old-fashioned sofa at the extremity of the drawing-room, and endeavour to rest awhile. She stole quietly from the room, which Miss Brodie had already left ; and as the voices of Alwyne Mackenzie and his fair companions, proceeding down the garden-paths towards the glen, died away upon his ear, Herbert gradually sank into a profound sleep, all the more easily that he had spent a feverish and wakeful night, after the over-excitement and fatigue of the previous day.

He had slept about half an hour, when Mrs. Monro, re-entering the drawing-room, approached the sofa, and bent over him ; for, long habituated to watch the symptoms of delicate health, his looks had rendered her uneasy, and she feared that he was less well than he chose to admit. It so happened that in his sleep, he had laid his head far back on the sofa-pillow, thus causing the hair to fall in heavy masses off his forehead, which was slightly contracted, as by a sensation of fatigue or pain, while his

face, at all times pale, now looked unusually so. Mrs. Monro fixed her eyes upon him as he lay thus, with a look, at first, of the same quiet and almost maternal anxiety with which she had last regarded him awake ; but this expression, as the look, by slow degrees, altered into an intent, earnest, yet half-doubtful gaze, altered with it into one of perplexity—pain—fear—finally of agony and horror ! She passed her hand over her eyes, as questioning the reality of the impression they were giving her—withdrawed it—looked again—and sank into a chair—with difficulty suppressing a groan.

At this moment a shadow darkened the glazed door, and Miss Marjory Brodie, quietly sailing into the apartment, seated herself in her wonted corner of the settee near to that entrance, and spreading out around her stately person the ample folds of her voluminous grey silk gown, deliberately fitted on her tortoiseshell spectacles, and took up her book, a volume of the works of Bishop Sage. From the study of its contents, however, she pre-

sently looked up, with something like a start, as Mrs. Monro approached, and sat down by her side.

“What ails ye, my dear?” she hastily enquired; “your face is as white as your kep! What’s come ower ye?”

“I don’t know, I am sure,” replied Mrs. Monro, endeavouring to force a smile; “I am very foolish, I fancy. But something just now gave me such a shock—I cannot get over it. Oh! Miss Brodie,” she continued, after a moment’s pause, and as if suddenly mustering courage—“come with me for one minute—come and look at that young man—and tell me—just tell me—did you ever see any one like him?”

Miss Brodie rose with a look of silent amazement, and followed her friend to the side of the still unconscious sleeper.

But Herbert had now moved from his former attitude, and his face turned inwards to the pillow, left nothing but the profile visible; while even that was shaded by his redundant hair.

“He has moved!” said Mrs. Monro, in a whisper; while Miss Brodie shook her head, partly in token that she perceived no likeness in his face to any one, partly in benevolent lamentation of the aspect of the young man, so indicative of want of physical strength. “I can’t perceive it now. I would fain hope—I think—it must have been imagination. But oh! that look!” she exclaimed, with a shudder, as they again returned to the seat they had quitted. “When the resemblance grew upon me, as he lay sleeping there—when I recognised the likeness—or fancied I did—”

“Whose likeness, my dear?” enquired her friend, in a low and quiet voice, but one indicative of much sympathy. “Ye hae had some sair shocks in your day; nae wonder ye bend to the blast ower easy noo. *Whose* likeness saw ye in that lad?”

Mrs. Monro looked round; then drawing closer to her friend, as if she dreaded the very walls of the apartment hearing the name she was about to utter, she bent her pale and quivering

lips to the old lady's ear, and whispered a few words into it.

"*His* name be about us!" ejaculated the latter, in a tone of awe-struck fervency. "That is no a favour to pass awa' frae your memory or mine! I think ye're mistac'en, bairn. But I'll e'en tak anither look."

She rose, as she spoke, and once more crossed the apartment, and stood gazing on the sleeper, while Mrs. Monro leant back in her seat, and again pressed her trembling fingers upon her eye-lids.

"Florence, my dear, I canna' see it," said Miss Brodie, returning from her perusal of Herbert's features, and resuming her seat. "I canna' see it, and ye ken I'm no a bad haun' at discernin' thae things. Some passin' glance has misled ye; though what had brocht *him* back to your mind the day I ken na."

"I cannot tell; but I dreamt of him last night, Miss Brodie. It is long since I have done so; and why it should have been last night I cannot guess. But so it was. I saw

him—so vividly ! I saw *her* too ; but she often comes back to me in my sleep—far oftener than he. We were walking together in some pleasant place, all gay and happy, as we used to be. And then the scene changed—the wind began to rise—I heard the dashing of the sea—I stood *yonder*—and saw—”

“ Eneuch said ! eneuch said ! I see it a’,” interposed the old lady, pressing the cold and trembling hand of her friend between her own wrinkled palms. “ We are strange and mysterious craters, and our path is emcompassed by mysteries ; o’ the whilk deeper can hardly be than what we ca’ sleep and dreams.”

“ Yes—is it not passing strange ? Long—long years—nine-and-twenty years—and there it all appeared as it has so often appeared before—arrayed in colours as ghastly distinct and clear as though a week had not elapsed since the whole scene was acted on that sea-shore.”

“ Aye, aye ! in a dream—in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man,”

musingly proceeded the old lady. "There might be a purpose in it. Wha can tell? It is easy to ask the lad," she continued. "There may be some kinsmanship. I'll put it to him, if ye think fit?"

"No, dear Miss Brodie—no, pray do not," nervously implored her friend. "Why should we? Why do anything to revive such memories, to incur the remotest risk of bringing to light what is best left in silence and darkness. Think of the girls; and why—for what purpose should we?"

"Nay—surely not, my dear, unless ye had yourself desired it. I agree with you; why should we—unless at the call of duty; and I see none here, only what seems a strange coincidence, and may after a' be nothing mair than the baseless fawbric o' a vision. I wish it had na come across ye, though," she added, in a kindly tone, and looking earnestly at her companion; "for it has upset ye sair."

"I shall be better immediately," replied

Mrs. Monro, smiling through the tears which were now overflowing at her eyes. She arose and passed out at the glass door; and after a few turns up and down the garden-walk beneath the windows, her usual composure returned, and with it the woman's instinctive desire to lose the thought of her own troubles in ministering to those of others.

CHAPTER V.

A SUNDAY EVENING AT AUCHMITHIE.

WHEN Herbert Grey, after nearly an hour's sleep, opened his eyes, he found his gentle hostess seated by his couch ; and directly after becoming aware of her presence, felt her hand applying a handkerchief, steeped in *eau-de-cologne*, to his heated and throbbing brow, and to the palms of his hands.

"How very kind you are to me," he exclaimed, after a few minutes' passive enjoyment of the refreshing ablution. "I feel quite ashamed of causing so much fuss."

"You are causing no fuss," replied Mrs. Monro, with a smile, "only giving me the pleasure of doing something to make you a little more comfortable. I have had some practice in these things. You are an only

son, Mr. Grey, are you not?" she enquired, after a few minutes' silence; then as he answered in the affirmative—"and your mother is far away? I once knew what it was to have an only son." Her lip quivered; and, as Herbert, yielding to an uncontrollable impulse, caught her hand, and pressed it to his lips, the tears, which had been so near her eyes, overflowed again, and she arose and left the room.

Herbert, on his side, refreshed and revived, and his affectionate heart glowing with a thousand new and delightful sensations, raised himself from the couch, and finding himself alone in the apartment, went out into the garden, where he heard the sound of approaching voices, giving token of the return of the young people from the glen.

"You feel rested now, I hope, Mr. Grey?" said Eva, as Herbert offered her his arm in the ascent of a steep walk, where he met the party. "We were so sorry that you could not walk with us."

“Not half so sorry as I was, I am sure,” replied Herbert. “But I hope you enjoyed your walk?”

“Oh, that we did,” replied Florence, looking back. She and Alwyne were in advance of the others in the narrow path. “We have been down to the side of the loch, and we have just heard the carriage coming back from church, passing along the road above. They will wonder what is become of you and Alwyne, Mr. Grey.”

“No, they won’t,” said Alwyne. “They know I always spend these Sundays here.”

“But Mr. Grey, Alwyne?”

“Do you think, Miss Monro,” answered Herbert, “that they will not give me credit for sufficient good taste to follow his example? May I look at this?” added he, taking a small volume out of the hand of Eva, which rested on his arm.

“Surely,” she replied. “I brought it out that Alwyne might read some of the poems to

us, though I am sure I know them by heart. But he reads so beautifully—it is a pleasure to listen to him. Of course you know the book, Mr. Grey?”

It was ‘The Christian Year.’ “What will you think of me, Miss Monro,” said Grey, actually blushing, for, be it remembered that he was still a very young man, and one of a singularly ingenuous temper, “if I confess to you that I have never read it?”

“No—have you not, really?” asked Eva. “But I dare say many people have not, it is only that we happen to have known it a long while, so I supposed every one else did.”

“I might have known it if I had chosen,” said Grey, resolved to finish his confessions. “My dear friend, Mr. Clavering, to whom I owe any little good that I ever learnt, used to have ‘The Christian Year’ constantly lying on his table; and like you, Miss Monro, I really think he had it by heart. But, somehow, I never did read it, though I often intended to do so. You have very little idea

what an idle, good-for-nothing fellow I have been all my life. I am sure you would despise me if you knew how little I have read."

"Despise *you*, Mr. Grey!" exclaimed his companion, raising her soft, yet laughing, eyes to his face with a genuine expression of wonder. "You must be making game of me. But—it is not too late yet, is it?" she added, in a tone of timid suggestion, her kind heart feeling for the real pain and regret with which Herbert had spoken.

"No, that I trust it is not," he replied. "I mean, if I be spared, to turn over a new leaf. You don't know with what shame I look back upon a great deal of my past life, and its wicked squandering of time. I felt that before I left India—and made many resolutions then; but I have been so unsettled since I returned home, and so frequently ill and useless, that I have done nothing yet. I feel as if I had ac-

quired new motives within this very little while. The few past days have—”

At this juncture, the sound of a bell within the house warned the loiterers in the garden to quicken their steps; and very shortly after, they were all seated round Mrs. Monro's simple, but elegant dinner table. Here also appeared Colin Ban, who had been wandering “lonely as a cloud,” by himself among the hills, since the close of the morning service, but now took his place amongst the rest of the party, conducting himself with all the native good breeding, the ease and self-possession, which never fail the Highlander, and which in his case had been so much improved by habitual intercourse with the family circle of Mrs. Monro.

On the adjournment of the party to the drawing-room after dinner, little Shelas made her appearance, bearing a salver of coffee, after which, tempted by the delicious warmth and sweetness of the afternoon, they all by one

consent proceeded into the garden; which having a south-easterly exposure, was now free from the rays of the sun, so as to render bonnets or parasols unnecessary. Here they had not remained long, seated on two rustic benches placed very near each other, ere Donald, the ancient Highlander before mentioned, was seen approaching from the house.

“Ah!” exclaimed Eva, who first descried him.

“My sand is run, my thread is spun,
This sign regardeth me.”

“What mean ye, bairn?” quoth Miss Brodie.”

“I mean that I must be gone,” replied Eva, smiling, as old Donald now reached the party, and addressing himself to her informed her that “the weans was a’there, waitin’ her honor’s pleashur.”

“Have they all had tea, Donald?” asked Mrs. Monro.

"Aye have they, Matam, and plenty o't," was the response.

"Well then Donald, take them to the summer house," said Eva, "and I'll be there directly."

"Will you mind if I don't help you with them to-night, Eva dear?" asked Florence.

"Oh dear no, Florence!" was the ready and cheerful reply. "You know I am not accustomed to be helped, and they are all good little things, and really give one no trouble."

"It seems so selfish of me," said Florence hesitatingly.

"No, it is not, dear, they want you more here than I do."

"I hae na' made oot yet what the lassie's after?" interrogated Miss Brodie; and Eva paused ere departing, to give her simple explanation. She was going to teach some little children, belonging to some of the poor families in the neighbourhood, of whose religious instruction, Mr. Ogilvy had some months before

asked her to take charge, on the Sundays when he did duty elsewhere. He was very anxious about the children of his flock, very particular as to their catechetical instruction, and as Eva herself had for years had the advantage of attending those catechisings, which the old Bishop of Moray was wont to hold every Sunday afternoon, in his own Church, Mr. Ogilvy considered her, she said, equal to the task. Thus, for some time past, she had had a regular Sunday-school, on the Sundays when there was no service at Tomhan na Crosh; and very often the children's parents came too, when they could get away from home, and all had tea in the kitchen, and remained for Evening Service.

"For we always read both services at home, you know," added Eva, "though we are not always so lucky as to have them read by Alwyne."

Having told her tale, Eva departed up the garden walks towards the summer-house; an

octagon wooden building, with glazed windows, and a sashed door, overhung with climbing roses and jasmine, and perched on the very brink of the ravine, over which the projecting addition to the back of the house seemed to hang. This, an erection in the taste of her time, had been made at the instance of the late lady of Glenandarroch, in the early days of her wedded life, and still continued to be a favourite retreat of the present household of Auchmithie. It was the scene of Eva's summer instructions to her little flock, and in cold weather, was exchanged for the dining-room of the house.

The sunshine seemed in the eyes of Herbert Grey, to take its departure from the skies, along with that light and graceful form, as it disappeared from before him. He turned from gazing after her, and caught the eye of Alwyne Mackenzie, who, in a low voice, and as if half in soliloquy, repeated these words,

“ There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them, who, in love and truth,
Where no misgiving is,—rely
Upon the genial sense of youth :
Glad hearts, without reproach or blot,
Who do thy work, and know it not.”

“ What are you quoting from, Alwyne ?”
asked Florence, “ for I am ashamed to say I do
not know.”

“ Wordsworth’s ‘ Ode to Duty,’ ” he replied,
“ ‘ Stern Daughter of the Voice of God !’ I
delight in Eva’s simple performance of her
duty. I think I never knew a human being
more entirely devoid of self-consciousness.”

“ She is a darling !” exclaimed Florence,
with enthusiasm, “ she can even make the
teaching of a Sunday school a beautiful
thing.”

“ Dear child, why should it not be a
beautiful thing ?” asked Mrs. Monro. “ Not
that I like the word ‘ beautiful’ applied to
such a very simple act ; but surely, Florence,

dear, it is a delightful thing, in some small measure to take part in that sacred charge—*'Feed my lambs.'* To be allowed to shew our love by such a pleasant service, is no small privilege for such as we are."

"Ah, yes, dear mamma, as you put it, and as you and Eva feel it, of course it is, but—"

"But who are Eva and I, Florence? All the best and holiest men who have ever lived, have felt so; and I am sure, young as you were when you left us," and Mrs. Monro struggled to suppress a sigh, "you were old enough to remember what importance the Bishop attached to the instruction of children, and what pleasure he took in it."

"And does yet—auld and frail as he is," added Miss Brodie. "It's a solemm sicht to see that auncient white-headed man surrounded by young innocent bairns, when he's able to speak to them, by a time, as he still makes an effort to do; a solemn and a movin' sicht."

"And a solemn and hallowed memory it

will be for those children in their after-years," said Alwyne, "to look back upon the instructions of that saintly man."

"You know I revere the Bishop, mamma," said, Florence, "and the order and quietness, and absence of fuss, about all these things, under his auspices—the absence of self-consciousness, as Alwyne said of Eva—all that I call beautiful. You must let me use that word, mamma, for I can't find another. But you never lived in Edinburgh, dear mamma, or at least, though not *in* it, near enough to be involved in the coteries there! You would not wonder at my hating the very word *school*, and Sunday school-teaching, if you could imagine what my Edinburgh experiences are on that head. Miss Brodie, you know Edinburgh, you can bear witness to the truth of what I am saying."

"Troth, my dear bairn," responded that lady, "though it wad be mair correck to admonish ye touch'in the evil o' judgin' your neebor, my regard for the truth compels me to agree wi'

ye. There's no mony lights hidden aneath a bushel in Edinburgh, I wot."

"Mamma cannot imagine it, Miss Brodie. No one could who had not lived amongst that set; and although my Aunt Brooke does not belong to it, she is rich and generous, you know, and very willing to give money, and she has many friends who have great hopes of 'dear Lady Brooke,' and so I hear and see a great deal about the good people."

"Florence, dear!" expostulated Mrs. Monro.

"What can I call them, dear mamma? You would not have me call them bad people? Ah! Mr. Grey, you are laughing! I see you have some private sympathy with me on that score?"

"More than you guess, Miss Monro," replied Herbert, as he thought of "dear Lady Grey," Miss Wayland, Miss Selina Silverton, 'the Pope,' and many more of his home-experiences.

"I wonder whether you know any managing ladies such as I know?" pursued Florence, "I

often ask myself, Miss Brodie, whether it can be possible that some of these worthy, busy women ever were young and quiet and modest. Were they born as they are, I wonder, or how did they grow to be what they are?"

"They grew, Florence, depend upon it," said Alwyne. "You may live in hopes. There is no saying what *you* may grow to."

"I declare, Alwyne, dearly though I love life—bright and beautiful as this pleasant world seems to me, rather than believe that I could live to be what I have seen, I would take a leap, *à la Sappho*, from the top of the Crag-Glas, down yonder, to the bottom of the loch at once! To think that one should ever come to that!" pursued Florence, her bright eyes sparkling under the influence of the images called up by her lively fancy. "Imagine me, Alwyne, with great thick boots and a brown merino gown, a shawl of no particular colour, a poke bonnet, and a cotton umbrella, carrying a port-folio under my arm, in the character of coresponding secretary to the Edin-

burgh Ladies' Auxiliary Association, for the Protection-of-Converts-from-the-Errors-of-Popery-in-Ireland ; rushing to a meeting on that subject ; hurrying from that meeting to another of some other ladies' auxiliary association for something else that ladies have no business with ; then exchanging my portfolio for a basket full of tracts, bustling along the streets, so fast as nearly to tumble over any of my acquaintances whom I may happen to meet, in order to be in time for my hour of attendance at some school or other ; arriving there, scolding children, lecturing the school-mistress, unpicking hems, pointing an indignant finger at dirty work, and finally departing, leaving a bundle of the contents of my basket behind me. Then, after a round of tract distributing visits which leads me into some very odd places, flying home to dinner—for which I arrive too late, in consequence of having stopped by the way to scold a serious bookseller for some unpardonable delay in the printing of a 'sweet little book,' which I have just written."

"What! You have written a book in the midst of such pressing avocations?" exclaimed Alwyne. "My dear Florence, the Admirable Crichton was a joke to you."

"Nay, but, understand me, Alwyne; I said a 'sweet little book.' I assure you it does not take long to write them, and you have no idea how many good, busy ladies of my acquaintance commit authorship of the sort in a small way. It is so pleasant to teach people their duty. Well, but I have not half finished my day yet. After dinner I write fifty letters—"

"Fifty, Miss Monro?" enquired Herbert.

"Fifty, Mr. Grey. Did I not tell you that I was corresponding secretary to that society with the long name? Having done this act of duty, I may perhaps favor my family with a few minutes of my company, a felicity which they have not enjoyed since breakfast time. Then I dress for a *soirée* at the house of dear Lady So-and-so, or dear Mrs. —, as the case may be, a very large and very serious party! perhaps, if the hostess belong to my society,

enlivened by the presence of a star from Ireland, the Rev. Phelim O'Grady, or some such name ; who, as soon as tea and coffee are over, is requested to favor the company with an exposition ; and—”

“ My dear Florence !” again interposed Mrs. Monro.

“ Well, darling mamma, I am not going to proceed, but I am not exaggerating, I give you my word I am not. And I have not enumerated half the occupations of my good lady ; not half her ‘ religious dissipations,’ as Miss Sinclair calls them. Nor have I said a word of the meeting of the General Assembly, a period when all such good ladies are more than usually on the *qui vivè*—when in certain circles you hear of nothing from morning to night but Dr. Chalmers, and Dr. Candlish, and Mr. Guthrie, and the Moderator, and the Moderates, (not that these two have any necessary connection together,) and when many ladies whom I know, will go to listen to the debates—it is a sort of parliament of the



kirk, Mr. Grey—at ten in the evening, and remain entranced by the eloquence of the speakers till two or three o'clock of the morning of the following day. You have no idea of the excitement caused by the General Assembly, especially of late years; and the disputes, the angry—noisy, acrimonious debates—the actual quarrelling—to which I have been an auditor amongst ladies such as I have been describing, on the subjects which they have heard discussed there. No wonder one dreads the very name of goodness, after having heard it so applied.”

“Ye’re a daft lassie,” said Miss Brodie, “but none can deny that there’s e’en ower muckle truth in the unlo’esome picture ye hae limned to us. Mair’s the pity! It’s no a desirable atmosphere to dwell in.”

“And yet,” said Alwyne, “how much of real worth, and of zeal which might have been invaluable if it had been rightly directed, often lie at the foundation of those busy, bustling, disagreeable, good people’s characters.

Yes, Florence, good—or at least what might have been so, under judicious guidance. What Sisters of Charity such women might have made!”

“Yes, our sex is best under government,” observed Mrs. Monro, smiling. “It is not well for most of us to be left to our own devices even for doing good.”

Herbert Grey remained silent, as the conversation turned upon the subject of Sisters of Charity, concerning whose almost angelic ministrations to the sick and suffering, Mrs. Monro had many anecdotes to tell, from the experience of her early days in Belgium. The thoughts of Herbert, meanwhile, were wandering after Eva, and her simple, unostentatious fulfilment of a simple duty, as an act of obedience; contrasting her and her mother, the while, with Augusta Courtenay and hers. He pictured to himself the talk, the display, the boasting, the labored self-glorification which would have attended the discharge of such a task on the part of the latter young lady. He

called to mind certain mysterious whispers of Mrs. Courtenay's to Lady Grey, respecting "dear Augusta," and her Sunday scholars at the Larches; chorussed as these were by sighs, and admiring ejaculations with upturned eyes, from Miss Selina Silverton—and then he awoke from his reverie, to the comprehension that his companions were preparing to return to the house.

Colin Ban had remained during the whole conversation immoveably propped against a tree, a little behind Alwyne, where he sat by Florence on the rustic bench, his arms folded, and his eyes either fixed on her face when she spoke, or bent upon the ground. He, now, like Herbert, started from his reverie at the voice of his foster brother, who led him a few paces aside as having something to say to him.

"Florence," said Mrs. Monro, "just run along to the summer-house and tell Eva that it is time for Evening Prayers."

"May I go too, Miss Monro?" asked Herbert, offering her his arm.

"Certainly, Mr. Grey," said Florence. "Come, and we'll take a peep at them through the window, and see what they are about."

They stole, accordingly, with noiseless step, towards the nearest window of the summer-house, which was open on account of the heat; and, themselves unseen, through the screen of leaves which veiled it, obtained a view of the scene within. Eva was standing, surrounded by fifteen or sixteen children, from three years old to ten or eleven, little bare-legged, sun-burnt creatures, with locks generally bleached to flaxen whiteness by the influence of sun and wind; but all, more or less intelligent in appearance, and all, at the present moment, wearing an aspect of solemn and reverential gravity on their infant brows. She had concluded their lessons in the catechism, and was now apparently explaining to them a large and very well executed scriptural

engraving, which she had placed against the wall, in such a position as that they could all have a distinct view of it. The subject was, "*Suffer the little children to come unto Me.*" And the young teacher, the flush of strong feeling on her delicate cheek, her sweet earnest eyes bent upon her little auditory, seemed, with her pure thoughtful brow and veil of golden ringlets, more like an angel than an earthly creature, in the eyes of one of the spectators now gazing upon her. The little lecture was apparently over, and Florence and Herbert presented themselves at the door, and delivered their message; when Eva, followed in a very quiet and orderly manner by her scholars, accompanied them along the garden walk towards the sashed door of the drawing-room.

The household congregation for Evening Service was augmented, not only by the children, but by some seven or eight seniors, their fathers and mothers; and in the case of one venerable couple, grand-parents, who,

having partaken of a bountiful tea in the kitchen, now appeared along with the servants, and for whose accommodation at prayers some benches had been brought into the room. These worthy people were all provided with their Gaelic Bibles and Prayer Books, but were all more or less able to follow the Service read in English; and a more devout and reverential congregation Herbert Grey thought that he had never beheld. The chanting and singing, with the pianoforte accompaniment, evidently had great attractions for all; and if most part of the short but impressive sermon with which the Service closed, was unintelligible to them, that circumstance made no alteration in the aspect of quiet and concentrated attention with which they listened to it.

At last prayers were over; and with many kindly and respectful farewells, the humbler members of the congregation departed; the room was cleared; and within half an hour after, the young people were summoned from their twilight saunter, among the garden-paths, to

the sociable tea-table, at which Eva presided, and round which they lingered long, in a full flow of pleasant talk. The lamp was lighted, and, as usual, a tiny fire burned in the wide, old-fashioned grate; but the windows remained open; and the soft evening air, for breeze there was none, filled the whole apartment with the fragrance of roses, mignonette, and sweet peas, from the garden borders below them, called forth, as it was, in full perfection by the dews which had now begun to fall, while far in the glen below, the rippling dash of the streamlet came audibly on the ear.

The conversation of the party, suggested by one of Colin's tales of a former Chief of the Clan, whose eldest son had been drowned in that very glen, while fishing there, in consequence of a sudden *spate*, or rising of the waters from a thunder-storm amongst the hills—turned upon the former days of Glenandar-roch; and Miss Brodie, who had been a very frequent visitor there in the time of the old Chief, the grandfather of the present one, re-

lated many anecdotes illustrative of that patriarchal style of living amongst his own people, which he appeared always to have maintained; and her graphic description of which was very interesting to the English listener.

Mrs. Monro, too, as the inmate of Miss Brodie's father, before her marriage, and in company with her husband after it, had known the castle well in former days, and recalled many particulars which, as a stranger, she had found most striking in the on-goings of its daily life. Both ladies dwelt on the magnificent aspect of the old Chief himself—that identical Roderick Mackenzie, whose gallant rescue by his foster-brother, Colin had related to Herbert—and the very *beau ideal* of “the last old Scottish Cavalier that loved the olden Time.”

He had, as we have seen, spent a good many years in foreign service; and had been married abroad to the daughter of another noble Scottish exile; and they described his stately bearing, a union of the dignity of the

ancient Celt, with the polished and chivalrous courtesy of the Frenchman of the old school ; and the grace and winning manners of his lady, even when an old woman, as something the like of which was not to be found in modern days. There they had dwelt in their old Highland Castle, surrounded by their kindred, down to the remotest degrees of affinity, keeping open house for their friends and neighbours for miles around, and exercising to the fullest extent the sacred duties of hospitality. Every clansman of the name of Grant or Mackenzie, who stood in need of friendship or assistance, might safely reckon on finding them there ; and the lady, whose own two daughters had died in early girlhood, brought up in the household three or four orphan maidens, the children of poor gentlemen of the Clan, who were carefully educated to the extent of the means available for that end, and instructed by herself in the mysteries of fine needle-work, and in all those innumerable departments of

housekeeping, which devolved upon the lady of a Highland gentleman in former days, and in which, as years and infirmity grew on their patroness, they repaid the trouble which she had taken with them in youth by becoming her unwearied assistants.

At Glenandarroch, likewise, the aged non-juring clergyman of the district, after many years of peril and hardship, during which he had wandered from place to place, often under hiding for weeks together, yet still constant in his adherence to the flock over whom he had been placed, had found a haven of repose for his declining years. There the good old man resided until he died, acting as chaplain to the family, unweariedly riding about to visit his scattered people, assembling them on Sundays from house to house, during the operation of the atrocious penal laws against the Church in Scotland; and up to the day of his death, which occurred shortly before that of Prince Charles Edward, never ceasing to pray, with

devout faith, for the restoration of the house of Stewart.

Then Miss Brodie told of the marriage of the gallant old Chief's son, the father of young Glenandarroch; and who, like his father, had spent some years of his early life in foreign service. She recalled the festivities attendant on that event—the mustering of the Clan, from far and near, the bonfires, the dances, the heartfelt rejoicings. Then the bringing home of the bride to Auchmithie, her future home.

“A bonny bride she was in troth, my dears,” said the old lady, “and he as gallant a bridegroom. Ye mind it, Florence, my dear?” addressing herself to Mrs. Monro. “Mair by token, ye were a bride yoursel that same time; wed in the same year; and here ye cam’ wi’ your husband, as some o’ the nearest o’ kin.”

“I remember it well,” said Mrs. Monro, with the sigh which seemed habitual to her in

speaking of former days. "It was a merry time."

"A merry time in troth; and a' the auncient customs behoved to be keepit up on the occasion; so, while all the gentlemen o' the clan, and the kith and kin, saluted the pair wi' the discharge o' fire-arms, here within the porch at the open door stood the stately leddy hersell, the mother o' the bridegroom, wi' her maidens, and a' the female kindred ranged be-hint her; and as her son led his bride across the threshold, she advanced and brake a cake o' fine wheaten bread aboon her heed, in token o' peace, and plenty, and welcome hame."

"What a beautiful custom!" exclaimed Herbert.

"Beautiful!" said Mrs. Monroe; "and in former days, I believe, universal at a Highland wedding. But every ancient rite was faithfully observed at that one. Your mother, Alwyne, had beautiful, long, curling hair, somewhat of the colour of Kenneth's; and I

so distinctly remember the old lady, with her own hands, adjusting the Curch upon it. That too was always done by the husband's mother. In this case, it was a square of the finest cambric, trimmed with Valenciennes; and she looked very lovely in the strange antique garniture. And what a ball succeeded those ceremonies, Miss Brodie, in the old hall of the castle! What a night of revelry that was!"

"It was that," responded the old lady. "And eke at Kenneth's birth—for they were nigh four years without offspring—the rejoicings were past the common. The auld leddy did na' lang survive that period. She died fu' o' years and honors, weel I wat."

The tea-equipage was now in process of removal; and Colin, whose whole soul had been intent on the above conversation, arose to take leave of the party, and pursue his homeward road, down the side of the loch to Clachan-an-duich. He went out by the sashed door, intending to make his way to the road, by the path down the glen, and Alwyne,

who had something to say to him, touching the morrow's sport, accompanied him into the garden."

"How beautifully the moon is rising over the trees!" exclaimed Florence a few minutes after, as she stood by the door aforesaid. "I think I shall go down the glen path, and meet Alwyne Dhu, and bring him back, or else the couple will stand exchanging last words all night."

"My dear, there is a heavy dew. You will catch cold," said Mrs. Monro, anxiously.

"Dear mamma, I never caught cold in my life," replied Florence, adjusting, as she spoke, a black silk scarf of her mother's, which was hanging over the back of a chair, so as to form a covering for her head and throat, and sallying without farther parley into the garden.

"A wilfu' lassie," ejaculated Miss Brodie, shaking her head.

"Yes," sighed her mother. "Dear child! she has had too much of her own will. Would

it had been otherwise. It is a noble nature too."

"A fine nature—a frank, a free, and a kindly. But oh! Florence my dear, it is gude for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He tholes it unco' ill in his later years, if no, and sune or syne, at the hand o' God or man, it's what we maun a' look to dree, if we wadna' be reckoned among the doomed number o' them that's left to their ain devices—filled wi' their ain ways."

Herbert Grey, during this talk, had followed Eva to the other end of the room, where, under pretext of assisting her to arrange and put away her music books, he continued to detain her in conversation, and in gazing from the window at the rising moon. Its light disclosed the forms of Florence and of Alwyne; who, after returning from the glen, continued for some little time to pace up and down the walk beneath the drawing room windows, engaged apparently in some discussion deeply interesting

to themselves, but which at last came to a conclusion.

“We must go in, or mamma will be wretched,” said Florence, as they paused by the projecting wing behind the house, and looked across to the bridge, spanning with its aerial arch the dark abyss below. “Ah, yes, it is quite true Alwyne, you have made a sad mistake. It should have been Eva, not me, she would have been a kindred spirit for you ; I am nothing but—”

“Nothing but the light of my life—dearer to me than life itself !” exclaimed the young man, catching her in his arms, and straining her to his heart. “No, Florence, you will never know—never guess, I believe, the extent of my love for you. Judge what it must be when for you, if you require the sacrifice, I am even ready to abandon the most cherished hopes and wishes of my heart. Judge what the love must be which can silence the voice of conscience.” These last words were spoken in a low tone, different from the

impassioned energy with which his speech had begun, but not too low to reach the ear of Florence.

“Ah! Alwyne,” she said, as her soft, bright lips were for an instant pressed to his cheek. “Ah! Alwyne Dhu—well it is for you, that you have made me the keeper of your conscience; it will save you from a world of fatiguing responsibility, and ten years hence, you will be so much obliged to me for the care I took of it!”

Her cousin made no answer, save by a deep sigh, and another, and yet another long and tender kiss upon the lovely face which was upraised to his, beaming in the moonlight with so arch and bright a smile. Then, drawing her arm once more within his own, he led her to the drawing-room door.”

“Here we are, mamma!” said Florence, who, as she entered, overheard her mother expressing an anxious wish for the return of

the truants. "Here we are, dear mamma, safe and sound."

"And ready to say good-night," added Alwyne, "for don't you think, Grey, it is time that we were gone?"

Herbert, with much secret unwillingness, was constrained to assent; and after an exchange of kindly wishes, and of thanks on his part for the happiness he had been permitted to enjoy in spending the Sunday with Mrs. Monro's family, to which that lady replied by the most cordial assurance of the pleasure which his company had afforded her, and hopes of seeing him on the next similar occasion, he took leave along with Alwyne.

The two friends proceeded down the avenue, and up the quiet road, now lighted by the moonbeams; Herbert absorbed in an ecstatic dream, which prevented him, quick though his perceptions of the feelings of others usually were, from observing the cloud of sadness, and mournful pre-occupation of mind, which hung

upon the brow of his companion. The household of Auchmithie, meanwhile, had not long after their departure retired to their chambers, and Florence, having very speedily dismissed Miss Lydia Jamieson from her attendance at her evening toilette, took up her candle, and wrapped in her long, white dressing-gown, stole softly along the passage, which led to her sister's room, and tapped at the door for admittance.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GLENANDARROCH GATHERING.

"COME in," said Eva, in answer to her sister's tap. "Oh! is it you, Florence dear? I was just wondering if you would pay me a visit."

"Yes, dearest, I didn't feel at all sleepy, so I thought I should bestow myself on you for a little while," replied Florence, seating herself in a low chair, which stood between the fireplace and Eva's writing table, on which she placed her candle. Eva was sitting at her toilette mirror, engaged in brushing her hair, which, released from its plaits, fell around her like a redundant veil, the extremity of the rich, wavy, golden brown tresses, reaching below the chair on which she sat.

"Certainly, Eva," said Florence, gazing at her sister, "you have the loveliest hair in the world."

"I don't think it is so pretty as yours, Florence," was Eva's quiet reply. "Oh! Florence," she added, after a pause, "what a happy, peaceful, delightful Sunday this has been! one's very heart seems overflowing with feelings of happiness after such a day."

"It has been a sweet day," said Florence, "and I think Mr. Grey enjoyed it. You like him as much as I expected you would, don't you dear?"

"Better, I think, Florence. And mamma likes him too, I am sure. No one could help doing so."

"No," said Florence, "he is most thoroughly likeable—loveable, I may say, though he is not my master, and so—"

"But I thought you didn't like a master, Florence?" asked Eva, with an arch smile.

"I don't like to be mastered," said Florence, "but I like more power—more force of

character, than I see in Mr. Grey. I like the glory of overcoming what could master me if it chose."

There was a moment's silence.

"Yes," then pursued Florence in a musing tone, "it has been a very peaceful, quiet day. I suppose it was my own fault that my thoughts were not more in unison with it. I am not so good as you, Eva dear."

"Oh Florence! how can you talk in that way? and I have never been exposed to anything that could distract my thoughts."

"Aye, there it is! but I don't know that your thoughts would be so easily distracted as mine. You are, and always were, more of a meditative, contemplative creature—steadier every way than I am. I have no vocation for goodness."

"Dear Florence," said Eva, "even in jest, it is not right to say that."

"But I am not in jest—I am in sober, serious earnest. You know you are my confessor, Eva, and you must submit to hearing

the revelations of my conscience. This day has not been altogether to me, what it was to you. I can't tell you the feeling it gave me, to see Alwyne dressed in black. Even his reading the service—you would be shocked, Eva, if you knew what thoughts were in my heart all the time."

"Dear Florence! and he reads it so beautifully—with such feeling—such reverence. To me it is such happiness to listen to him."

"I know he reads it beautifully," exclaimed Florence, almost impatiently; "but what difference does that make? It is not of his reading I am thinking."

"But Florence," persisted Eva, "he read it here this day fortnight, and—"

"Well, I know. But somehow, just then, these thoughts were less present with me, than they have been to-day. Since that time, there have been so many things at the castle—so much to recall our beautiful London life. And Kenneth, and Anne too, have both talked to me of their anxiety that Alwyne should

decide on following out a career, in which Lord Middleham's interest, and that of many of their friends, could so rapidly advance him ; and, altogether, it is more almost than I can bear, to find his mind still wandering on those wild dreams."

" Oh Florence !"—Eva paused, as if doubtful how to proceed.

" What, Eva ? you do not, you cannot for a moment imagine that I could agree to such an abandonment of his every prospect in existence ? that I could bear to see Alwyne, with his talents, his advantages—in the very outset of life, thus madly fling all to the winds, and sink into a nameless, obscure something, which I can hardly picture to myself ? You cannot seriously think so ?"

" Has mamma ever talked to you about it, Florence ? It would be so much better, dear, to consult with her."

" Consult ! as if I could ever bring myself to think of such a thing. Mamma has spoken of it. It is no use talking to her. You and

she live out of the world. You have no idea of life as it really is."

"Mamma has not always lived out of the world, Florence," said Eva gravely, "and I can hardly fancy your having any peace of mind in any circumstances, without her approval."

"Mamma cannot—does not at any rate, enter into it," replied Florence. "Not that we have spoken much on the subject, for no speaking could alter my resolution. You should have heard what my Aunt Brooke said, when I mentioned those crotchets of Alwyne's to her." Eva sighed, but made no answer. "One comfort is," pursued Florence, "he will do nothing unless I agree to it. He told me as much to-night. He is the kindest—the very kindest of human beings, certainly."

"So kind, so good, so unselfish," said Eva, that—oh! forgive me, dear, but I cannot refrain from saying it, because I feel it is right—I wonder you can bear to thwart his purposes, Florence, and to go against his conscience."

"His conscience, Eva." The very secret feeling of the truth of her sister's words—the voice of the internal monitor warning her that she was wrong—that voice to which she was determined not to listen, only served to irritate Florence, and she answered in a tone of more asperity than Eva had ever heard from her before. "His conscience! how can you talk such nonsense, child? I think you may very safely leave me to deal with Alwyne and his conscience; there is no need for you to interfere."

"I did not mean to interfere, Florence," answered Eva, sadly, yet firmly. "I have no business to interfere between you. And I know—I am well aware—that it must be a severe disappointment, in a worldly point of view. It is easy to see that; and I am sure, dearest, I do feel for it. Still, Florence, it is such, a solemn thing to meddle with—I do so dread your bringing remorse upon yourself hereafter."

"I shall take my chance of that," replied

Florence, haughtily. "You need not trouble yourself about *my* conscience either, Eva. Now you shall not begin to cry," she added, in a tone of still greater irritation; for, catching a glimpse of her sister's face, reflected in the mirror, she perceived that her eyes were full of tears,—“you know if there is a thing in the world that I detest, it is to see any one cry. And why *are* you crying? What have I said or done to make you do so?”

“Nothing, dear Florence,” said Eva, struggling to suppress a sob; for she had never before seen her sister so unreasonable; it was a new and painful variety in her experience. “Pray don’t be angry with me. I am sorry I have displeased you by what I said.” And again, in spite of her utmost efforts, her lip quivered, and the tears sprang to her eyes.

“This is intolerable,” exclaimed Florence. “I come in to talk things quietly over with you, and you begin crying and sobbing as if I had done something dreadful to you. Of course if this is to be the way you go on, it

must put an end to all confidence between us."

"Florence," said Eva, "I don't understand you. You never spoke so to me before. What have I done? You seemed to want my opinion, and I gave it you. I could not say what I did not think."

"As to what you think, or do not think, Eva," replied Florence, rising, and taking up her candle, "I am afraid you attach rather more importance to that than you will find me disposed to do. Don't flatter yourself. It is not any opinion of yours that will alter my resolutions. But as we do not seem likely to agree, the sooner we cut short this discussion the better."

She was moving towards the door when Eva started from her seat.

"Florence! you are not going away?"

"Why not?" was Florence's cold reply, as she turned round for a moment. "It is very late. Time we were all in bed."

“ But going like this, Florence ? Without saying good-night ? Going away in anger ? ”

“ I am not angry,” returned Florence, in the same tone. “ You lose your temper, and fall a crying, and then blame me for it. I never was less angry in my life ; but I really cannot stand discussions *à la Niobe* ; nor do I see the least use in continuing one which will only leave each of us exactly where we began ; and which, after all, concerns myself alone. This is the head and front of my offending. Good-night, then.”

“ Good-night,” said Eva, approaching her sister, and flinging her arms round her neck. “ Forgive me if I have displeased you, Florence dear. I did not mean to do so, and I cannot bear to see you angry with me.”

“ Angry again. I am not angry,” exclaimed Florence. “ Now—no more tears, for pity’s sake, Eva. I can stand anything but that. There, good- night.”

And with a hasty kiss upon the forehead, she extricated herself from the arms of her sister,

and departed, leaving poor Eva when the door was closed, and she might weep unreprieved, to shed a flood of the bitterest tears which her short life had ever yet given cause to flow. Sorrow Eva had already known. The keen agony of bereavement—the deep and never-to-be-forgotten pang of separation for ever from the scenes of her infancy and girlhood, the home endeared alike by the association of joy and grief, by the happiness of early years, and the memory of the departed—these things had left indelible traces on her young heart, and exercised a chastening and subduing influence over a spirit which had dwelt so much alone; but these were the hallowed sorrows which come from the hand of God, and in which, although there is much of anguish, there is no alloy of bitterness. The hand of the All-wise and All-merciful does, indeed, in infinite love and wisdom, press the “bunch of Myrrh” into the wine of life; but the wormwood and the gall—the ingredients of the draught which make the lip revolt, and the heart

shudder and sicken—these are none of His mingling—these are what the beings—whom one Father formed, and for whom one Saviour died—in thoughtlessness, in wantonness, or in cruelty, inflict on one another.

The present was the first occasion in her life on which Eva had ever experienced unkindness or injustice. And those from Florence. From that sister to whom she looked up as, in some sort, a superior being. The fact was alike painful and incomprehensible. She began to think over what she could have said or done to offend, for it would have been easier for her sweet and trusting nature to have found the blame resting with herself, than to think her sister unjust and unreasonable. But unable, after the most stringent investigation, to discover anything which ought to have had that effect, she came, at length, to the conclusion that Florence must have been vexed by something which had passed between her and Alwyne when they were alone together, and

that this had rendered her so unusually impatient.

“I cannot tell,” she said to herself, “what may have occurred to annoy her. It must be a lesson to me, to be more cautious another time. I meant no harm, but if any thing I said has made my sister angry, I have done harm, and led her into temptation, and this I am heartily sorry for.”

And having composed her mind to her devotions, on this night very long and fervent, Eva at last lay down to sleep. It was much later than usual when she did so, and her slumbers lasted longer on the following morning than they usually did. She was at length aroused from them by a kiss—another, and another pressed upon her forehead and her lips. She opened her eyes, and looking up beheld Florence, attired as she had last seen her in her dressing-gown, her beautiful hair escaping in stray curls from under her cap—for she had apparently just left her bed—and her bright

face beaming with an expression very different from that which it had worn when they parted last. She was bending over her sister's bed, her arms encircling her, and those of Eva were in an instant clasped round her neck.

"Eva, darling," said Florence, "will you forgive me? I was very cross to you last night."

"Dearest Florence !"

Not another word was necessary. The long and tender embrace which followed was more eloquent than speech.

"Yes," at last said Florence, "I know I was shockingly cross, and you were as sweet-tempered as an angel, dear. But I am very sorry. Remember though, Eva, I am only sorry for having been unkind to you. I don't repent one word I said on *the* subject. Nothing can alter my feelings there. And now having confessed my sins, I must go and dress."

Eva sprang lightly from her bed as Florence left the room ; her affectionate heart glowing

with delight at their reconciliation, and every memory of her sister's unkind conduct of the previous night not merely dismissed but forgotten, merged in her admiration of the candour displayed in its acknowledgment. Whether Eva—in Florence's place—whether, in fact, any one accustomed to habits of self-examination and self-distrust, could so easily and lightly have got over the sin of letting the sun go down upon her wrath, and lying down to sleep with an unacknowledged fault upon her conscience; whether she would have felt that fault cancelled by its tardy confession, and have at once dismissed its very recollection from her memory, instead of recalling it as matter for secret penitence and after-warning, were questions which never, for an instant, occurred to the single-minded girl; and she rejoiced in the renovated sunshine of her sister's looks, at the breakfast table, as though some error on her own part had caused its temporary obscuration.

But from this day forward there was little

leisure for any one at Glenandarroch, or within reach of it, to indulge in private meditation on any subject; for now commenced in good earnest the festivities of the shooting season in the Highlands. The castle was full to overflowing of company; and Florence and Eva were in constant requisition there. The day was filled up with drives and long excursions, sometimes to the residences of the few neighbours within reach of a morning drive; sometimes to one or another picturesque spot in the vicinity; or else there were riding-parties across the moors; or boating parties on the loch; or small detached sketching-parties independently of those larger ones. And after the very first burst of ardour on the part of the sportsman and deer-stalkers was over, it generally fell out that one or two from amongst their younger members were to be found who preferred an occasional morning's attendance on those parties to a day's sport; or who managed, after spending the early part of the

day amongst the hills, to return in time to join them in the afternoon. Then, after the late dinner, when every one appeared in renovated looks and bright spirits, the evening flew rapidly away, between music, dancing, and brilliant talk; and night—a late hour of the night, sometimes—was wont to surprise the assemblage, ere they, at least some amongst them, could believe that another day was gone.

It was, in truth, for some of those young hearts, a fairy world, one of those periods in life which leave indelible traces on the memory; and for all it was a bright and pleasant time. A spirit of genuine friendliness and hospitality pervaded the gay life at the castle, and prevented its degenerating into the chilly selfishness of exclusivism. The young Chief inherited too much of the ancestral warmth of heart and love of country and of kindred which had always belonged to his family, to have in any place, and least of all amongst his native mountains, any claim to the appellation of an exclusive. And Lady Anne, brought up by a

judicious mother, married while yet a mere girl, and following her husband's lead since then, had never hitherto come under any influences to render her less amiable, good-natured, and open-hearted than her temper inclined her to be. She was full of that *soi-disant* enthusiasm for the Highlands and Highlanders, whose experience of the realities of Celtic life is limited to its picturesque costume, and such of its details as may be found amongst the household and immediate dependants of a wealthy proprietor; and delighted with what she called life in the Highlands, which might be understood to mean the species of life that she was leading at that time; and her natural disposition, equally with her husband's wishes, led her to desire popularity amongst her neighbours; so that Glendarroch Castle, and its festivities, and the charms of its society, became the theme of conversation far and wide.

Amongst other amusements devised by the

young couple in the course of this brilliant autumn, was a gathering of the clansmen to compete for prizes in various games and feats of agility, which took place at a time when the complement of guests at the castle was at its height, the weather most beautiful and settled, and the moon—the second which Herbert Grey had seen since his arrival—at the full. Extensive preparations were made for this *fête*, of a nature so multifarious as to have rendered them difficult of completion within the short time allotted for them, but for the almost unlimited number of active and willing assistants, whom the prospect of a scene of amusement so completely to their hearts' content, called into requisition. The sapient John Cook, as he stood beside his sturdy pony, his riding-whip tucked beneath one arm, his hands in the pockets of his grey riding-coat, and his white hat set firmly on the summit of his brown wig, and from the offices of the castle contemplated a busy troop of men at work on the erection of a row of sheds for temporary stabling, under

the immediate direction of Sweyn Beg, who was an accomplished carpenter when it suited him so to employ himself—wore an aspect of countenance on which might be traced a whole volume of unutterable scorn.

“The Hieland loons !” it was thus that in colloquy over the tea-table that same evening, with his sister, Miss Mysie, Mr. Cook’s suppressed feelings found a vent. “The idle Hieland do-nae-gudes ! I wad like to see any ane o’ them fa’ to, an pit a wise-like job o’ wark oot o’ his hands for ony rational end or purpose ! Na, catch them ! They’ll gang daunnerin’ aboot like gentles, an’ let a’ thing hing as it grew, frae Mononday morn, till Saturday at e’en, an’ wha’ daur say them nay ? The Laird uphauds them, the Laird ne’er fashes his thoomb ; it’s a’ ane to him. A manlike me may gae whistle for a vricht, if I wanted ane for the maist needfu’-est concern o’ rael wark, an’ deil ane o’ the loons (that I suld say sae !) wad steer hand or fit on aught short o’ compulsion, till execute it ; but see till them the noo, when ony daft-like

nonsense is in the wind ! See hoo they'll come gatherin' like the eagles to the carcadge, at the first sough o' ony device for encouragin' pride, an' idle set, an' loupin', an' flingin', an' blawin' at the pipes, an' wastin' o' money ! They'll work fast aneuch for that. A' the sornin', reiven', leein', neer-do-weels in the country side hae I seen congregated at the castle this blessed day ! An' Colin Mackinyie, that hasna' set the neb o' him within my office door this week an' mair, an' the last time he cam, had the impidence to sit an' vrite some Gaelic blethers at the vera desk, on the tap o' my account books—there was my gentleman majorin' in the thick o' them a', like wha but him ! An' helpin' a wheen mair muckle bare-leggit fallows till mark oot a space for their nonsense Gemms, wi' his tail ! An' no' ae word o' apology to me for his scandalous negleck o' business ! I fancy it wad be an insult till even him to comin' here binna just when he has naething else a do. But that 'ill no gang on for aye ! I'll no be made a fule o'

that gate for a' the Colin Bans that ever was cleckit. Bide a wee ! bide a wee ! The hetter war, the suner peace, say I."

Despite the objugations of Mr. Cook, the work of preparing for the "Glenandarroch Gathering" went prosperously on ; and all within and without the castle was in perfect order by the morning of the eventful day ; a bright and beautiful one as it proved. The thin veil of fleecy mist, which at an early hour overhung the loch, and veiled the opposite mountains, and above which the blue sky was dimly visible, suddenly, at the bidding of some rush of wind unfelt below, uplifted itself like a curtain, rose in long, rolling wreaths up the sides of the hills, till above their rocky crests, it dissolved into the transparent ether, only lingering on some of the loftiest, and curling there in light clouds, like the faint smoke from a volcano in a state of quiescence. The large and merry party seated round the breakfast table at Glenandarroch, before whose eyes this

wondrous change of scene, peculiar to mountain scenery, was enacted, exclaimed in admiration and delight, as thus in a moment, as it were, at the touch of a magician's wand, the magnificent prospect of the loch and hills burst upon them—and one and all agreed in prognosticating a splendid day; which augury in due time received its fulfilment.

The Gathering was held on a green and level space of ground, on the farther side of the castle, and lying along the shores of the loch; and there, before noon, an immense concourse was assembled, including the members of all the county families within reach, and the sportsmen, who tenanted various shootings in the neighbourhood; while even Mrs. Monro had been prevailed upon by Lady Anne, to quit her seclusion for that one day, and with her friend, Miss Brodie, mingled among the party who sat on the seats prepared for the aristocratic portion of the company, at the head of the space marked out for the games. Her lovely daughters, looking even more than usually so,

Florence, radiant with beauty and animation, and Eva's sweet face beaming with more tranquil happiness—were also in the centre of the group, and many an admiring eye was bent on both, but above all, on the former. Florence was in constant requisition; her taste, her opinion, appealed to by Lady Anne, by Glendarroch, by Sir William Clavering, and many more, who were glad to follow where they led the way; while at a quieter distance, the dark eyes of her betrothed lover still kept wandering towards her in the midst of all the constantly recurring claims on his attention, in arranging with his brother and other gentlemen, the preliminaries of the sports; still wandering towards her, and lingering with fond attention on her every look and movement; and the eyes of another, a humbler, but not less devoted worshipper, sought her bright face, and dwelt upon her smile, with an adoration as pure as it was absolute, as guiltless of a shade of presumption, as “the desire of the

moth for the star—of the night for the morrow.”

The games, sword exercises, dancing—all the varied modes of displaying Highland strength and agility, began, continued, and terminated in the most satisfactory manner, and amid unbounded applause; while the perfectly appointed equipments of the various competitors, not less than their clean and well formed limbs, and the general aspect of comfort, health, and hearty enjoyment, diffused over the large assemblage, elicited much admiration from the English visitors present. The last competition of the day was boat racing; two races between two different sized classes of boats, from a starting point close by, to a certain distance down the loch, and back again, and these were admirably contested, and won in both instances by a very small advantage.

Then came the distribution of the prizes to the successful competitors, and also to those

who had been second, and in some instances, third best, in the different trials of skill. This was well and gracefully performed by Lady Anne, nor less so by Florence Monro, who, at her particular request, had agreed to assist her. These rewards of skill were very handsome and liberal, and to those who received them, lost none of their value, by coming from the fair hand of their Chief's lady, or from her, who, independently of her grace and beauty, was loved and looked up to as the daughter of Mr. Monro, their clan's best friend, and the affianced wife of Alwyne Dhu, the well-beloved brother of Glenandaroch. The heart of the latter swelled with generous pride, as, at the conclusion of the ceremony, the shouts of wild applause, invoking every blessing on him and his, broke from the assembled multitude, and again and again renewed, rising above the triumphant blast of the bag-pipes, were again taken up, and reverberated by the surrounding hills.

“ Kenneth,” whispered Alwyne to his

brother, as soon as his low voice could be heard, and as soon as the emotion which had suffused his eyes in tears, of which he felt no shame, would permit him to speak, "Kenneth, is not a scene like this well worth a wilderness of sheep?" His eye glanced, as he spoke, towards Mr. Cook, who, with his white hat, and pragmatical, self-satisfied countenance, on which a shade of sentiment—the smallest touch of a finer feeling—could not, by any effort of imagination, ever have been supposed to linger, stood pre-eminent upon a knoll, a little way behind the brothers, the centre of a group comprising his sister, Miss Mysie, the family of a Lowland store-farmer, who tenanted a wide, desolated track on the estate of a neighbouring proprietor, once inhabited by a large population—and one or two stragglers, upper servants from the castle, and so forth. Conspicuous amongst them all was the Abigail of Florence Monro, Miss Lydia Jamieson, who was strongly suspected at the castle of designs upon the heart of Mr. Cook, defended

though that membrane was in his case alike by impregnable self-esteem, and by the seven-fold mail of fifty years' obstinate bachelorhood. Notwithstanding all his denunciations of this day's display, Mr. Cook would, on no account whatever, have absented himself from it, as much for the purpose of indulging his own consequential pride of office, as of feeding his splenetic humour on the doings of the "Hieland neer-do-weels;" and also, to render him justice, in order, by his authoritative presence and superintendence, to prevent any advantage being taken of the Chief's lavish hospitality; and in his own emphatic words, "to see that there was nae wastrie' an' galravitchin' gaun' on." Mr. Cook was a thoroughly honest man, and devoted to the interests of his employer—albeit, obstinately bent on serving him in his own way, and tolerant of no other.

"Hang that fellow!" exclaimed Glenan-darroch, following the glance of his brother's eye. "The sight of him in a moment of

enthusiasm is like the descent of a cold shower-bath. You should have heard how he prosed and lectured to me, Alwyne, for two mortal hours, about this very Gathering, three days ago."

"Should I?" said Alwyne. "I am glad I did not."

"I assure you it is matter for congratulation. But now that the refreshments are going to be distributed, he will really be of use; and he likes nothing so well. I must go and order him off to his post."

The young Chief hastened off accordingly; and Alwyne made his way towards where Florence stood, her bright eyes glancing through the tears which yet filled them, called up by the burst of acclamation which had also upset the composure of her lover. And now began the work of ministering to the bodily wants of the assembled multitude; the arrangements for which were extremely good, and ably followed out by the servants and other persons entrusted with them, under the

vigilant surveillance of Mr. Cook. Huge baskets of cold meat, bread, and cheese, were seen making their rounds from group to group, and their contents rapidly disappearing ; while still came pouring in additional supplies from the castle kitchen. These were followed by attendants bearing "*Greybeards*" of mountain dew, and quaighs from which to quaff their inspiring contents ; and amongst those appliances to good cheer, over which the eye of Mr. Cook kept strict and incessant watch, were mingled enormous pitchers of hot tea for behoof of the women and children of the party.

Hunger and thirst at last appeased, the remains of the feast were placed under a shed appropriated to that purpose, at one end of the enclosure, as being destined again to make their rounds ere the Gathering should break up. Such were the orders of the Chief, to which it behoved Mr. Cook to yield obedience, notwithstanding that one object of his two hours' discourse, some days previous, had been

to demonstrate to his master how infinitely preferable it would be "to let ae gude wamsu' ser' the fock, as weel it micht; an' send them a' hame in fair day, an' no hae them hingin' aboot the castle till a' the hoors o' the nicht."

"Pooh! nonsense, Cook," had been Glen-andarroch's reply. "Did you ever hear of a Highland meeting breaking up without dancing? And must not the lads and lasses have something, before they go home, to wash the dust out of their throats? Give them a couple of hours spell of it, and then send the baskets and the quaighs round amongst them once more, and dissolve the meeting respectably. No stinting, and no license. I know I can depend on you."

And thus, to his infinite disgust, was Mr. Cook compelled, while mounting guard over the Greybeards, to remain a spectator of the "*loupin an' flingin*," which, to the inspiring strains of the bag-pipes, now began in right earnest. The gentlemen and ladies of the

company, meanwhile, were some of them wandering along the shore of the lovely loch, or up the winding walk which led to the Castle-terrace, or exploring the old-fashioned garden, which extended down a slope in a sheltered nook between the scene of the present sports and the castle, and afforded many a sweet and quiet path amongst the carefully-trimmed hedges of yew and holly which intersected it. A larger number of the company, amongst whom were most of the English strangers, remained walking or standing about in the near neighbourhood of the dancers, attracted by the agility of all, and the really admirable performance of many amongst them. From them the Chief and Alwyne presently singled out some who were especially celebrated for the accomplishment, to perform the "Rill Thullachan" for the edification of the Sassenach; and afterwards called some still more renowned in the gestic art to exhibit the far-famed "Chillie Callum," or "Sword Dance;" for which one fine

strapping young Celt of the party had gained the prize at the last competition of pipers in Edinburgh.

“Will you take my arm, Miss Brodie, and walk about for a few minutes?” asked Lady Clavering of the latter named lady, between whom and herself there had seemed, from the beginning, to be a strong attraction.

They strolled accordingly towards the loch, for the few minutes that remained before the company were to be summoned to prepare for the *déjeuner* which awaited them in the castle.

“How lovely Florence Monro is looking!” exclaimed Lady Clavering, glancing backwards at an animated group, of which she whom she named was the centre. “Which of those two sisters do you prefer, Miss Brodie? Certainly Florence is the more brilliant by far. There is something very delightful about her—so much heart and warmth—such a charm of manner! She is full of talent, and yet has no display, no affectation—with it all. When we are together, I am charmed with her; and yet,

apart from both, my heart dwells with most pleasure on the thought of Eva. You who know them both so intimately, and who are so much wiser than I, can, perhaps, explain the reason of this to me?"

"As to my wisdom, my dear Lady Clavering," replied Miss Brodie, "the less said about that the better. Other than the licht borrowed frae lang experience, I hae nane; and, maybe, as is the won't wi' us a', it may, in its time, hae helpit ithers better nor mysell. But I hae seen mony and mony a varied aspeck o' human natur', lang or ye were born; and I can read its queer characters by the glimmer o' a lamp that, as yet, has no been lent to you."

"Whatever it may hereafter be," followed up Lady Clavering, with a smile. "And this lamp, dear Miss Brodie—what light does it throw upon the dispositions of those two sisters?"

"They are fine lassies, baith," replied Miss Brodie. "I hae a warm regard for baith,

alike for the sake o' father and mother, and their ain. And I'm free to confess that for holiday life—for a' purposes of this world's grandeur and shew, and for helpin' ithers to enjoy the same, ye wad be better sted wi' Florence than her sister; for Eva has less self-possession, less spirit, and, as ye justly observe—less brilliancy."

"But for every-day life?" persisted her companion.

"For every-day life, as it is to the happy and the prosperous," returned Miss Brodie, "Florence—and she kens nae ither—would be a helpfu' and an eydent comrade; nay, even in a time o' trouble, gie her a' the plea—let her tak' helm in hand, and the rest depend on her, and she would be a daring pilot, though ane could figure her a venturesome. But the trial wadna' lie there for her. It would be, what she has never kennt—submission—the layin' aside o' her ain will, that would prove her as she ne'er yet was proved. Place Florence where she behoved to feel herself the party

obleeged, and no the ane conferring obligation, place her where her self-love was keepit in check for want o' nourishment, and where there was an absence o' the imperceptible restraints that are imposed by one society past that o' ane's ain hame, and I wadna' be sae sure o' her stannin' the test."

"In short, Miss Brodie, you think that Florence has a leaven of pride and self-love amongst her many delightful qualities? It may be so, might be so, rather, if they were called forth. One can't tell. But who shall dare to judge his neighbour?" pursued Lady Clavering, in a low musing voice. "Little do we know what may lie hidden in our own hearts."

"Little indeed, my dear Leddy!" solemnly replied Miss Brodie. "And it may chance to some o' us," she added, fixing her eyes on the face of her beautiful companion, "it may weel chance to some o' us to hae passed thro' years o' mature life, and never suspeckit the

force o' character, the amazin' strength o' purpose, coiled up, as it were, within us, ready for use when *the hour* arrives. Aye, aye!" she pursued, in a tone more of soliloquy than of speech, that craved reply. "Ten years hence, wha lives to see the time, mony a strange alteration may hae ta'en place i' the midst o' us!"

"Many a one indeed!" sighed Lady Clavering. "Ten years seem long to me—very long, Miss Brodie."

"Nae doot, my dear, and yet, when past, what are they? What are ten years o' by-gane life to ane like me that has seen a gude wheen tens? Nae mair nor a vapour that appeareth for a time, and then vanisheth away."

"And I may live to say so too!" said Lady Clavering.

"Please God, my dear, ye may and will. And may ye leeve to ken that tho' in ae sense our years are brief and insignificant, in anither,

they are o' unutterable moment, time passing by and ne'er to be retrieved, time that is gien as probation for eternity."

"It is an awful thought!" exclaimed Lady Clavering, "and I live too little in its presence, I know I do. But—" for her earnest spirit was one which shrunk from the unreality always to be dreaded in speaking of self, "to return to Eva Monro, Miss Brodie. I can guess, I think, from what you imply more than what you say, wherein consists her strong attraction. She is no egotist. Is that it?"

"That's it, my dear. Nae leevin' thing was e'er less o' ane, and tak my word for't, there's mair o' permanent influence ower the heart in that blessed deficiency, than ony ane wad surmeese that hadna' found it by experience; and I'm no blamin' Florence—far be it frae me! She's a fine lassie, and a generous, and a noble. Her trainin' has been to blame if ought in her wad thole amends. But oh, my dear leddy, afore a' the gifts, and

a' the graces, o' this life, the value of a sweet cheerfu, patient, unselfish temper in a hame, is to be set ! It's abune rubies, it's worth a' thing else thegither, and the langer ane leeves the better ane kens that."

But now the great bell of the castle began to sound overhead, as a signal to the various stragglers to wend their way thitherward, and prepare for the five o'clock *déjeuner*, which was to be succeeded by an unceremonious dance ; and Lady Clavering and her venerable friend, in obedience to the summons, left the garden, and mingled with the other parties, who, from various directions, were now ascending the paths conducting to the mansion.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DREAM-CASTLE.

ARRIVED at the castle, the party separated, in order to arrange their dresses a little, for in consideration of the visitors who came from a distance, Lady Anne had interdicted any formal change of attire. Every bed-room in the house being at present occupied, two apartments, in an upper story of the tower which formed one of its most ancient portions, had been arranged as temporary dressing-rooms for the gentlemen and ladies not residing under the roof; and long unused though they had been for any regular household purpose, had been rendered very comfortable by the exertions of the housekeeper and her assistants. Thus, in a short time, all parties descended, in

renovated case, to the drawing-room, and there awaited the summons, which speedily came, to the elegant and sumptuous repast prepared for them, under the appellation of *déjeuner*; and which, in order to accommodate such a company, was arranged on a large horse-shoe table, whose ends extended the whole length of the dining-room.

“This,” quoth Miss Brodie, to Alwyne Mackenzie, who was placed on one side of her at table, “reminds me o’ Leddy Marget Bellen-den’s *Disjune*, o’ immortal memory, at least in as far as the substantial natur’ o’ the vivres is concerned.”

“Only somewhat at a later hour of the day, Miss Brodie,” she replied, with a smile.

“Ye may say that, lad, but that’s a’ o’ a’ piece wi’ the rest o’ yer new fangled gates here. The vera order o’ day an nicht is changed, an weel may ye tak’ yer denner at aucht or nine o’clock at nicht, if ye hae a breakfast like this at five.”

The breakfast, so called, was a very gay

affair ; and enlivened throughout its duration by the martial strains of Angus Ruadh, who, in full gala costume, with streamers flying, paraded the entrance hall, as was his wont on all festive occasions, and made his pipes discourse their proudest music. Every one was in high spirits ; the champagne flowed abundantly, and the easy and agreeable manners of the host and hostess placed the most shy and diffident at ease.

The retirement of the ladies from table was speedily followed by that of the younger men ; although Glenandarroch, in compliance with what he knew to be expected from him by some of his older neighbours, men of a former generation, remained a due time in the dining-room with them. Meanwhile the company dispersed themselves about the drawing-rooms, the second of which had been uncarpetted and cleared out for dancing—drank coffee—talked and laughed—and proceeded—some of the younger and more adventurous amongst them, to open the sashed doors of the ante-chamber,

and issue forth on the terrace, thence to admire the glorious prospect beyond and beneath.

Glorious indeed that prospect always was ! and never more so than now, when the warm glow that had attended sunset was not yet entirely faded from the horizon over the mountain summits, and the full, round, newly-risen moon beginning to tip their jagged crests with silver, and to blend her soft, mysterious radiance with the transparent obscure of the long northern twilight. The lake appeared so still, so dim, so unfathomably deep below the castle—the great, grey projecting headlands—the heavy masses of wood, so shadowy and immoveable above its depths—the sky overhead so darkly-clear, so calm—and the air, although it was now the middle of September, was so warm and soft, that the temptation to linger on the terrace felt to some of the party irresistible.

Amongst these loiterers were Lady Clavering, Florence and Eva Monro, Alwyne Mackenzie, and Grey. They advanced to the ex-

tremity of the terrace farthest from the drawing-room, and leaning on the balustrade, stood looking down in the direction of the spot which had been the scene of the Gathering, and whence voices were still at intervals to be heard proceeding, as the final stragglers of the multitude dispersed by different routes. Gradually, as they listened, the last tones, the distant, occasional shouts, the far off notes of some bag-pipe among the mountain-paths, died off one by one, and then the dash of oars, the shadowy form of a boat pushing off from the shore, and the voices of some men on board of her, as they cut through the quiet water with a rapid motion which soon carried them beyond sight and hearing, were the last indications of animated life, ere the place, a few hours since so populous, was left to night and silence. A deep hush succeeded, broken only by the murmur of voices from the apartments opening on the terrace.

“What a night! What a scene!” said

Lady Clavering, in a low voice, as if afraid to disturb its repose.

“Yes,” almost whispered Alwyne, who was standing beside her; “a scene to haunt one hereafter. A night which one instinctively feels will never be forgotten.”

A deep sigh, a sigh however of intense enjoyment—not of pain—escaped the lips of Grey as these words reached his ear.

“Could it be possible,” he said, “to forget such a day—or such a night—as this?”

“There is something strange, is there not?” asked Eva, “something almost mystical, in this kind of light? Everything assumes a new and unusual aspect.”

“A change,” added Florence, “into something rich and strange.”

“Strange, at least,” answered Eva, “but not bright or distinct enough to be rich. It is more like the light one sees in a dream than anything earthly; a vague, shadowy, unreal light, which alters the character of all one looks at.”

“ Yes, Miss Monro, I know the kind of light you mean,” said Grey ; “ I have often seen it in my dreams.”

“ Your dreams ? Are you such a dreamer, Mr. Grey ?” enquired Lady Clavering.

“ Oh ! do tell us some of your dreams, Mr. Grey !” exclaimed Florence ; “ this is just the scene, and the hour, for listening to such things.”

“ My dreams,” said Herbert, smiling, “ do not merit the appellation, I fear ; they cannot be genuine visions, for I seldom have any when I am in health. Those I alluded to were the wild phantasmagoria of fever, from which I so recently suffered, that some of them still remain very distinctly impressed upon my memory. And, by the way—now I think of it—”

“ Think of what !” asked Florence, as he paused.

“ Go on, Grey, tell us what you are thinking

of," said Alwyne; "we are all in the mood for listening to anything strange."

"I was only thinking of something which I had resolved to tell Miss Monroe; a dream, whose interpretation I thought she might, perhaps, discover for me by the help of her bright fancy," replied Grey. "Pray remind me of it some day soon, Miss Monroe, and I shall refer me to the oracle."

"Some day soon! Fancy anything so tantalizing, Lady Clavering! How these men enjoy anything that they imagine gives them a little brief authority! But I'd have you to know, Mr. Grey, that I don't like to be kept in suspense; and that I don't mean to leave this spot till you have told me your dream."

Finding that the peremptory commands of Florence were eagerly seconded by the rest of the party—above all, though in a timid voice, by Eva, Herbert yielded to their entreaties, and detailed to them the particulars of the singular dream of the castle on the sea-shore

which had haunted him during his fever in India.

Scarcely had he concluded his graphic description of its aspect, and of the scenery around—when—

“Bless me ! very extraordinary !” ejaculated Alwyne.

And—

“Florence ! can it be possible ?” began Eva, in a whisper.

“Hush, Eva dear ! not a word !” replied Florence, in the same tone—while at the same moment her little hand was pressed firmly on the lips of Alwyne ; who, profiting by the obscurity, captured and kissed it fervently ere he released it.

“Did you speak ?” asked Herbert, turning to Eva.

“No, nothing,” she replied. “Pray go on, Mr. Grey.

He went on, accordingly, to relate that, on his return to Greystocke Hall, he had seen the original of his Dream-Castle amongst the

drawings in the portfolio of a deceased brother of his father, but recently brought to light after many years lying aside; and then told how, on occasion of his illness there, the same vision had recurred—coupled, that time, with the figure of some one resembling Florence Monro, apparently in distress, and claiming the assistance which he was mysteriously prevented rendering to her.

The narrative was well and forcibly told, in simple, striking words; and at its conclusion, while Lady Clavering expressed her wonder at the strange and unaccountable coincidence, Florence and Eva silently looked at each other in the now brightening moonlight; and again, for a moment, the hand of the former rested on Alwyne's lips.

“Lady Clavering! Margaret! where are you?” the voice of Glenandarroch was at this moment heard calling from the sashed door. “And Florence and Eva? I want you all, but Florence especially.”

“We are here and coming, Kenneth,” re-

plied Lady Clavering. "I suppose we must go in, since we are wanted," she added, turning to her companions. "But how unwilling one does feel to leave this lovely, quiet scene! And, Florence, we have not heard the oracle; we must have your interpretation of Mr. Grey's very singular dream. I certainly never heard anything more curious."

"Nor I," emphatically replied Florence. "But although I do not say that I never shall be able to throw any light upon it, Mr. Grey, yet I cannot read such a dream as that at a moment's warning. I must have time to think about it; and I must consult some of the experienced interpreters of dreams hereabouts—old Norah for one, Alwyne—and blind Callum the Taishatr. Eva and I always refer any thing wonderful and incomprehensible to him."

"So that although you would not wait for my dream, I must wait for your interpretation, Miss Monro?" smilingly asked Grey.

"You must, Mr. Grey, and serve you right."

I like a little power where I can find means to exercise it."

"And I must submit with a good grace, I suppose," he replied, as he offered his arm to Lady Clavering, in order to conduct her within doors.

"Since you are ordered to submit, Mr. Grey," answered the latter, "it is as well to do it with a good grace at once; for you seem to have no alternative between that and a bad one."

"It is a very singular thing, is it not, Alwyne?" said Eva, as the sisters followed with their cousin.

"A most curious circumstance!" exclaimed the latter. "Why, or how, should it happen that an absolute stranger—"

"Now will you both be quiet?" said Florence, stopping, and lifting her hand with a threatening gesture.

"Why won't you allow us to speak, you tyrant?" enquired Alwyne.

"Because you will spoil the whole—destroy

the effect of the surprise I am planning for him. Just listen to me for a moment."

"Well, well," said Alwyne, after she had poured forth a rapid explanation. "I am mute; and so is Eva, I am sure. But, Florence, amidst all your plots and plans, are you not struck—puzzled—I may say—by this singular vision of Grey's? I own that I am. In those matters, as in most others, I am a thorough Highlander; and there seems to me a strange mystery in such a circumstance. I should like to ask him—"

"If you ask him any more questions—all you know will come out," exclaimed Florence; "and you will spoil *my* mystery, which will go to my very heart. Yes, of course I am astonished and puzzled at it. We all are. But I have not Eva's and your love of mysticism, Alwyne Dhu, and I confess that a little harmless intrigue like this is much more to my mind. Now, will you just promise me—like a darling—to say no more of the dream until I allow you? Eva, will you promise too?"

“Surely, Florence,” replied her sister; “so you don’t forbid me to think about it?”

“Think, and welcome. Alwyne, will you give me your promise?”

Eva, as she said the last words, had entered by the door opening on the terrace, where Florence and Alwyne were left alone; and the latter, ere they followed, drew her gently towards him, and sealed his promise upon her bright lips.

“Come here, Florence,” said Glenandarroch, drawing his cousin’s arm within his, and leading her into the second drawing-room. “I want your assistance in bringing the business of this day to a proper conclusion. You must know, ladies and gentlemen,” he continued, looking round upon the company, who were congregated in that apartment, “that Lady Anne and I both wished to have terminated the Gathering by a competition for a prize in Gaelic poetry. But even supposing there were many poets amongst my clansmen—which I rather doubt—the time allowed for

preparation was too short to admit of a proper invocation of the muse; and altogether, we found that there would be quite enough work to fill up the day without such a lengthy process at the end. Still it is out of the question to allow the occasion to pass without bestowing some honor on what used in old days to be held in such high account in the Highlands. We all know that if there had been such a competition, there is no doubt that my brother's *Dhalt*, Colin Mackenzie, would have been the winner. Everybody is aware of his merits as a poet; and in order to shew how highly we rate them, Lady Anne and I requested Miss Monro to adapt some verses, which he wrote last year on the occasion of our marriage, to a Gaelic air, which I am now going to ask her to be so kind as to sing for us, as an appropriate conclusion to the Glenan-darroch Gathering, before we begin to dance."

An audible murmur of applause ran round the assembled company; while Florence, blushing deeply, but with her usual graceful

self-possession, prepared to accede to the request of her kinsman, and seated herself at the harp, which had been placed in a conspicuous situation, at the top of the room; then, after running her fingers over the chords in a rich and flowing prelude, struck a few simple notes, and burst, at once, into the song. The words, which her beautifully distinct articulation rendered perfectly audible to all of the party who understood Gaelic, did, in truth, display no small amount of poetical feeling and fancy, and breathed, throughout, the spirit of devoted loyalty to the race of his Chief which characterized the writer; and the air to which the fine musical perceptions of Florence had led her to adapt them, suited their tone not less than their measure, as though it had been composed on purpose. The lovely singer herself, meanwhile, presented no unapt type of the muse who might have inspired the poetry to which her lips gave utterance; and when her full, clear, exquisitely-modulated voice, through whose rich melody

ran a strain of that pathos, wanting which the finest human organ fails to reach the heart, had at last, with a long warbling shake, brought the song to a close, while the last notes of its simple accompaniment thrilled and died away upon the harp-strings, another universal murmur of applause pervaded the listening circle, and those nearest the musician pressed forward to surround her with rapturous expressions of delight.

One there was, however, amongst the crowd too deeply moved for speech. Colin Ban had been summoned by Glenandarroch just before he went in search of Florence, and desired to follow the rest of the party into the music-room ; and the sensations with which the romantic and poetical youth listened to the speech of his Chief, and felt all eyes turn upon him where he stood near the door of the apartment, may be imagined better than described. But, perhaps, there are few who can imagine the emotion—the gush of ecstatic feeling so intense as to resemble pain—with which he

heard its concluding words, and beheld the bright object of his lowly and reverential adoration advance with her sunny smile, and seat herself at the harp, to sing *his* song. Pale as death—motionless—absorbed in a trance of ineffable rapture, he stood with his every faculty concentrated on sight and hearing, till the last notes of the music ceased—then, with a deep-drawn, sobbing sigh, recovered to the consciousness of what was passing around him.

“This is an honor, Colin, is it not?” said the voice of Sir Willian Clavering by his side. “It is not every poet who is fortunate enough to hear his own verses sung, as you have heard yours just now.”

“An honor in truth!” ejaculated Colin. “Too much—too much honor for my father’s son.”

The words were uttered in a choking, almost an inaudible voice; and in the next moment the speaker had disappeared. Passing rapidly through the large drawing-room to the open win-

dow at the lower end of it, he darted from it upon the terrace—rushed rather than ran to its farthest extremity, overhanging the lake, where the sounds from the music room scarce fell with a low murmur on the ear, and flinging himself upon a seat which extended beneath the balustrade, burst into a passion of tears.

Meanwhile the dancing had begun within, and long and with unabated zest did it continue; the spirit-stirring music of the pipes alternating with that of more civilized instruments, as the national dances gave place in turns to those of France and Germany. It was a brilliant and a happy scene; infinitely more delightful, as every one agreed, than a premeditated ball; and in due course of time, an elegant supper served in the same order as the *déjeuner* had been, added fresh spirit to the performance of the dancers, and enjoyment to the lookers on.

The *Bhairdh*, though several times inquired after, was visible no more after his abrupt departure from the scene of his triumph; but if

any one at any period of the evening had happened to look steadily from the windows to the terrace, he might have caught a glimpse of a dark figure in the shade of a projecting buttress ; and at times, when one fair form passed that way, have beheld a face intently gazing from out the obscurity which shrouded him without, and rendered all within more bright by contrast to him. No far-fetched analogy, perhaps, might have been drawn from this circumstance to his own fate, had the poetic dreamer mingled a selfish thought with the devotion which filled his heart for that one " bright particular star." But this was not the case. Wild, unreasoning idolatry it was. Yet pure, stainless, and unpresuming ; its very essence consisting in oblivion of self.

But now, early though the entertainment had begun, the hour was waxing late ; midnight was long past, and symptoms appeared of a disposition to break up the party, especially in the case of those who had farthest to go home ;

adieux began to be exchanged, and one vehicle after another to roll away from the door.

"Come, my dear girls," said Mrs. Monro to her daughters, who now stood by her side, each attended by a partner from whom she had not for some time found herself separated, "it is time for us to say good-night also."

"I daresay it is, mama," replied Florence, "but——"

"But we are very sorry that it is," added Eva, smiling; "only, dear mama, I fear Miss Brodie and you must be very tired. You have been very kind in remaining so long, I am sure."

"We are so little tired, my dears," answered Mrs. Monro, "that we were just proposing, if Alwyne will escort us, to walk home through that beautiful moonlight, instead of taking out Lady Anne's carriage so very needlessly. Miss Brodie agrees with me in thinking that it will be a delightful termination to the evening."

The sisters and Alwyne expressed the utmost satisfaction in this arrangement, as the

old lady, thus appealed to, corroborated Mrs. Monro's account of her sentiments; and Herbert Grey ventured to inquire whether Alwyne alone was admissible as an escort, or if he might not be permitted to join the party; a permission readily accorded, and which Mrs. Monro presently found herself obliged to extend to several other volunteers in the same service; for the proposal of a short walk in the cool moonlight appeared to be a very popular one, when announced. Lady Anne opposed it, and pressed the carriage upon Mrs. Monro, as did her husband with much importunity; but their objections were over-ruled, and in a very short time the party found themselves on their way down the avenue, whose over-arching boughs made a checquer-work of light and shade in the bright moonbeams on the ground beneath.

It is scarce necessary to say that the arm of Eva had been secured by Herbert Grey; and this sweet, quiet walk to Auchmithie, after the heated ball room and the blaze of its lights,

was not to either the least delightful part of a delightful day.

“Is it not lovely?” said Eva, as the whole party paused for a minute, ere turning into the avenue leading to the house, and looked from an opening amongst the trees, down upon the loch.

“Lovely beyond words! almost beyond imagination! A scene to haunt one’s memory for ever!” was Grey’s fervent ejaculation in reply. “You have been happy to-night?” he added in a low voice, as they moved on into the deep shadow of the avenue.

“Oh! so happy!” exclaimed Eva. “I am sure I shall never forget this day and night.”

“Nor shall I, ever!” said Grey, in a still lower tone. “It seems hard,” he added after a pause, “to say good night, and end so happy a day; but we shall meet again to-morrow.”

“I hope we shall,” answered Eva.

There was no reply in words to this; but for one moment the right hand of her companion

ventured to clasp the fingers which lay so lightly on his left arm, and to rest upon them with a gentle pressure. Neither of them spoke again, until the whole party halted in front of the house.

“Good-night, gentlemen, and many thanks for your escort,” said Mrs. Monro; and once more a clasp of the hand, more fervent and prolonged than the first, accompanied the farewell of Herbert Grey to Eva. Another, scarce less fervent and respectful, marked his parting from her mother, next to whom he stood; and after an exchange of gay and kindly greetings with Miss Brodie and Florence, their attendants retraced their steps to the castle, and speedily sought their chambers.

At an early hour Herbert Grey was lying in a deep sleep, which towards morning had at last closed his eyes, and steeped his senses in repose, after a long period of waking reverie; when the door of his bed-room was softly opened, and his servant Davis entered with a scared and bewildered look,—a letter in his hand.

Advancing to the window, he withdrew the curtains and unclosed the shutter, then approached his master, and endeavoured to awake him.

For some little time, so very profound was Herbert's sleep—this proved no easy task. At last, opening his eyes, and partially rousing himself, he became aware of his servant's presence.

"Why, Davis," he said, "can it be time to get up already? What o'clock is it?"

"Just struck seven, sir; but if you please—"

"Seven, Davis! you must be asleep yourself, I think, to wake one at seven to-day. Get along, and call me at nine o'clock." He was again asleep, almost before he had done speaking, but Davis pressed his shoulder, and again aroused him.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Grey, but I fear you must try to wake, sir. There's a letter for you—an express from the post-master at——."

“A letter ! An express did you say, Davis ? What ? how ?”

“’Tis my lady’s hand-writing, sir. I fear there’s something amiss at the hall.”

Dizzy and bewildered with the sudden shock, with which his slumber had been dispelled, Herbert sat up in his bed, and hastily, with a trembling hand, broke the seal of the letter which Davis gave him, and which had been forwarded express from the nearest post-town ; for the post-bag belonging to the Castle was brought later in the day, by a messenger from the clachan. The letter was from Lady Grey, a few hurried and nearly illegible lines, entreating her son to set off for home without an hour’s delay, if he hoped to see his father alive. Sir Gervase Grey was dangerously ill of a pleurisy, and his physicians scarcely held out any hope of his recovery.

“Get my things together instantly, Davis ; we must be off as fast as possible,” said Herbert, in a voice which his agitation rendered nearly unintelligible. And he arose, and

began to dress, commanding the first overpowering emotion which had seized him, so far as to make his servant sensible of the pressing cause of haste which there was. The cool, collected Englishman, undemonstrative in distress as in joy, immediately busied himself in the most rapid, yet methodical manner, to get together and pack various articles of his master's property, which were lying about in all directions, and then was proceeding to leave the room, in order to announce his intended departure below stairs, and to request that some conveyance might be got ready, to transport them to the nearest place—the inn already mentioned—where post-horses were procurable.

“Just ask some one to awake Mr. Alwyne Mackenzie, will you, Davis, and beg him to come to me as fast as he can,” said Grey, “and pray don't let them rouse any one else, or make any disturbance.”

Davis promised obedience, and departed. His master's hurried toilette was now com-

pleted, and after gathering together, and cramming into his travelling desk, letters, money, and other *et ceteras*, such as accumulate during a prolonged visit from home, he looked around him, and could see no more to do. His shooting apparatus was in the lower regions, and would be in his servant's care; and Davis was nearly unrivalled in the art of being eyes, ears, and memory to his master, so far as keeping watch over his property was concerned. But even had it been otherwise, the latter was in no state to have taken much heed for himself. His brain was whirling, as it were, and a racking headache, consequent upon the terrible and startling manner in which so short a sleep had been broken, completed the confusion of his ideas. Feeling as if he must rest for a moment, and endeavour to collect them, he drew a chair towards the open window, and sat down—gazing, while the cool breeze fanned his forehead, for the last time, upon the glorious morning prospect, and abandoning himself to a vague reverie,

full of pain and bitterness ; how miserable a contrast to the dreams of love and joy, which had filled his heart as he flung himself into that very chair a few hours before, on returning from that delicious moonlight walk. !

From this trance of anguish, from the ever recurring reflection that all was over—all that bright period of happiness at an end, that he must go at once, without a farewell, and go for what purpose? Too probably to attend on the death-bed of a father—Herbert was aroused by a tap at his door, and the entrance of Alwyne Mackenzie, full of kindness, of feeling, and of deep regret for his friend's enforced departure. There was something in his warm and cordial sympathy, which did more to restore the energy of Herbert, and invigorate him for whatever calls on his fortitude might await him, than anything else could have done at that moment ; and as they descended the stairs together, Alwyne informed him that he himself meant to drive the dog-cart, which had been ordered to convey

the departing guest, so that he might have the satisfaction of seeing him fairly off.

Grateful for the kindness which was thus to spare him a solitary journey from that hospitable roof, Herbert accompanied his friend to the Chief's own private sitting-room, where breakfast had been hastily prepared. While he was swallowing a cup of coffee, for to eat anything he found impossible, Glenandarroch himself entered the room. Alwyne had desired his valet to call him, assuring Grey that his brother would never forgive him, if he allowed a visitor to depart in that way, without his knowledge. The young Chief was full of sorrow, and of the kindest expressions of regret for the melancholy news which had necessitated this sudden journey, and brought Grey a message from Lady Anne to the same effect ; adding an earnest hope on both their parts, that matters might not prove so serious as was feared, and that next shooting season, they might have another and longer visit from him.

"We shall meet in London ere then," added Glenandarroch, "but that is so different from the country. Remember, Grey, you are booked for next Twelfth of August. We will take no excuse. I cannot tell you how grieved we both are to lose you so abruptly, and in such a melancholy way too; and so will Margaret and Clavering be, I know."

"Not more grieved than I am, believe me, Glenandarroch," replied Grey. "Pray tell Lady Anne how deeply I feel all her kindness. I shall write, of course—from home."

"Pray do, as soon as possible. We shall be so anxious to hear how you found Sir Gervase. Keep up your spirits, things may be better than you fancy."

And now a servant appeared, to announce that the dog-cart was at the door. Not a moment was to be lost; and in an incredibly short space of time, Herbert Grey, his hand still tingling from the Chief's kind parting grasp, was driving at a rapid rate down the

avenue by Alwyne's side, while the imperturbable Davis sat in silent dignity behind.

Their speed in a few minutes brought them to the gate of Auchmithie, up to which the horse attempted to turn.

"Ah!" exclaimed Grey—"how little did I think, last night—"

"They will be so much grieved!" said Alwyne.

"Do you think they will?" eagerly asked his companion. "I shall write to Mrs. Monro. I have much to say. I meant—I had hoped—to-day—perhaps."

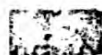
"I shall go in there to breakfast, as I come back," said Alwyne, "and tell them all that has happened."

"When shall I go there again, and how?" thought Grey, as another turn of the road concealed the gate, at which he was looking back.

They drove swiftly on, down the long slope—swiftly through the Clachan—and ere its inhabitants had half exhausted their wonder and

conjectures as to the cause of their early and rapid journey, they had paused, for an instant, at the summit of the steep ascent, whence was to be obtained the first and last view of the lovely loch of Glenandarroch.

CHAPTER VIII.



ONCE MORE AT GREYSTOCKE HALL.

THERE is no need to dwell on what may so easily be imagined, the surprise and the sorrow felt and expressed at Auchmithie, when on the entrance of Alwyne Mackenzie, in the midst of the unusually-late breakfast there, that morning, the fact of Herbert Grey's abrupt departure, and its cause, became known to the family-party. As little is there need to dwell upon the darkness of the cloud which these tidings caused to overspread the summer-heaven of Eva's innocent happiness—upon her quiet retreat to her own apartment, as soon as the conclusion of the meal enabled her to accomplish it—or the flood of tears in which she was soon after found plunged by Florence, whose

warm and affectionate sympathy was such as altogether to cause her to forget her favorite remedy for the tears of others—namely, an indignant lecture on their folly and unpleasantness. On the contrary, her plan of consolation, in this instance, consisted in confident asseverations of Herbert's affection for her sister, in details of the remarks made to that effect by all the party at Glenandarroch, and in undoubting anticipations of his returning at no distant day to declare all that this hasty journey had caused him to leave unsaid ; till in her own despite the tears of Eva were checked, alike by a dread of observation, and by the dawning of new thoughts and hopes as yet unknown to her heart.

About ten days after the departure of Grey, Glenandarroch received a letter from him, announcing a favorable change in his father's complaint. He had found Sir Gervase, on his first arrival, although the alarming symptoms were in some slight measure abated, still in a most precarious state ; but now the medical

attendants felt able to speak with sanguine hope of his recovery, though the utmost care and watchfulness continued necessary ; and his son wrote, in consequence, in a tone very different from that of the first short and melancholy letter which his Highland friends had received from him immediately on his arrival at the hall.

The same post which conveyed this letter to Glenandarroch, brought one addressed to Mrs. Monro ; the whole of whose contents she did not judge it advisable to impart to her daughters. What she read to them caused a sweet emotion to thrill the heart of Eva, expressing, as it did, in the warmest and most affectionate terms, the bitter regret with which the writer had found their intercourse so suddenly brought to a close. It had, he said, been one which had lent a new colouring to his existence. He looked back upon the hour which first introduced him to Auchmithie as an era in his life ; and he should look forward to that of his return with emotions which he could not at-

tempt to express. More there was to the same effect, reminiscences of particular circumstances connected especially with the latter part of his stay at Glenandarroch, and messages of affectionate remembrance to every individual of Mrs. Monro's family-party. But the conclusion of the letter called forth a gush of mingled emotion from the mother's heart—a blended tide of joy and deep anxiety. It contained an impassioned declaration of affection for her younger daughter, and implored permission to address her by letter, as to return to the Highlands was at present impossible, his leave of absence being nearly out. That very day, wrote Herbert, on which he had received his summons home, he had intended to ask for a private audience of Mrs. Monro, and to make the request in person; and the disappointment of this purpose had added intensity to the bitterness of his distress in being forced to depart on such an errand. But to remain in suspense—in doubt as to Eva's feeling towards him, for

so many months, was, he said, beyond his fortitude ; and her mother was adjured, in the most earnest terms, to say what hopes there were for him, and to permit him to plead his own cause.

The tone of this letter—manly, straightforward, and breathing the most devoted affection, could not fail to make its way at once to the heart of Mrs. Monro, above all when combined with all that she had remarked of amiable temper and good feeling in the writer. She had, in fact, conceived something almost like a maternal sentiment for Herbert Grey, and had, for some time past, observed, with the deepest interest, his evident admiration of Eva.

Nor did she attempt to disguise from herself how desirable in every way such a connexion would be, considering the solitary lot, too probably awaiting her lovely girl, in the event of her own death—a contingency which many unacknowledged sensations of weakened health

and shattered nerves frequently brought before her mind as too probable, at no very distant day.

Still, she did not hesitate in the reply which she felt it her duty to make to his letter, and which was dictated as well by her own high sense of honor, as by her self-respect. He was a very young man, and had seen but little of the world; he was, moreover, the heir to a title and a large fortune. Was it right, was it fair either to him or to her young, innocent daughter, to permit them to become bound by an engagement at this early stage of life? What would his father and his family think of the delicacy or right feeling of the mother who had permitted it? Or could it be borne that Eva should be regarded as having caught at the offer of so brilliant an establishment—perhaps—who could tell? as even having flung herself, or been flung by her family, in the way of it?

The answer to his letter, expected with such trembling and anxious impatience by Herbert

Grey, was written under the influence of these and similar considerations ; and while it condemned him to a continuance of his present state of suspense, yet by no means forbade him to hope for the future. This Mrs. Monro had neither the right nor the inclination to do. She would not, she said, disturb the peace of her young daughter's mind by any hint at present of the confidence which he had reposed in her ; but if, on a future meeting, after farther and more extended intercourse with the world had given him a clearer insight into his own heart, his feelings still remained unchanged, then, with the approbation of his father, he should have her free permission to address Eva.

It was kindly, gently, even affectionately said, but with perfect decision ; and the implied assurance of secrecy on the subject was faithfully kept. Mrs. Monro did not even impart to Florence what Grey had confided to her ; as, although unaware of the species of consolation which her elder daughter had

already held out to the younger at the time of his departure, she mistrusted her power of keeping a secret like this to herself.

To Alwyne Mackenzie alone, whom in every respect she regarded as a son, did she entrust the tale; and from him received the assurance of his perfect concurrence in the sentiments which had prompted her reply to his friend.

And pending all the flow of this deep undercurrent, and of other and deeper ones perchance, the outward "stream of human time" continued its rapid and brilliant course at Glenandarroch. All through the autumn an endless succession of visitors, a constant variety of gay entertainments, enlivened every day, and lent wings to every night. Then came the Northern Meeting, of which Lady Anne Grant Mackenzie was one of the patronesses, and which was, that year, a peculiarly gay one. In order to do it all due honor, the Chief and his lady, with a large party, in which of course the two Monros were included, took up their abode during its continuance, in the

principal hotel of the county town. And long was the sensation remembered, which was caused by the sight of such a galaxy of female charms as graced the Meeting in question. Perhaps, amongst all the lovely and attractive forms which it numbered, there was not one who commanded such universal admiration as Florence Monro. The brilliancy, the witchery, of her beauty, and her deportment, threw loveliness more critically perfect into the shade; and wherever she moved, she was followed by a throng of admirers, all, for the time, led captive by the influence which she exercised.

The present was Eva's first appearance in public; and a few weeks ago, when it was expected that Herbert Grey would remain at Glenandarroch for the purpose of attending the Meeting, its anticipation had been full of delightful, though agitating emotion. The reality was very different, like the contrast between an evening landscape all bathed in the roseate glory of the setting sun, and the same scene a little later, when the light has

fled, the glory departed, and a still grey shadow fallen over all. Yet Eva enjoyed the gaiety which was so completely new to her; but in a way more nearly resembling the indifferent enjoyment of a much later age than the keen ecstasy of youth. She moved through the festive scene like "a pale and quiet star," eclipsed in all save a few very observant eyes by the bright luminary beside her. And therein was displayed a very marked difference in their characters.

The impressions made on Eva's heart were of a far deeper and more abiding nature than was the case with Florence. She did not forget—she could not put memory away; and although, from the sweetness of her unselfish nature, she never suffered her private feelings to cast a gloom on those around her, still they probably only sank down the deeper within on that account.

Very different, the while, was the scene surrounding her lover. A deeper shade of gloom than usual had been cast, by the alarming

illness of their master, over the stately apartments, and the dark woods of Greystocke Hall; and yet the community of alarm and anxiety which had united, and, as it were, unlocked all hearts in the house—which, with Lady Grey, had transformed unreality, peevishness, and restless craving after excitement, into earnestness, energy, and patience—which had rendered Gertrude gentle—Elizabeth sympathizing, and even Mr. Hargrave kind and considerate, was a much less painful state of things than that into which all relapsed again when the alarm subsided, when life flowed back into its wonted channel, and the hearts that had been opened by the hand of sorrow, closed again, as hearts, alas! do too often close when the humanizing hour of trial has past away. Even Sir Gervase, on what he had believed to be his death-bed, was a very different, a very much gentler and less reserved person, than Sir Gervase convalescent, his natural taciturnity increased by the languor of recent illness, and his gloom and austerity daily gaining

ground in consequence of Mr. Hargrave's assiduous efforts to "improve" his late trial, and the mercy which had spared him.

Day by day, even while sincerely longing to be more of a comfort to his father, sincerely desiring to atone for past deficiencies in his conduct towards him, did Herbert Grey feel himself more and more repelled in every attempt which he made to do so. When he went to sit with Sir Gervase, and endeavoured to amuse him by talking of his late visit, and his Highland adventures, he soon discovered, by unmistakeable indications, that the topic was at best indifferent, if not distasteful. Why—neither Herbert nor his sister Gertrude—to whom he communicated the remark, had ever been able to find out; their father had an evident aversion to the names, for he could know no more concerning them—of the Grant Mackenzies. He had, it may be remembered, greatly disliked and opposed the plan of his son's visiting them, when at first broached, and it had never appeared to

Gertrude that this feeling at all subsided in his mind. It was to her that all her brother's longest, and his only confidential, letters were addressed, and she very speedily perceived that the less she read aloud of them before her father, the fewer particulars he heard of Herbert's life at Glenandarroch the better, as every thing that was communicated only strengthened his conviction of the family there being gay, worldly people, and very dangerous companions for his son. The subject, in short, without any thing decided ever having been said about it, soon became *taboo*; and so Herbert discovered that he must make up his mind to let it remain. He instinctively felt, after having several times attempted it, that his father had one of those deep rooted, silent, unaccountable—but generally unconquerable—prejudices, against his friends, with which it is vain to contend; nay, with which contention is nearly impossible, since the feeling is not over that vents itself in words. And few things more effectually tie the tongue and

cast a restraint over the very thoughts of an open-hearted and sensitive person than the moral night-mare of such a chilling consciousness.

The theme of Glenandarroch, then, was tacitly interdicted, and with it that of Auchmithie ; indeed it would not have been easy for Herbert, full of the ingenuous consciousness of a first attachment, to have named any inmate of the latter house without betraying more than he had as yet any inclination that his father should know. But these were the themes ever uppermost in his mind, his thoughts by day, and dream by night, and it was very difficult for him to talk without introducing something about them. Topics remotely connected would have been a relief ; but even those were denied. The wild sports of the Highlands, or descriptions of their scenery, elicited no sympathy—less than none. The names of Sir William and Lady Clavering recalled that of Ernest ; and caused Sir Ger-

vase to groan and move uneasily in his chair, as often as they occurred. Then, if Herbert, in despair at his own ill-success in conversation, abandoned these subjects altogether, and took refuge in that of India, matters were no whit improved. Again it was inevitable that the "word of fear," the name of Clavering, must repeatedly occur; and as often as it did, an anxious, troubled look, a sigh, sometimes a short question or remark, indicative of mistrust and uneasiness, chilled and repulsed the speaker, and placed fetters on his lips. Then would come a long interval of total silence, broken, perhaps, by one or two common-place remarks from Herbert; then, just as his ideas had sunk to their lowest ebb, and he knew not what next to say or do, that by any chance could interest his father, a tap at the door announcing some other visitor, would terminate his perplexities, and send him away, weary, baffled, and annoyed, with all the affectionate feelings which he had brought to the

interview, driven back and frozen up within him.

Meanwhile, if, as very frequently happened, the visitor, who succeeded him, was Mr. Hargrave, how little did Herbert suspect the nature of the colloquy which would then take place between him and Sir Gervase. How little did he dream of the intense parental anxiety with which his father would question the stern director, (for such he was to all intents and purposes), respecting his opinion of the spiritual state of his son, and with which he would recapitulate all the doubts and fears which agitated his mind on account of the worldliness of Herbert's chosen friends and associates. Exaggerated and erroneous as were the feelings prompting these confidences, their depth and reality must, had he known of them, have excited the grateful sympathy of the son ; and in such a case, as in many others, an adviser of a different stamp from Mr. Hargrave might have done much towards drawing

him and his parent more closely together, and breaking down the painful barriers of restraint between their hearts. But with his gloomy religious views, re-acting upon a nature to whose original want of tenderness they had so greatly added, Mr. Hargrave performed the part of a wedge to separate, not of a bond to unite, the members of the Grey family. In the course of these private discussions respecting Herbert, his harsh and narrow minded judgment of a young man who had never been a favorite with him, and of the influence acquired over whom, by a brother clergyman of such opposite views, he privately nourished a bitter feeling of jealousy, added intensity to the anxieties experienced by Sir Gervase, and consequently to his constraint and reserve in his son's company. Even when, endeavouring to turn his thoughts out of this channel, Mr. Hargrave would direct them to himself, the habit of mind induced by his system of theology, the perpetual self-introspection, the practical exaltation of the feelings, the

emotions, the "frames," of the mind itself, into works, was not less injurious in its effects upon a temperament like that of Sir Gervase. In the best balanced mind an emotional religion must produce an unreal and unhealthy state, so far as it predominates; in one whose bent was exclusively towards despondency and gloom, the influence was proportionately dangerous.

The only comfort, in short, which Herbert experienced during this period, was in the society of his sister Gertrude; for Elizabeth was daily narrowing in heart; and Lady Grey, fondly though she loved her son, had, as we have already seen, but little leisure or disengagement of mind to bestow upon her own family, to whose real thoughts and dispositions she neither had, nor cared to have, the keys. Gertrude was her brother's only solace. During the first days of alarm and anxiety which succeeded his return, she shared his watch beside their father by day, and so far as she was permitted—by night; partook, when he began to recover health, in all Herbert's endeavours to

be a comfort, to amuse or interest him—generally with equally indifferent success, and sympathised with him in all the pain and discouragement which the failure of those endeavours caused him ; only, as was her wont, more in anger than in sorrow, or, if not in anger, at least in bitterness of feeling ; attributing it, as she not unjustly did, in a great measure to the sinister influence of Mr. Hargrave, that her father would not open his heart a little more freely to her idolized brother.

As the family returned to its usual way of life, and Sir Gervase began in some measure to resume his usual habits, Herbert, the time of whose departure to join the *depôt* of his regiment now drew very near, profited by every opportunity which he could seize upon to be alone with Gertrude. They rode together—long, pleasant, sauntering rides, by deep winding lanes, lonely woodlands, or breezy commons, now and then exchanging the quiet pace which admitted of confidential talk, for an exhilarating gallop. They walked

together, long walks in the park or down the river side, in the still grey October days ; and at night, when the formal household had retired, they not unfrequently sat for hours over the fire in Herbert's dressing-room, till Gertrude, on her return to her own apartment, was fain to creep with the stealthiest and quietest pace, for fear of raising suspicion of her late watching, and having dismissed her maid from attendance ere she sought her brother's room, to find her way to bed as she best might, without assistance.

And during all this period of intercourse, the most unreserved which they had ever had together—and to Gertrude replete with a degree of happiness superior to any she had ever known, while to Herbert it afforded the only alleviation which enabled him to support, with patience, the grievous uncongeniality of his home—one engrossing topic, as may well be imagined, was ever uppermost in their conversation and their thoughts. Although her brother had not confided to her, in his letters,

the actual fact of his passion for Eva Monro, Gertrude must have been less acute than most of her sex, not to have guessed it; and they had been but a very short time together ere the whole narrative of the lover, his hopes and fears, was entrusted to her sympathising ear. For Gertrude's was full and entire sympathy, even on that difficult subject to some fondly-attached sisters, the love of their brother for another woman. Imperfect as in many respects her temper was, it had no bitterness, no jealousy, amongst its imperfections. It never occurred to her that Herbert must love her less because of his attachment to Eva; on the contrary, she felt quite prepared to take to her own heart the being who had inspired it, and to lavish affection upon her for his sake.

In fact, the interest which Gertrude took in the whole affair was inconceivable. Independently of her devotion to her brother, it was a peep into romance, the first which her prosaic and restricted life had afforded—the first lifting of a corner of that mysterious

curtain which shrouds the wondrous on-goings of the inner world, that lies so deep beneath the commonplace paths of existence—and as such, engrossingly new and interesting. And last, not least, it was a secret, and she was its confidante. And Gertrude dearly loved a little mystery. Profiting by the immunity which Herbert had procured her from having her correspondence with him submitted to inspection, and being well aware that every circumstance affecting any member of the family, sooner or later became entrusted to the ears of Mr. Hargrave at all events, if not likewise to “the Pope,”—she had, from the first, been very careful to adhere to generalities in her accounts of what Herbert told her in his letters, and to read nothing aloud to her mother and Elizabeth, which she might hereafter wish she had kept to herself. Thus neither of them had the slightest suspicion of the real state of the case, or, in fact, knew more of the very name of Monro than an

occasional passing mention. As to Sir Gervase, we have already seen that he did not know even so much. And thus did Gertrude earnestly entreat her brother to permit things to remain for the present. To this Herbert demurred. His open, ingenuous nature revolted against concealment and mystery; and although he candidly confessed the almost impossibility of broaching such a subject to his father; yet he thought, he said, that it might be wise, as well as dutiful, to endeavor to interest his mother in behalf of his attachment.

But the anxious persuasions of Gertrude over-ruled this feeling on his part. She earnestly counselled silence and prudence, so long as things remained in their present undecided state. Were her mother left to her own unprompted judgment, she said, it might be very different; but Herbert was well aware how much she was under the influence of others, to whom she was in the habit of entrusting every case requiring consideration,

and who were no sincere friends to him. Then, too, she confided to him her own impression of the strong wish entertained by her mother that his choice should fall upon Augusta Courtenay. That young lady, with her admiring mama, were at that time absent from the Larches on a visit to Brighton; and Gertrude argued that it was impossible to say whether some 'serious' love of '*les beaux yeux de sa cassette*' might not turn up there or elsewhere before the next twelvemonth was out, and so render the idea of any other daughter-in-law less distasteful to Lady Grey than it would be at present. By one argument or another, in short, seconded as all her arguments were by the difficulty of ever finding his mother at leisure, or procuring undisturbed access to her for confidential purposes, Herbert was persuaded into silence and secrecy for the present.

Gertrude was in the wrong; and yet who could wonder, considering what her education, and what the home-influence around her had been? If she had acquired a love of intrigue

it must, at least, be confessed that there were few abodes where it was not less difficult for young people to be open and candid, than at Greystocke Hall. She had carried her point, however, in the present instance; and perfectly satisfied that she had done rightly, she sought refuge in cogitation as to the best means of forwarding her brother's hopes hereafter, from the bitter sorrow occasioned her by his departure to join his regiment, and the loneliness of heart, in which she remained behind.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVE OF A FIRST PARTING.

It was a dark, still, windless day in the beginning of November, with all that peculiar aspect of solemnity investing the grey skies and fading woods, which renders it the most touching of all seasons, and insensibly disposes even the lightest heart to thought and sadness. Thus felt Eva Monro, as, seated in a window of the drawing-room at Auchmithie, she laid down the pencil with which she was copying the outline of a beautiful Madonna, lent her by Lady Anne Mackenzie; and leaning back in her chair, fixed her eyes on the garden without, and fell into a reverie of its summer beauty departed.

“Dreaming, my child?” said her mother, who just then entered the room, and coming

up behind her chair, parted the sunny curls from her white forehead, and imprinted a tender kiss upon it.

"Yes, dear mama," replied Eva, looking up with an affectionate smile, "dreaming while I looked at that poor withered garden

Of spring, and spring's sweet violets,
Of summer, and summer's roses.

But they will come again. It was not a hopeless dream."

"No, surely not. But a long dreary winter must intervene. Was it of that you were thinking, Eva?"

"Not sadly, mama—at least, not altogether sadly. I know you are afraid that I should miss Florence more this winter than I have ever done, after the gay, happy summer. But I assure you it shall not be so. I never can be solitary when I have you; and you know I have a great deal to do. I never find the day half long enough. But one cannot help feeling sorrowful just at present."



“No,” replied Mrs. Monro, with a very deep sigh, “one cannot, indeed, Eva.”

“What shall we do without Alwyne, mama? How can we reconcile ourselves to the idea that he is going away—*gone* away it will soon be—not to return again. He has been so much more with us than the others. He seems, as it were, to belong more peculiarly to you and me. How can we picture to ourselves months—years perhaps—that we shall not see Alwyne again?”

“If one felt sure that his heart were in the prospect,” said Mrs. Monro, “one would feel it less painfully. To most young men an Attachéship at such a Court as that of —, obtained with so little difficulty, and the prospect of such interest being hereafter exerted for him, would appear a strange subject for regret on the part of his friends. But no one knows Alwyne as I do; and—”

There was a pause. The eyes of Mrs. Monro were filled with tears; and Eva pre-

sently stole up her fingers to dispel some drops from hers.

“ Florence seems very happy,” she observed, at last breaking the silence.

“ Yes, her letter this morning is written in almost wild spirits, dear child ! I scarcely think her mind realizes the fact that she has such a long farewell to say to Alwyne,” replied Mrs. Monro. “ Florence lives more in the present moment than you do, Eva.”

“ The present moment must have more power over one in such a life as hers,” said Eva. “ I think I can fancy what it must be to feel the present sufficient for one’s happiness. Do you think Alwyne has returned to the castle yet, mama ?” added she, after another pause.

“ He said he should be there last night,” answered Mrs. Monro ; “ but no one has been down this morning. They are so unusually quiet since the last detachment of visitors left. He only meant, you know, to be three days with Miss Brodie, for the purpose of having ample time to see the Bishop uninterruptedly.”

She had scarcely uttered the last words, when the house-door was heard to open, as obedient to the hand of one too familiar with the dwelling to apply for admittance. A step crossed the lobby—and Alwyne himself entered the room.

He had laid aside his Highland dress, and appeared in plain clothes ; and either that circumstance, or the fact that he was otherwise changed, caused a considerable alteration in his aspect since the bright day of the Glenandarroch Gathering. But there was no change in the warmth of his affectionate greeting to his relatives ; and the first few minutes were occupied, after that was over, in the delivery of sundry messages from Miss Brodie, whom he had left on the previous morning.

“You will remain the day with us, Alwyne?” asked Mrs. Monro, as he placed himself by her side, on the settee by the blazing fire.

“Yes, and the night too, if you will have me, dear Mrs. Monro ;” he replied, with a smile, “and perhaps another night besides.”

Eva uttered an exclamation of joy, which was echoed by her mother. "We did not anticipate such a pleasure as that again, Alwyne," said she.

"It will be the last," replied Alwyne. "On Tuesday next I have fixed to go."

There was a minute's profound silence; and then he resumed his speech in somewhat of a stifled and unsteady tone.

"But I daresay you are wondering why I am remaining away from Kenneth and Anne? The fact is, I find them just about to set off to-day; to remain till Friday morning at Craighuair—a visit which they have long promised, they say, and have only this week in which to pay it, as there is a fresh importation of people coming next week again. They urged me to accompany them, but you may well believe that I had not much heart for that; and I thought you and Eva would take compassion on me."

"Thank you, dear Alwyne! It was kindly thought. We are too glad to have you here."

"Now, Eva," said Alwyne, after a little while, "will you come out and take a walk with me? My brains want clearing up, sadly; and the fresh air is a wonderful restorative."

"Go, Eva, and get ready," answered her mother, "and I shall ring and have in the luncheon-tray before you return. You will have time for a long walk before our five o'clock dinner."

It was not long ere the two cousins, arm in arm, were descending through the paths of the glen, the sere leaves crisping beneath their feet, and now and then another of the few survivors on the boughs above floating quietly down to join them.

"It is just the sort of weather it ought to be, is it not, Eva?" said Alwyne. "Bright sunshine, a high wind,—anything animated in short, would have seemed so uncongenial to your mood and mine."

"They would, Alwyne," she replied. "And Nature is often very unsympathising."

“ Ah ! Eva——

—— ‘ We receive but what we give,
And in our light alone doth Nature live.’ ”

“ She lives in a sad, subdued, and yet calm light to-day then, Alwyne. We are together still, though the shadow of a long parting is hovering over us ; and though poor dear Florence is not here to scold me for shedding tears, I will not shed any to-day.”

“ No, don’t Eva ; even though perhaps I should feel more disposed to join you than to take Florence’s place of dispelling your tears. Now which way shall we walk ?” he added, as they found themselves on the road, “ down towards the Clachan, or up towards the hills ? for I conclude that we shall keep the road. One requires a trodden path, a quarter deck, so to speak, when one has much to talk over.”

“ I don’t feel in spirits for the Clachan to-day, Alwyne ; and it is unkind to go amongst one’s fellow-creatures in an unsociable mood.

Let us go past the castle and up the hill road, where we are not likely to meet any one."

"The road along which you all went with Grey, on that sketching expedition, the day after he came;" said Alwyne, with an arch glance under Eva's bonnet. "Well, dear," he added affectionately, squeezing her hand, "*that* is one very pleasant subject of thought to me, in the midst of many sad ones. You know I hear from him very often, and I believe he lives more upon the memory of certain passages in his life here, than any present circumstances. Yes, come, let us go up the hill road, and have a good talk."

And they proceeded along the solitary road, talking as those talk who soon must do so no more to the friend and companion of early years. They spoke of Florence, whom Alwyne expected to see on his way south, having promised to take up his residence for a day or two with Lady Brooke; and from less to more their conversation glided on till he found himself pouring forth to Eva what he had never

yet in so many words expressed to her, the bitter regret, and almost remorse, with which in compliance with the unalterable wishes of Florence, he had finally abandoned the cherished purpose of his heart respecting his future destination.

“The die,” he said, “is cast, and regret or remorse unavailing now. Doubtless—as has been said to me—I can serve God in any walk of life; and I do not mean to waste my time in vain regrets for what cannot be recalled. But, Eva, once more—only once—it is a comfort to speak to you of what I have given up. You can understand me; and you will not consider me unkind or unjust to Florence in so speaking. Here, above all—and looking yonder, I feel impelled to it for relief.”

He pointed with his hands, as he spoke, towards a long narrow glen, which opened out beneath the elevated road they were traversing, and up which ran a footpath, conducting to a low green hillock at its farther extremity, on whose summit stood the humble chapel which

was the scene of Mr. Ogilvy's ministrations. Tomhan-na-Crosh, the Hillock of the Cross, had been for centuries consecrated ground, having been the site of a place of worship of very ancient date, burnt to the ground by the Hanoverian soldiery shortly after the battle of Culloden; and replaced by the present small building, which was erected many years after that fatal day by Alwyne's grandfather.

"You have often heard me talk, Eva," pursued he, "of a day when I, along with Colin, was alone at the Castle with your father, some ten years ago, when the Bishop was visiting this part of his diocese? He slept a night at the Castle, and we accompanied him here next day to attend a confirmation which he held in the chapel."

"Yes, I remember it perfectly," said Eva.

"He and your father had talked so much on the previous night of the sufferings of the Scottish Church, and her miraculous preservation, that it made a very profound impression

on me, boy though I was ; and this was deepened on the following day, by the sight of the devout congregation assembled here on that occasion, some of them from immense distances. I think I date my enthusiasm for our Church from that time. And for the last two years it has grown in depth and intensity every day. What dreams I have had, Eva, of the blessed life that Florence and I might have led here amongst our own people, with such work to do, and with such a soil to work upon. You, who know what devoted Churchmen the poor Highlanders can be, with their profoundly reverential spirits, and their vivid imaginations, you can imagine the privilege of being the instrument of restoring the ritual of the Church, which they are so formed to appreciate, to something of its early dignity for them ; and of carrying the Church system out amongst them as it is only possible to do by living with and for them !”

“ I can indeed, Alwyne,” said Eva, her eyes

full of tears. "No one knows better than I do how they could be brought to value its blessings."

"And we might have done it," pursued Alwyne, "without my being compelled to ask Florence to forego any comfort to which she had been habituated. Nor should I have interfered with Mr. Ogilvy's scanty emoluments. The delight it would have been to devote the worldly means entrusted to me to the service of the Church, and of our attached people! And the Scottish Church wants labourers in her vineyard who are not necessitated to live by their labour. She wants—sadly wants—the devotion of worldly means and position, and of human learning to her service. Our Lowland countrymen are cold and cautious, and hard to move, and those who are enthusiastic for her in the Highlands are not in general the rich, the noble, or the learned. Oh! if it had pleased God to accept of me as a labourer in such a cause!"

“It has been a hard sacrifice, dear Alwyne!” said Eva, “I so completely feel with you, I can so entirely enter into it!”

“No sacrifice that I could have made, Eva, would have been hard for Florence. I would give my life itself for her. I need not tell you that. But sometimes an agonizing doubt comes over me—have I not sinned in making this one? Had I any right to withdraw, and restore to the service of the world the gifts, and the worldly possessions, which I had already dedicated to God? Could anything justify this? or have I not permitted my human idol to come in betwixt Him and me, and have I not reason to dread that my idol, as well as myself, may suffer in consequence? We may both live to feel how greatly we have erred; and I, the stronger, ought to have combated the temptation for her as for myself.”

Eva was silent. She knew too well the pertinacity, the determined will of her sister; she was too fully aware of the unscrupulous-

ness with which Florence had availed herself of her power over her generous and unselfish lover, backed as her influence had been by that of his elder brother, to be able to join Alwyne in his condemnation of himself; and she could not say what in her heart she felt respecting Florence's conduct. But so keen was her sense of sympathy with him, so painful were her anticipations of future grief, and late repentance for her sister, that she could only restrain herself from weeping at his last words, by her resolution not to add to the weight of sorrow, which evidently lay so heavy on his heart at this time.

There was a brief pause: and then, as they walked on, Eva made some enquiries concerning her cousin's interview with the old Bishop, of whom he had just been taking a last farewell.

"He told me that in all human probability it would be so," said Alwyne, "and indeed I believe that we shall meet no more on this

side of time. But to think of the approaching dissolution of one like him, so full of faith, and love, and humble hope, in the evening of a life so spent, is no overwhelming anguish, heavy though the loss must be to the Church which he has served so long and devotedly. It is the Living, those whose term of trial and probation is still far from its close, not the holy Dying, who are to be commiserated. And yet my heart was wrung, Eva, with a very bitter pang, when I knelt, for the last time, to receive the blessing which his venerable hand has so often conveyed to me. It is a comfort to have had those last hours of intercourse with him."

"And he gave you comfort, dear Alwyne, I do not doubt?" said Eva.

"No one ever went to him in vain for that," replied Alwyne. "And though he has always lived an ascetic life, no one ever had more kindly sympathy and tenderness of heart; for those whose human affections entangle them, perhaps, too closely. He gave me much com-

fort, and yet I could see that he grieved for my defeated purpose. But, in parting from me, he said, in answer to an expression of deep regret from me, 'It pleases God, sometimes, to accept our offerings; but not *when* or *as* we offer them; and long after this, my dear friend, He may in an unlooked-for manner remind you of your early desire to serve Him in His temple, and call you to that service by a path which as yet you know not of.' They were striking words, Eva."

"They were, indeed, Alwyne," said she, raising her eyes to his.

"And uttered at such a solemn moment by one on the verge, as it were, of the eternal world, they came to me—I cannot describe to you how—with a strange and awful thrill, almost as with the effect of a prophecy. They *may* yet prove so. Who can tell?"

The cousins had now reached a point nearly three miles from home, and observing that the short November day would be over ere they could retrace the whole of the way they had

come, they unwillingly turned their faces in the contrary direction; and still talking as they proceeded, on many themes, at length found themselves near the gate-way leading up to the castle. An unwonted aspect of quietude and silence invested that hospitable mansion during the absence of its master and lady; not a sight or sound of a living creature occurred to break the stillness—the palpable calm, so to speak, of the grey and voiceless afternoon; and Alwyne and Eva, struck by a contrast to its usual condition which so well accorded with their present state of feelings, paused, and stood still a little space, leaning on the old moss-grown wall opposite the gate, gazing towards the mansion, and recalling many incidents of the departed summer and autumn.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a sound, the short and measured trot of a pony; and down the leafless avenue came riding the substantial form of Mr. John Cook, mounted on his not less substantial galloway; and attired,

as ever, in the unfailing drab great coat, top boots, and white hat. Only, in consideration of the season, an ample volume of red worsted comforter enveloped his rubicund chin, and was tucked in, saltier-wise, across his burly chest. Saving this addition to his costume, the outward man of Mr. Cook exhibited no change since when, on a glowing afternoon in August, we first introduced him to our readers.

Alighting for the purpose of opening the gate, and leading his pony through, in order to close it behind him, Mr. Cook became aware of the presence of Eva and her cousin, and raised his hat as he saluted them.

“Yer servant, Miss Eva! And yours, Maister Alwyne! I didna ken ye were sae near at hand. Its a toom dwallin up bye the nicht. But ye’ll be pitten up at Auchmithie, Maister Alwyne?”

“Even so, Mr. Cook,” replied Alwyne, “until my brother and Lady Anne return. And on Tuesday next I bid you all good-bye for some time to come.”

“Aweel, sir, ye’ll be sair missed, nae doot. But it ’ll be a heartsome way-gaun for yersell frae this howlin’ wilderness, afore the lang dreigh winter be on us wi’ a vengeance.”

“Really, Mr. Cook,” replied Alwyne, “I am not quite so much afraid of a Highland winter as you seem to be. And as to a howling wilderness, upon my word, this country is pretty well peopled to be called by such a name.”

“Ower weel-peoplet, Maister Alwyne—over weel-peoplet!” responded the man of figures, with an oracular shake of the white hat, brown scratch wig, and brick-dust visage underneath, which spoke as many volumes as Lord Burleigh’s. “Ye ne’er spak a truer word than that, sir, and sae the Laird ’ll find till his cost ae day, or I’m sair mista’en.”

“I must beg, Mr. Cook,” said Alwyne, with considerable haughtiness of manner, “that you will place no such constructions on what I say. I never dreamt of asserting that my brother’s estate was too well peopled, and I should have thought you knew my sentiments on that sub-

ject too well to suppose so. I was only," he added, resuming his ordinary good-humoured tone, "expressing my wonder at hearing a populous district like this called a howling wilderness. But I suppose, if the truth were known, that you rather alluded to the quality, than the quantity, of your neighbours. You do not find many congenial spirits to a mind like yours amongst them—eh! Mr. Cook?"

"As to that, Maister Alwyne," quoth the mollified *Bhalie*, with a modest show of disclaimer to the compliment, "I hae raison to be thankfu' that I hae learnt the wisdom o' contentment wi' my lot, whare'er it may be cast; and though nae doot, it's a great trial till a man like me, to be set doon in the mids' o' a wheen idle, leein' onceevileezed Hieland ne'er-do-weels——"

"Confound your impudence!" ejaculated Alwyne, scarcely *sotto voce*. "Yet," he pursued aloud, finishing Mr. Cook's sentence for him—"Yet the sense of transcendant useful-

ness reconciles you to your banishment. Is that it?"

"It's e'en sae, Maister Alwyne," was the placid reply. "There's balm in Geelead, when ane reflecks on that. For if a thochtless youngster like the Laird, wi' reverence, sir, can be herriet and cheatit, and is herriet an' cheatit, in spite o' my teeth, afore my vera face, I leave ye to judge whar he wad be if my back was turn't. Na, na! there's ower many sorners and reivers about Glenandarroch ha'-house wi' my best endeavours. Muckle need o' ae sponsible man to keep them in wi' bit and bridle."

"It is very plain that the whole welfare of the family hinges on you, Mr. Cook," replied Alwyne, glancing at Eva, who turned away her face to conceal an irrepressible smile. "Pray can you tell me," he added, "what is become of Colin Ban? I have not seen him once to-day—a very unusual circumstance."

"As for Colin Ban, Maister Alwyne," answered the Bhalie, his brow darkening, and his switch describing an emphatic circle in the air,

“I’m free to confess that as far as ony gude I get o’ him’s concerned, ye’ll get leave to tak him an’ keep him. At the best o’ time he was a thorn in my flesh; and he’s dafter noo than ever, and aye the langer the waur. I sent him aff this day on a yerrand o’ business; but gude kens hoo he’ll win through wi’t, or when he’ll be back! He’s no to lippen to—unstable as water, Maister Alwyne! an nane the better, let me tell ye, o’ a’ the cockerin’ he’s gotten amang ye. The lad’s heeds just turn’t.”

“That is a pity, Mr. Cook,” replied Alwyne.

“A peety, sir! Troth it’s a peety, baith for himsell and them that has the ill luck to be mistrysted wi’ him. I’m sure, as I said till him this blessed day—Colin, says I, it’s weel seen that I hae the patience of Job, or else ye durstna’ for yer life tak’ advantage o’ me this gate; but the langest day ’ll hae an end at last—an’ says I——”

“Well, Mr. Cook,” interrupted Alwyne, “one of poor Colin’s worst *cockerers*, as you call them, is about to rid you of his presence;

so for the few days that I have to remain at home, I must beg you to dispense with his services, and let him be with me as usual."

"Dispense, Maister Alwyne?" quoth Mr. Cook, as he remounted, and settled himself with emphasis on his saddle;—" 'deed, sir, it 'll no' be an afflictin' dispensation, let me tell ye. Od an' ye wad' tak' him wi' ye, there was mair tint at Shirramuir, sae far as my loss wald gang. But," with a grim smile at his own wit, "ye'se be welcome the morn till my share o' him. I hae nae fears but he'll be back on my hands again, like the ill penny. He's no the gear that traiks. A gude e'en t' ye, sir; a gude e'en, Miss Eva." And off trotted the Bhalie, the clatter of his pony's hoofs gradually dying on the ear down the quiet road.

"Poor Colin!" exclaimed Eva, after Alwyne and she had indulged in a laugh over the imperturbable, impregnable self-esteem of Mr. Cook, "I earnestly wish he could be persuaded to listen to your advice, Alwyne, and let you find him some more congenial occupation else-

where; for it is too true that a dreaming, eccentric habit of mind is gaining ground upon him, and I am sure his life here fosters it. Mama and I observe a perceptible difference in him of late. And I dread to think how your final departure will sink down upon him."

"So do I," said Alwyne, "and I have exhausted every argument in my power to induce him to change his present way of life, but in vain. I fear it is hopeless. Poor Colin besides his original sin of poetry, is too completely of the Celtic type ever to exert himself for his own benefit. His nature is to love and look up, devotedly—reverentially; to lay down his life, if need were, for the objects of his devotion—to haunt and cling to the spots associated with their image—to lose himself altogether in them; but as to rousing himself to systematic work—to effort in any shape,—as to industry, or perseverance, or money-getting, such things are not in him, Eva. You might as well harness the wild deer of the forest up

yonder into a plough, and expect him to draw it for you."

There was a few minutes pause ; when Alwyne, with a deep sigh, resumed the conversation.

" There are other subjects, Eva, which press more heavily upon my mind, just now, than the thought of poor Colin, though that is an anxious one. But there are things still nearer home ! It is all sunshine here just now ; most people would laugh at me for saying that I see heavy clouds on the far horizon ; but I do."

" You are anxious about Anne and Kenneth, are you, Alwyne ? And why ? They are so perfectly happy together."

" Perfectly. It is not of their happiness I am thinking. I am anxious about their future as the happiness and comfort of others hinge upon it, more than for themselves. Our family have stood for centuries, as the family of every Highland Chief ought to do, in a paternal re-

lation to their people. But they have done so by living for and amongst them ; there is no other way. No duty in this world can be fulfilled without exertion, and a self-denying spirit, and when Kenneth married, he fully intended to settle here and follow the example of his forefathers ; but I fear—I greatly fear, that resolution is not gaining ground.”

“ It is natural, Alwyne, that Anne should wish to spend some part of the year amongst her own family. No one could expect otherwise.”

“ Of course it is. Who could be so absurd and unreasonable as to expect otherwise, or who would wish them not to visit their connexions ? No, no, Eva, it is not of that I am speaking. I never dreamt of their living all their lives chained to one spot. But I cannot help feeling startled when I gather from things they say, that it is an understood thing that they spend next season, and probably every succeeding one, in London. Now you know that is a very different thing from visiting

amongst their connexions. The expenses of a season in London, doing things as Kenneth, and Anne too, like to do them, are immense. You cannot know, as I do, what they are, but I assure you, Eva, that large, though his income is, it is not possible that Kenneth can fulfil his duties as a Highland proprietor, it is not possible that he can do justice to his estate or his people, if such a perpetual drain of money is to go on from year to year, joined to the expenses of incessant company here, and—probably—those of an increasing family.”

“But, Alwyne, do you not think that they will soon discover that for themselves? and that their own good sense will lead them to stop short.”

“I don’t know, Eva. It is much easier to keep out of a dangerous vortex at first, than to extricate one’s self from it after one is fairly entangled. And it is difficult for you, with your simple, unworldly tastes and habits, to imagine how the love of pleasure and the craving after excitement, grow upon those who

abandon themselves to a life of self-pleasing. Kenneth, residing amongst his own people, and busying himself in schemes for their welfare, would continue what nature originally made him—generous, warm-hearted, hospitable, open-handed; but plunging into the whirl of London, and keeping open house here for his London friends, he will speedily become extravagant. Anne, too, is a mere girl at present, her character, in a great measure, unformed; but I see the love of pleasure strong within her. I can perceive the germs of much that renders me anxious—lavishness—inconsideration—wilfulness—all that such a life as she is bent upon will rapidly develop.”

“Do you really think so, Alwyne? She is such a nice creature! I like her so very much.”

“So do I. I think her a charming creature. In the hands of a husband a good deal older than herself, and of a different temperament, much—everything almost—might have been made of her; but Kenneth and she are too

much alike to be safe companions for each other. And she will, without intending it, estrange him from Glenandarroch. Not from the gay company-life of it, for that she delights in, but from that of usefulness and domestic retirement. She could never endure it. Already I see that a couple of days without excitement of some kind tire her to death. You must not think me hard upon Anne, Eva. It is only, in the hour of departure, that all my long-repressed anxieties are finding a vent. Do you know that before Lady Clavering went away, she and I had more than one private conference on the same subject, and I found that her opinions quite coincided with my own."

"Really—ah! Lady Clavering is so charming, Alwyne. There always seems to me a depth of character in her, of which I should say those around her were hardly aware."

"You are quite right, Eva, I almost think that she herself is scarcely aware of what she could do were she called upon—as she may yet

be called upon—who can tell? Such gifts are seldom bestowed in vain. Well, I find that her impressions, and her fears, respecting her sister, are much the same as mine. I opened my heart fully to her, and she quite entered into my views, and assured me that her influence with Anne should not be wanting. But I could gather—indeed I have seen—that it is not great. Anne loves her dearly, but she does not like even her sister to interfere with her. In short, Eva, my heart is full of forebodings.”

“And of what nature, Alwyne?” she anxiously enquired.

He stopped and looked her full in the face.

“Of a nature, Eva, that would almost raise your father and mine from their graves, if they were realised. My forebodings are that, in course of time, Kenneth will find himself distressed for money—that embarrassments will thicken upon him, because, by that time, he will have lost the firmness and self-denial necessary to extricate himself; and so difficulty will crowd on difficulty, and he will become

desperate. Then Mr. Cook will come forward—”

“Ah !” ejaculated Eva, as a new and painful light broke upon her.

“And will show him how he could double his rent-roll,” pursued Alwyne. “I need not tell you how. It will be a hard struggle—for I *know* my brother. But a life of self-seeking deadens the power of resistance to temptation, and money-difficulties are beyond all others distracting, unmanning, and—Eva, I believe that he will give way.”

“Give way, and expel his tenantry—depopulate the glens!” exclaimed Eva. “Do the thing which I have heard him denounce a hundred times as atrocious—drive away the clansmen whose fathers have fought and died for his, who love and venerate him as a superior being! Alwyne, what possesses you to utter such a prophecy. I would not believe it if an angel spoke it.”

“I wish I could not believe it !” said Alwyne, sadly, “I do not know what is possessing me, but it seems as if I could not help

· saying things from which my own heart recoils. Yes, bitter as the anticipation is, I believe it will come to that, if things continue as they now promise to do.”

· “Oh! Alwyne! Can one fancy living to see that day! And, Mr. Cook! Giving way to *his* suggestions! A man they both dislike and laugh at.”

“Anne’s dislike to him,” said Alwyne, “is a great misfortune. His pragmatical self-conceit has led him to oppose many of her plans, some because he had not been consulted in them, and others on really good and judicious grounds—if the thing had been judiciously done—and this has irritated her till it has come quite to a trial of power between them; so that I have often observed that she would take pains to spend more money on anything she had set her heart upon, just because he had remonstrated on the expenditure. As to Kenneth, he may dislike Cook, but he has great sway with him, nevertheless. He knows the man in his own way, to have his interest

at heart, and then Cook's is the stronger will of the two, which is much."

"And his strong will," said Eva, "is bent upon turning the estate into sheep-farms. That we cannot be blind to."

"Yes, both because he considers that to be, in a worldly point of view, the most profitable system, which of course it is; and also, I see, greatly on account of his intense dislike to Highlanders. He hates them. They are in every way opposed to each other, and his pride and self importance are mortally offended by their's, and by the undisguised contempt, with which they regard him, as a Sassenach. I believe that Colin's excessive Celtic pride, much more than his unsteadiness, has aggrieved the Bhalie, and aggravated his animosity against all the people to whom he belongs. I wish they had never come together with all my heart. And I wish," added Alwyne, glancing kindly at the pale, sad countenance of his companion, as they now turned up into the avenue of Auohmithie, "that I had kept

these dismal fancies to myself, and not distressed you with them, dear Eva. I fear I have spoilt the pleasure of your walk."

"No, that you have not, Alwyne," she replied. "It has been a delightful walk, and it is the greatest of comforts, I know, to open one's heart; so it makes me happy that you have done so to me."

"Well, put away the mournful images I have suggested—leave them on the threshold," said Alwyne, "and let us have a cheerful evening together, while yet we may."

They entered the house as he spoke, crossed the lobby, and opened the door of the drawing-room. There the windows were already closed, and the curtains drawn, to exclude the dreary November twilight. No candles were as yet lighted, but a bright and blazing fire almost rendered them superfluous, and cast a warm radiance over everything. Mrs. Monro, who was reading by its light, at least sitting beside it on the sofa, with a book in her hand, but probably finding more of occupation in her own

thoughts, than in its pages, smilingly arose to welcome, and reproach the wanderers for returning home late for dinner, and speedily dispatched them to dress; and as not long after, they gathered round the board, there was something to Alwyne Mackenzie so homelike, so kindly, in the familiar scene, that it insensibly raised his spirits. All seemed to feel that they must make the most of the few hours still left them; and in spite of the absence of Florence, and the approaching departure of her betrothed, the small circle at Auchmithie did spend a cheerful, even a happy evening.

CHAPTER X.

AN EDINBURGH MAN OF BUSINESS.

OUR last chapter closed on an evening of dark November. The present, imaging the changes of life, opens on a lovely morning, in the beginning of the July following, when the warm sunbeams are falling with softened radiance, through the delicate muslin draperies of a large window, opening to the ground, and affording access to a small, but beautifully tended flower-garden, bounded by trees and graceful shrubs. Inside the window is an elegant breakfast parlour, having a round table drawn near to it, and covered with the appliances to that sociable and pleasant meal, including two green baskets filled with freshly-gathered cherries and strawberries.

An elderly lady, handsomely-dressed, and of an agreeable aspect, sat by the table, with a newspaper in her hand, on whose contents she had not long dwelt, when the door opened, and admitted a younger one; no other than Florence Monro, radiant in loveliness as ever, and her beauty enhanced by the most perfect, and most graceful of summer morning toilettes.

"Good morning, my dear aunt. I am shocked at being so late!" was her salutation to the elder lady, as she advanced, and affectionately kissed her. "Have you waited long for me?"

"No, my dear, by no means," replied Lady Brooke. "I was sure you must be weary with your journey."

"Weary? oh no! I am never weary. But I slept very long, and very soundly, and so I suspect did Lydia, for she did not seem above half awake when she called me. I feel quite refreshed and alive, I assure you."

"And ready for breakfast, I hope?" said Lady Brooke. "Ring for it, my dear."

Florence obeyed, and the summons was presently answered, by a servant bringing coffee, eggs, hot rolls, and other appendages of the meal. There were no family prayers at Lady Brooke's house, and the aunt and niece sat down to table immediately; conversing in the intervals of their prolonged repast, one over which it is so pleasant sometimes to linger long—on the incidents of Florence's life during the last two months. These she had again spent in London with her cousins, and had just arrived at home the previous night, under the escort of a respectable, elderly butler of her aunt's, who had met her at Dycheley, whither she had accompanied the Grant Mackenzies, on their departure from London a week previously.

Florence had much to relate of this last visit, which she had greatly enjoyed. Nothing, she said, could exceed the kindness of Sir William and Lady Clavering in their own house, and she had been delighted to find the

former in better spirits, and more like himself, than he had been during his sojourn in London. At that time it appeared that he had been in a state of acute anxiety, on account of his brother, whose health had suffered from his over exertions at the period when a severe visitation of cholera had occurred at——, on which occasion, his efforts on behalf of the sick and dying, were described by Francis Mackenzie as nearly super-human. Sir William could not be persuaded that Ernest told him all the truth respecting himself. He fancied him worse than he chose to say; and Lady Clavering, who had looked, Florence added, quite worn out, and heart-broken, when in London, informed her sister that for days before the Indian mail was expected, her husband's agony of mind was dreadful to witness. Recent letters, however, had done much to lighten his anxiety, and restore his spirits to their usual tone; and his wife's, of course, were the reflection of his.

Besides the Claverings, Florence had to tell

of the infant heir of Glenandarroch, a fine little boy, who had been born nearly five months since, but to the intense chagrin and disappointment of the clan, not amongst his native hills, but in London. It was in vain that Glenandarroch had urged his wishes on that head, and that Lady Middleham had offered to come down herself, and remain with her daughter during her confinement. The fact was, Florence said, that Lady Anne dreaded the long winter in the Highlands, and preferred spending her time of enforced seclusion in closer proximity to the civilized world. In this sentiment, Lady Brooke, a thorough woman of society, and who possessed no small contempt for Highland enthusiasm in any shape, cordially agreed, averring that Glenandarroch, after the shooting season was over, and the winter fairly set in, would be one of the most *triste* abodes in the world.

The conversation then glided on to Alwyne, at present an unpaid Attaché in the Ambassador's household, at —; but only awaiting

what, with the interest at his command, could be no distant prospect, a more independent as well as lucrative appointment, to claim his cousin's promised hand. Lady Brooke expatiated on the theme of her own satisfaction at her kinsman's deliverance from the trammels of "those Oxford men," and congratulated Florence on the successful exertion of *her* influence in winning him from the wild notions which had possessed him a year ago.

"But indeed, Florence," she added, "your influence is something wonderful, and not less so the manner in which fortune seems to favor you. You never fail in any point on which you have set your heart. I do anticipate a brilliant destiny for you, my dear. With Alwyne Mackenzie's talents, energy and interests, what may he not attain to?"

Florence laughed, and declared herself quite ready to wait—in no hurry for Alwyne to achieve his destinies. Her present life was too bright and pleasant for her to desire its coming to a close. And then, too, her hopes

for her darling Eva were as bright as her own. And she proceeded to inform her aunt of her having twice seen Herbert Grey in London, and of his unaltered interest in her sister; and how he had told her that he meant to move heaven and earth for leave of absence, so as to get down to Glenandaroch in August.

“His regiment,” she said, “is in the north of England, in a very disturbed district, and he has never been at home since he joined; and had only, at that time, one hurried week’s leave, in order to see his family, who were in London on their way to make a few months’ tour on the Continent. Sir Gervase has never rallied satisfactorily from his severe illness last autumn, it seems; and has been ordered abroad by his physicians. I was charmed with Mr. Grey,” added Florence. “He looks in much stronger health, and has become so animated—so different from his former languid manner. He is really a handsome, prepossessing creature. And from the little he had opportunity to say, and even more from what he

looked, I could perceive how devoted he was to Eva, and how her tastes and opinions seemed to have been influencing his during their separation. Ah, it is a very charming prospect. But now, aunt Brooke, I must go, I think, and see after Lydia's proceedings in unpacking my dresses."

"And I have a letter to write," said Lady Brooke. "After luncheon, my dear, we shall drive in to Edinburgh, I think."

"Very well, dear aunt," replied Florence, leaving the room, while Lady Brooke proceeded to write a confidential note to her man of business, requesting an interview that afternoon on a subject of importance; and this note sealed, and despatched to Edinburgh by a servant on horseback, she threw herself back on the sofa by her writing-table, and fell into a reverie on the destinies of her beautiful and beloved niece.

"Yes," she said to herself, "the career opening out before Florence will, in all human probability, be a brilliant and distinguished

one, and it must not be cramped by limited means. Eva, who could have been happy in a much humbler sphere, seems in a fair way of making a splendid match; and this connexion of my cousin's with the Middleham family—so much as Florence is with them, and so closely as she is about to be allied to them, necessarily brings her into contact with persons of the highest rank and largest fortune. I must not have my dear adopted child mortified by discovering her inability to cope with her little quiet sister's style of living, or that of her chosen associates. I have no object on earth but Florence; and if I find myself enabled, by means of the investment Mr. Fraser proposes to me, to make her a larger allowance during my life, and to leave her a larger fortune at my death—it would certainly be a very foolish thing not to avail myself of the opportunity.”

In pursuance of these reflections, Lady Brooke's carriage stood at the door of Mill-

mount House shortly after luncheon-time, and conveyed herself and her niece to Edinburgh—a distance of not more than a couple of miles, along one of those beautiful lines of road which diverge on all sides from the Scottish metropolis. Leaving Florence in Charlotte Square, where she had several visits to pay, and having arranged a meeting, when their respective business should be over, at the establishment of a fashionable dress-maker, whom both patronised largely, Lady Brooke drove on alone to the large and handsome house in the west-end of George-street, which was the residence of her man of business, and next door to which were his chambers,—where the carriage stopped.

Just as it did so, the door of Mr. Fraser's residence opened, and there issued forth a bevy of young ladies, the daughters of that gentleman, all pretty girls, all dressed in the most elaborate and *recherché* style—much too elaborate and *recherché*, as Lady Brooke's good taste suggested, for walking-costume—and all re-

markable for a certain air of pretension very nearly amounting to insolence; and for a degree of self-possession as closely approaching to assurance. These young ladies were followed by their mama, a large and handsome, though somewhat coarse woman, whose style of dress was even more striking than that of her daughters, and were attended by a brace of officers belonging to the dragoon-regiment, then quartered at Piershill, who had apparently been Mrs. Fraser's guests at luncheon; and, in requital of her hospitality, were now about to do her and her daughters the honor of escorting them a little way on their afternoon's round of shopping or of visiting.

Lady Brooke, who was acquainted with these ladies, was arrested by them as she alighted from her carriage, and overwhelmed by a profusion of tender enquiries after her niece, Miss Monro, on the part of Mrs. Fraser. Her daughters, after having each performed a studied bend and smile in answer to Lady Brooke's salutation, stood a little apart, talking

in an under tone with their military attendants —Miss Fraser, who had remarkably fine teeth, laughing as frequently as possible, so as to display them; and Miss Jane Fraser, who boasted of a very small hand, and wore exquisite French kid-gloves, twirling her near-sighted glass by the chain to which it hung, and occasionally raising and holding it to her eye as any one came up or passed the group, while Miss Helen, the wit of the family, ran on to the younger of the officers in an animated satirical discussion of a *fête* at the Horticultural Gardens on the previous day, as if with the charitable view of affording her sister as many pretexts as possible for the smile she so loved to shew.

Extricating herself as speedily as was consistent with politeness from the profuse civilities of Mrs. Fraser, Lady Brooke ascended the door-steps of her husband's chambers. His lady, the while, proceeded along George-street with her daughters and the officers, expatiating, as she went, on the rare

merits of this wealthy client of Mr. Fraser's, and on the beauty and accomplishments of her niece and heiress. It might possibly be in consequence of her absorption in this topic—a deeply-interesting one to Mrs. Fraser, whose life was spent in the most arduous and expensive efforts to extend and improve her circle of acquaintance—that she passed close by without returning the bow of a young man, very plainly and almost shabbily dressed, yet having a certain air of breeding which unmistakeably proclaimed him in every sense a gentleman. He was the son of a ruined Laird, whose estate had been under trust, and the affairs of the trust managed by Mr. Fraser, for many years ; till, matters becoming yearly worse instead of better, the whole property had been sold for a sum which barely sufficed to pay the debt upon it, and the youth, who was born its heir, flung nearly pennyless on the world, to fight his way as best he might. While he was thus experiencing something very much like a *cut* from the wife of a man

who, twenty years before, had esteemed it an honor to be invited to his father's table, the daughters of that lady were shewing themselves no inapt pupils in her school, by bestowing similar treatment on a young lady, very lovely, and very simply attired, who bowed to them in passing, and received a broad stare from one, and an application of the eye-glass from another, as the only return to her salutation. She too, though greatly the Misses Frasers superior in birth, was, compared to them, a step-child of fortune; and consequently, although in returning to Edinburgh after a couple of years' absence, she recognised them as former acquaintance, it by no means followed that their memories should be equally retentive of a countenance belonging to one, who had neither title nor wealth to render her worthy of remembrance—and, worse than that, who had good looks sufficient to cause both the officers to turn and look after her. And thus these aspirants after fashion went on their way, and presently separated—the mamma and

Miss Jane diverging in one direction for the purpose of paying visits, Miss Fraser and Miss Helen pursuing another route, whose object was shopping—and after parting from their attendant officers, meeting and being escorted, *unchaperoned* as they were, by sundry other admirers of their papa's good dinners, and of their mamma's agreeable *soirées dansantes*. Lady Brooke, the while, having been admitted into the business sanctuary of the former, and conducted past the open door of a room filled with clerks and apprentices, was now seated in the penetralia of the Temple of Themis, *tête-à-tête* with its High Priest, Wylie Fraser, Esq., W. S.

The gentleman rejoicing in that appellation was an extremely bland, courteous individual, whose manners were widely-different from the arrogance and assumption of his wife's and daughters', and who would not, for worlds, have *cut* the most unfortunate client who had ever had him as a trustee. He was the son of a nobleman's steward far in the north ; and

having begun life with that nobleman's interest, a tolerable patrimony from his father's savings, and an inexhaustible stock of industry, perseverance, and shrewdness, if not something more, had slowly but surely worked his way upwards and onwards—a progress much aided by his marriage with the only daughter of another Writer to the Signet, who had left her a considerable fortune—till, at the present time, there was not a professional man in Edinburgh who had a larger amount of profitable business, or in whose hands the management of more estates was placed. And in the various country neighbourhoods into which this branch of his profession led him, Mr. Fraser was considered safe as the Bank of Scotland itself; and to place money in his hands, the surest and most profitable of investments—inasmuch so, that there was scarcely a tenant on the estates under his charge, who had not made him the depositary of at least part of his capital.

The investment proposed by this highly-

respected man of business to Lady Brooke was of the above nature. In his capacity of money-lender—a very extensive and lucrative branch of the profession—he had constant occasions for large sums of money ; and for what he now required, he offered her unexceptionable security, and a high rate of interest—so high, that it would largely increase her income. This too, it must be added, was no offer volunteered on Mr. Fraser's part, but naturally and obviously elicited by the enquiries of his client, who implicitly relied on his judgment, as to the possibility of adding to her means. The subject had now been, for some time, under discussion between them, and was on the day in question brought to a final and satisfactory close, Lady Brooke empowering Mr. Fraser to sell out of the funds in her name, and apply the money thus realised to the purpose agreed on.

This matter settled, she was escorted to her carriage by the courteous man of business himself ; and flinging herself back upon its

cushions as it drove off from his door, was speedily lost in a vision of future wealth and splendour, connected with Florence.

Never had the high-bred, simple beauty, and the distinguished style of her niece appeared more striking to Lady Brooke than when, on their meeting at the place of rendezvous, she contrasted her, in her own mind, with the Misses Fraser; and a glow of proud satisfaction, in the means thenceforth to be at her command for enhancing the future position of that worshipped being, pervaded her whole spirit, as Florence lightly stepped into the carriage, and they rolled off along the smooth and beautiful road, on their way home. It so happened that, on this evening, owing to some accident having occurred to the North Mail, the letters which ought to have arrived some hours earlier, were delivered very late. Florence was sauntering alone after dinner among the flower-beds outside the drawing-room, when one was brought to her from her sister. Glancing into the room which she had quitted,

she perceived that her aunt, fatigued by the heat of the day, and the excitement of her business-colloquy with Mr. Fraser, had sunk asleep in the easy chair which she occupied ; so that instead of returning within, she placed herself on a rustic seat, and began to read it there.

Eva's letter began by various comments on the last one which she had received from her sister, and the expression of an earnest hope on her own and her mother's part, of speedily seeing Lady Brooke and Florence at Auchmithie.

It then proceeded to another and a very different topic—the announcement of an event which, she said, had plunged them in grief and mourning, the death of their beloved and venerated friend, the aged Bishop of Moray.

“ We heard of it yesterday,” she continued, “ else, dearest Florence, I meant to have written to you then—but I could not. Mamma and I passed the day in tears. To-day, however, we have wept no more—we both said we

durst not weep any more, after reading a letter which mamma received from Mr. Ogilvy, who had hastened to Saltounburgh, on hearing the heavy tidings, being near at hand at the time. He knew how anxious mamma would be for every particular, and kindly wrote her all connected with the—*death* one can scarcely term it—the translation of our venerated friend. It was, indeed, Florence, a death in keeping with his life. You know that, for a considerable time past, he had been compelled, by his increasing weakness, to seclude himself more entirely from the world, and to decline seeing any visitors. I am inclined to think that Alwyne's, previous to his departure hence, was amongst the last visits which he received. And how doubly thankful *he* will feel that it was made, and that he was once more permitted to receive the Bishop's blessing! Still he never allowed any one to sleep in his house, but continued, as ever, alone at night, with none but God and His Holy Angels to watch over him. With Them, if ever mortal man did, he

had lived, and in solitude with Them his spirit departed.

“At seven o'clock in the morning of St. Peter's Day, when the person who waited upon him came to the house, and went into his room, he found him lying dead, stretched calmly on his bed, his hands folded across his breast, and a handkerchief laid over his face.

“‘Nothing,’ Mr. Ogilvy goes on to say, ‘could be more perfect, more serene, than his aspect of holy stillness and profound repose. It is a sight, as I have just gazed, for the last time, upon that venerable face in his coffin, never to be forgotten to one's own dying day. *Requiescat in Pace!* I believe that he died as he would have wished to die; and if unseen and untended by human eye and hand, who shall venture to affirm that other and holier eyes might not be upon him in the last conflict? that his passage through the Valley of the Shadow might not be smoothed by hands more gentle and more helpful than those of

humanity? Who can tell what forms might be visible, even to the bodily organs of the departing Saint, in that hour of solemn loneliness? They are not wanting who aver that it was impossible he could have placed himself in the position wherein he was discovered; and foot of mortal man had not approached his chamber before that of him who found him so! We cannot tell. It is not for us to say. But the poor people of his flock, who loved him with no common love and reverence, do not hesitate to clothe in words the thought which has come to so many of us in silent, thrilling awe. They say—the Bishop was laid out by the Angels.’

“Oh! Florence—what a death-bed! Does not the thought check one’s tears? We dare not shed them for him. And does it not cause everything in this life, all its pomps, and vanities, and pleasures, to shrink into such emptiness? Nothing seems *real* but death; and how little does it matter where death finds us? That humble chamber in that humble

dwelling, monarchs might have longed to exchange places with its tenant !

“ Alwyne will feel this so deeply ! He will so grieve to be at such a distance ! I cannot help crying when I think of that, and recal our last conversation about the Bishop, after he had taken leave of him. He felt a presentiment then that they should never meet again.”

“ Yes,” thought Florence ; “ and if Eva had gone on to say what she felt, she would have added—‘ And whose blame is it that the presentiment has been fulfilled.’ I know she had that in her heart when she wrote these words. Why should she cry about Alwyne—or tell me so ? Oh ! shame on me ! shame ! how unjust I am to my sister ! How hard my heart is ! Why do I not feel like Eva in thinking that the dear, good, holy Bishop is gone, who was papa’s friend all his life long ? What has come to me ?”

Alas ! Florence did not choose to prosecute

her enquiries so as to discover what had come to her, and to humble herself in penitence for the rapidly-encroaching love of the world which was eating into her heart and altering her fine natural character. She had deliberately given way to it in the instance of her lover's choice in life, and the consciousness of this fault remained at the bottom of her heart, unconfessed, unrepented, and therefore exercising an evil influence on her temper and feelings. She finished reading her sister's letter, and reperused her account, from Mr. Ogilvy's, of the Bishop's death-bed ; but it was with dry eyes, and a heart pained at its own want of emotion, yet not softened ; then, rising from her seat with an impatient sigh, quitted the oppressive stillness of the sweet dewy flower-garden, and the tranquil, warm, clear, evening sky, and wended her way towards the house.

CHAPTER XI.

RETURN TO THE HIGHLANDS.

“ANNIE, why, Annie, are you not dressed, you little dawdle?” exclaimed the Chief of Glenandarroch, entering his lady’s apartment about half past seven o’clock in the evening of a beautiful day in the month of August succeeding the period of our last chapter. “It is dinner time, and—”

“I know, Kenneth, I know,” replied Lady Anne, turning round with a deprecatory look from under the hands of her French maid. “I shan’t be long. Mais dépêche toi donc Angélique! I was playing with baby, for I had not seen him since breakfast time, and I quite forgot the hour.”

"And there's Lady Brooke's carriage just come."

"Well, but mamma is down stairs. I heard her door open ten minutes ago."

"Yes, *she* is never behind time. I wonder how she came to have such a dawdling daughter?"

"She is punctual enough for two, you see, Kenneth," replied Lady Anne, laughing.

"But, Annie, does *she* understand?" breaking off his speech, with a glance at Mademoiselle Angélique.

"No, not so as to follow you or me. What is it? About Eva, I fancy. I have not seen you all day to explain—and I suppose she has not come?"

"No, I only saw Lady Brooke and Florence get out of the carriage, and ran up to ask you the meaning of it. There's Grey arrived, and I was just dying to see how they would meet."

"Mr. Grey is arrived, is he? I am so glad! We came in so late from our expedition up

the Corrie-dhearg, that I rushed up stairs without stopping to ask questions; only when I met my baby-boy, he sent the lateness of the hour all out of my head. But Mrs. Monro is not at all well to-day, it seems, and Eva could not bear the idea of leaving her. She wrote me a note to say so, which I received when I came home. It is very tiresome!"

"Very! Quite aggravating! I am sure one always misses Florence when she is out of the way; but I wish she had stayed at home to-day."

"Oh! That would not have been at all in Florence's way," replied Lady Anne. "I am sure her aunt would not have allowed her to do so; and she knows that I can't get on at a country dinner party without her. There's another carriage. Do go, dear Kenneth, and cover my non-appearance; and I shall follow you as fast as possible. Mais tu es folle, Angélique! Je ne porterai pas aujourd'hui la berthe en Guipure! Donne m'en une autre. Voyons!"

Ah oui ! La dentelle de Bruxelles. C'est cela !”

And berthe, gloves, bouquet, at last arranged to her satisfaction, her ladyship, more radiant in her fairy loveliness than ever, followed her husband to the drawing-room.

Late on the evening of this day, Eva went out into the garden. It was now quite dusky, for the moon was not up ; but the sky was so clear in its obscurity, the air so soft and sweet, so redolent of the garden odours—and in the stillness, the ripple and dash of the stream far down in the glen below, came so musically on the ear, that no one endowed with her vivid perception of the charms of nature could fail to feel it, what the summer twilight ever is, the pleasantest hour of all the twenty-four. The heart of the young girl beat in unison with the scene. Lost in a wilderness of sweet visions, she paced for a little while up and down the garden walks, till she was roused from her reverie by the sound of a footstep, distinctly

audible through the silence, coming up the avenue in front of the house.

She was, at this moment, close by the yew hedges which fenced the garden towards the front, and immediately passing through the open door way formed in them, advanced in the direction of the foot-step, supposing it to be that of Colin Ban, who she just now recollected had asked leave to bring up a letter which he had received from his foster-brother, to Auchmithie, for the perusal of Mrs. Monro and her daughters ; and who sometimes made his appearance at unwonted hours, whether of night or morning. Perceiving him, as she fancied, coming towards her, Eva walked on to meet him.

“Colin, is it you?” she said.

The person she addressed came to a pause a little way from her, under the shade of a large tree, but did not reply.

“Is it not you, Colin? I can scarcely distinguish you,” repeated Eva.

He made a few steps forward and extended his hand.

“Not Colin,” said a low and agitated voice, “but one who trusts that Miss Monro will forgive his intrusion at such an hour.”

“Mr. Grey !” exclaimed Eva.

She could not utter another word. Surprise and emotion choked her voice ; her heart throbbed so violently that she could only with difficulty prevent herself trembling from head to foot ; and she was scarcely conscious of any thing more than that Herbert Grey was by her side, that both her hands were clasped in his, and that, as on recovering some measure of self-possession, she instantly became aware, he was even more agitated than herself, and equally incapable of speech for some few minutes.

“Forgive me,” at last he said, making an effort to recover himself. “I am afraid I startled you—I am afraid this is a most unseasonable hour. But I could not—*I could not*

delay seeing you till to-morrow. I got away unobserved as soon after dinner as possible. May I come in? Will Mrs. Monro admit me?"

"I am sure mama would have been very happy," replied Eva, endeavouring to steady her faltering voice, "but she is not quite well, I am sorry to say, and is gone to bed some time ago."

"And you are quite alone?" he enquired.

"Quite alone. I only came out into the garden for a little walk. It is so sweet to-night."

"It is unutterably sweet!" he exclaimed. "Will you allow me to accompany you into the garden? I shall not, of course, ask you to admit me within doors under the circumstances. But a few minutes' walk in the garden," he continued in a pleading tone, perceiving that she hesitated, and again endeavoured to withdraw her hands, which were still clasped in his. "Surely, surely, Miss

Monro, there can be no harm in that? Do not bid me go away quite yet—not the very moment I have come—after all these long, long months of absence.”

Eva did not reply; but he apparently interpreted her silence as consent, for releasing one of her hands, he gently drew the other under his arm, and led her round the tall yew hedges into the garden, which, in contrast to the deep shadows in front of the house, was now lighted up by the radiance of the rising moon. Here they came to a pause, and Herbert turned his eyes full on the face of his companion.

“You have not forgotten the last time we met and parted, at the door, in just such a light as this—have you?” he asked.

“No, indeed, I have not,” said Eva, looking down from his earnest gaze.

“There has been no such moonlight as that—for me at least—until this moment,” pursued he. “If I were to live a century, Miss Monro, I never could forget that day and night.”

“It was a very, very happy day, and a happy night,” said Eva.

“And followed by such a morning! Oh! Miss Monro, the horror of such an awakening as mine next day! The shock of being startled from sleep, and from such dreams—by tidings such as met me then! I cannot tell you the impression which it has left on my mind—the mingled, entangled confusion of painful thoughts that crowd upon me when I recall it.”

“We were all so grieved for you!” replied Eva. “It was such a painful surprise to hear that you were gone, and from so sad a cause.”

“You grieved for me, did you?” Again his eloquent eyes were fixed on her.

“Surely—how could it be otherwise?” she replied. “We had all been so happy together, and—”

“We had indeed!” exclaimed he. “One of us, at all events, never knew what happiness was before.”

“But I hope we are all going to be very happy together again,” pursued Eva, endeavouring to smile unconcernedly. “And now I must bid you good-night, Mr. Grey. Mama will be so glad to see you to-morrow.”

She attempted to withdraw her arm from his, but it was held too fast to be extricated.

“Not yet—not yet awhile, Miss Monro. One minute, Eva.”

The last word escaped, as it were, involuntarily, and in a very low voice; but her ear caught the sound, and a strange thrill, an almost overpowering sensation, seemed for a moment to arrest the pulses of her heart. She could not command her voice to answer calmly, but he felt her tremble.

“You are cold?” he said, in a gentle tone, “I have kept you standing too long.” He drew her on along the garden walk, immediately below that which ran under the windows; and for a little space neither of them spoke again. They had now approached the

rustic sofas, which stood together about the centre of this walk.

“Do you remember,” asked Herbert, “that Sunday—that first Sunday which I had the happiness of spending with you, when we all came here, and sat in the lovely evening sunshine?”

“Yes, perfectly,” replied Eva.

“What a happy day that was! and what a happier evening! How many blessed hours I have spent here since then, or elsewhere in your society!” he continued, and as he spoke she felt the hand which was resting on his left arm, gently clasped in his right. “Well may I call them blessed hours, for their influence will be felt, please God, throughout all my after life. Eva, you little guess what a blessing you have been to me.”

Eva was silent. She could not answer, and after a moment's pause he went on.

“The thought of you has never quitted me. It has been my safeguard through many temptations since I left you; and you, who are pure

as one of the angels, you little guess how much I needed it. I have lived upon the memory of our intercourse, and on the hope of its renewal. To-day, when I expected to meet you once more, I scarcely felt master of myself. I was glad, after the first emotion of disappointment, that our meeting did not take place in a crowd. This seems a fitter spot. The purity—the sweetness—the repose, are more like you, Eva. Eva, do not turn away your head, do not take your hand from me—I know I am unworthy of you. But I love you, I love you from my soul. You will not forbid me to hope, will you, Eva ?”

Her innocent, trusting eyes met his, and the arm on which she had been leaning loosed its hold, and was clasped round her, as the unspoken compact was sealed upon her lips.

It was not long after this that they parted at the yew-hedge doorway ; not long in point of time, for the lateness of the hour forbade it to be otherwise. But there are brief spaces of time which, even in this world, “ clasp ” the

joy, as well as "the grief of years," and this was of them.

When released at last from Herbert's long and passionate embrace, when, after he had turned again, and yet again, to clasp her to his heart once more—once more to press his lips to hers and to reiterate the sweet promise of an early meeting on the morrow, Eva had caught the last glimpse of his form as it disappeared in the shadow of the avenue, when hastening with a light and rapid step along the upper garden walks, she had entered the drawing-room, closed the sashed door behind her, and sunk in a species of happy bewilderment, a waking trance, upon the sofa near it; years might have elapsed, were years reckoned by the succession of emotions, since she had last sat there beside her mother, but a few hours earlier on that very evening.

It was all so like a dream; the hour, the scene—of Herbert's abrupt appearance and subsequent declaration, all combined to render it so. Sometimes she paused on the rapid cur-

rent of thought, down which her soul seemed drifting, to ask herself if it was not a dream. But no, it was truth—happy—how happy!—reality. The object of her private thoughts for many months back, he who had first awakened her young heart to the profound depths of its own capacity of loving, *had* been with her that night, had returned more devoted than ever, had told her all—all his love—all his anguish in departing the previous autumn, had explained his subsequent correspondence with her mother, and enforced—but *not* hopeless—silence towards herself in consequence, and had received with rapturous gratitude her modest avowal of affection, and promise to be his, provided he had the approbation of her mother and of his own parents. They had parted, with a permission accorded him, to call upon Mrs. Monro early next day, and an agreement on his part that although he must be allowed to impart his happy secret that night to Florence; ‘to forestal you, my own Eva,’ he had said, ‘for I know you would

not keep it from her,' yet that no one else was to become a sharer in it, until he had Mrs. Monro's leave to disclose it. Yes, it was all true. A bright, a lovely future arrayed itself before them. Or rather there was no future, no trace of the care and thought inseparable from that word. It was all one radiant *now*; all forethought—all anxiety—annihilated, absorbed in the infinite rapture of the present.

The hours passed on unheeded while Eva sat. Little Shelas had brought in the candles at last, unbidden, after waiting in vain to have them rung for, and had found her young lady sitting alone in the moonlit drawing-room, her bonnet and scarf on the sofa by her side. She had re-appeared again with the tray of wine and water, and biscuits, which were to be left upon the table until the absent members of the household came home; and then had retired to bed, as did every one else but the two Edinburgh Abigails, Mrs. Marshall and Miss Lydia Jamieson, who were sitting up over strong tea and buttered toast,

for their respective ladies. Still Eva remained in the same position, absorbed in her entrancing dreams ; till roused at last by the clock striking one, she reflected that her aunt would wonder to see her out of bed, after having so particularly enjoined her not to remain up ; and began to feel a dread of her possible surmises ; for kind though Lady Brooke essentially was, there was a degree of worldliness and hardness in her character, with which her younger niece had nothing in common. Eva, therefore, retired to her own room, feeling sure that Florence would seek her there. And, accordingly, she had scarcely put on her dressing-gown, when the carriage drove up to the door.

A very few minutes elapsed, and then the voice of Lady Brooke was heard, as she and Florence issued from the drawing-room.

“ Good night, love. I’m so sleepy ! But we had a charming party. It is quite a pity that Eva missed it.”

“ Yes, a sad pity !” said Florence, very

solemnly. "Good night, my dear aunt. Oh! Lydia," to her maid, as she entered her apartment, and found that damsel in attendance, "I am sorry to have kept you up so late. Make haste and help me to take off my dress; and then you may go. I shan't want you any more."

"What, not to brush your hair, Miss Monro?" enquired Lydia, who had by no means been accustomed, especially during the by-gone London season, to apologies from her mistress for her broken rest at hours very much later than the present.

"No, no, I am much too sleepy. There, that will do. Yes, just put away my fan. You can make it all tidy in the morning. Thank you, good night, Lydia."

And huddling on her Parisian peignoir, and all but turning her wondering maid out of the room, Florence impatiently waited till the sound of her footsteps died away in the passage, then caught up her candle, and flew to her sister's chamber.

“Eva! my darling! not in bed? I was sure you would not.”

“Oh! Florence, I was too happy to sleep—and I thought you would come!”

They were clasped in each other's arms—kisses, tears, and laughter, contending for the mastery. Eva was right when she once had said, there was no sympathy like that of Florence. So warm, so entire, so unreserved. Thus Herbert Grey had found it that evening—thus was it poured forth on Eva now.

“And he told you all about it, Florence? Was it not strange?”

“Not in the least strange to me, love. I suspected it the moment I missed him from amongst the other gentlemen after dinner. I guessed where he was gone; and did my best to help him, by skilfully covering his retreat. And when he, at last, re-appeared, with those bright, dark eyes of his all lighted up with such a look of triumphant joy—(what a very handsome creature he is, Eva, now that he has got into strong health!)—there was no need to

tell me anything. I knew it all before he spoke. Oh ! dearest, I am so happy ! I never was so happy ! My own Eva ! you so richly deserve every good that can come to you. He has won a treasure, if he does but know it, and I think he does."

At last, even the two sisters had retired to rest. Not a sound was audible in the cottage—the grey, colourless sky was beginning to be flecked with the roseate clouds of dawn, the moon was paling, and the stars, save Lucifer, the "Light-bearer," had disappeared ; a low, whispering wind was sighing through the trees, and a few wakeful birds were beginning to chirp from their leafy covert.

Suddenly Mrs. Monro started from her sleep, which had for some time past been strangely disturbed and uneasy. She awoke from it in an agony of tears and sobs, stretching out her hand as if to grasp and detain some one by her bed-side.

"Eva ! Eva ! sister ! come back to me ! Come back, my heart's darling. Speak to me

again, Eva! Oh! it was a dream—nothing but a dream!” as with awakening comprehension, she recognised where she was, and sank again upon her pillow. “But what a dream!” she ejaculated to herself, as a strong shudder shook her frame. “What does it mean. What brought her back thus? And what did she say to me? I have lost it. It was something so dreadful—so agonizing! It made me weep so bitterly—I awoke myself with weeping. And yet now it is gone from me, and I cannot remember what it was. And *he* too! I saw him again—again—on the self-same spot. Oh! let me pray to be delivered from these terrors of the night, for they are hard for flesh and blood to endure.”

She arose from her bed, and kneeling beside it, remained for some little time absorbed in earnest prayer, which had the effect of calming her shaken nerves, and enabling her, when she again lay down, to fall into a dreamless and refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

HALCYON HOURS.

THE mists of morning, hanging dense on loch and river, did not more rapidly disperse beneath the warm influence of the fully risen sun, than did the memory of her mournful dreams, and vague anticipations of evil, vanish from the mind of Mrs. Monro, as, ere she quitted her chamber that morning, she listened to the tale which Eva had to tell her; and a long private conference with Herbert Grey, who appeared at Auchmithie immediately after breakfast, still farther added to her maternal satisfaction in the future prospects of her child, as every word he uttered, and every sentiment by which she perceived him to be actuated, shewed him in a more amiable and

honorable light, and confirmed the high opinion of his heart and principles which she had always entertained.

One circumstance alone disappointed her, and in some measure damped her happiness, as leaving a cloud of uncertainty still to overhang what ought to have been free from any such drawback. This was the fact that Grey had not, as she had expected he would do, made a previous disclosure to his father of his attachment to Eva. This he proposed to do by letter, that very day, and he assured her, that he saw no reason to anticipate any opposition to his choice; but it would have been infinitely more satisfactory to have had no such anxiety, as must attend the expectation of Sir Gervase's reply, to alloy their present enjoyment. With all his usual candour, Grey himself was the first to acknowledge this, and to blame himself for it. He poured forth to the mother of his betrothed, a full explanation of what he had often previously hinted or told her in part, the peculiar circumstances of his family, and

frankly acknowledged the difficulty and reluctance, with which he ever attempted to open his heart on any subject to his father; feelings, he said, which he found it nearly impossible to overcome, though heartily ashamed of, and unable altogether to account for them. It was like the oppression of a night-mare. His father's gravity, sternness, and unconquerable reserve, were such as to petrify the warmest flow of emotion, and freeze up the current of speech. He always found it much easier to write than to speak to him; for bigotted though he was, and contracted though his sympathies were, by a gloomy and erroneous system of belief, he was a truly right hearted man, he was not worldly in any of his views, and when uninfluenced by others, earnestly desirous to promote the happiness of his children. But although Herbert had many times, during the period which had elapsed since he joined his regiment, intended to write to his father on the subject of his attachment, he

had as often been deterred by the accounts which he received of the uncertain health, and low spirits of Sir Gervase, of the necessity urged by his medical attendants of avoiding any agitating topic with him, above all, by the reports his sister gave of the hourly increasing ascendancy of Mr. Hargrave; an ascendancy, which he himself had every reason to believe, would be most unfavourable to any hopes or plans of his own. He had trusted, Herbert added, that some opportunity of entering upon the subject might have presented itself during his parents' visit to London, previous to going abroad. This visit, however, from various causes, was not only limited to one hurried week, during which his father was extremely indisposed, and less than ever equal to any discussion, but was made in company with Mr. Hargrave, who, to poor Gertrude's infinite disgust, having found a clerical friend of similar views to himself, to undertake his duty, actually accompanied his friends to Germany,

and was only at this present time on his way home, leaving them to prosecute a farther tour.

Thus, in one way or another, had Herbert been prevented, or suffered himself to be prevented, touching upon what lay nearest his heart, with either parent. He accused himself now, he had often done so before, of weakness, and want of moral courage for this. The gentle and considerate Mrs. Monro did not blame him for it, half so much as she found him disposed to blame himself. She could enter into his sensations, she fully understood and sympathised with all he had told her; and besides, like him, she could not anticipate anything worse than some delay, perhaps some little opposition, which it would not be hard for an only son to overcome, for the birth and connexions of Eva were equal to his own; though far from wealthy, she was not penniless, and in herself, as her mother proudly felt, in person, mind, and demeanour,

amply fitted to grace the most exalted station. Thus it was not difficult to disarm Mrs. Monro of any emotion of displeasure, with one whom she regarded so affectionately as she did Herbert Grey.

This displeasure, such as it was, would have been of a still more modified cast, had she known what Grey was too generous to mention, how very much of this silence of his to his parents, had been attributable to the influence of his sister. We have already seen something of this, ere he left the Hall to join his regiment; and Gertrude had not failed to exert it by letter, as well as by speech; and on occasion of their meeting in London, had more strenuously than ever enforced the necessity of caution, so long as Mr. Hargrave continued a member of the family party. It was quite true that she did—and with justice—dread his throwing the weight of his powerful influence, into the opposing scale of her brother's, and confirming Sir Gervase's impression of the worldliness and ungodliness of all his son's friends and asso-

ciates in the north. It was also true that Mrs. Courtenay and her daughter were in London during the time which the Grey family spent there; that however hurried and oppressed with business Lady Grey might be, she still managed to find leisure for them, and for Mr. Armytage; and that Gertrude was compelled to listen to a more than ordinary amount of admiration bestowed by her mother, on "that dear, estimable young creature, Augusta Courtenay," and the very decided views on the subject of eschewing balls and operas, entertained by the said Augusta, not less than to endure at second-hand, many a repetition of the dicta enunciated by the Pope, as to the inestimable prize which would be secured by the fortunate individual, who should obtain Miss Courtenay's hand. It was true that she considered the influences around her father and mother totally inimical to her brother's hopes at that time, and conscientiously believed, that Herbert would act more wisely by deferring

their disclosure, until those influences were removed. But with all these considerations, was largely mingled a development of that genius for intrigue, and love of mystery, which had been fostered by her education. She enjoyed keeping the management of this secret romance in her own hands; and being, like Florence Monro, no adept in self-knowledge, she had little idea how keen a desire lay lurking at the bottom of her heart, that Herbert should find himself hurried on by circumstances, to declare his passion to Eva, before he had been able to mention it to his father at all; and thus, as she hoped, cause the latter to find that matters had gone too far, to allow his son with honour to recede. True, Sir Gervase might not think so, he might refuse his consent; and in that case, the heart of a sensitive young girl would be wrung by the bitterness of disappointment, succeeding what had worn the aspect of certainty; and a heavy burden of self-accusation be added to her brother's sorrow. It is always dangerous to play with such

edge tools as intrigues, which involve the happiness of our fellow creatures; but this view of the case did not occur to Gertrude; nor with the training she had had, was it very likely that it should do so.

Meanwhile her end had been attained, and now an earnest, affectionate letter was written, and dispatched by her brother to Sir Gervase, containing a manly and open-hearted avowal of his sentiments, and a history of the progress of his affection. Such a letter it was, in short, as it might be thought, could scarcely fail to find its way to a father's heart. This duty done, Herbert abandoned himself, with all the sanguine trustfulness of youth, to the intoxicating delights of a first and fortunate attachment. They were Elysian days, which now flew by with such winged speed; days that were never to be forgotten! Although it would of course have been premature to announce the engagement between him and Eva, until formally sanctioned by his father, yet no doubt was entertained on that subject by any one; and

it would at all events have been impossible to hide it from the Glenandarroch family. And of all persons who ever were formed to enjoy such a piece of news, or to promote to the very uttermost, the enjoyment of the parties principally concerned, the Chief and Lady Anne stood pre-eminent. Nothing could exceed their delight in such a state of things, except their inexhaustible kindness and good-nature. The parties formed—the expeditions undertaken, for the purpose of bringing the lovers unobservedly together; the graceful tact by which it was managed, that Herbert and Eva should be thrown in each other's way, without attracting the notice of visitors or servants—as if servants did not invariably contrive to find out every secret which their masters flatter themselves that they have most skilfully concealed!—all were charming. It was worth while, as Florence said, to have a love affair, with a little dash of mystery in it, to secure such inimitable auxiliaries.

And amongst all the happiness, who so

happy as Florence? Who so full of sympathy, of active good offices, of bright and hopeful anticipation? There were no bounds to her kindness—there never were with Florence, when she could be of use, and felt herself of consequence to others; she was occupied with the affairs of her sister and Grey, her best and warmest feelings were aroused, and she was more like her old self, as both her mother and Eva felt, than she had ever been since the previous summer. Thus surrounded by affectionate sympathy, time flew by with the lovers in a species of happy dream, undisturbed by one importunate thought of the future. All consideration of after arrangements was postponed until Sir Gervase's letter should arrive; and so perfectly happy did they feel, that it almost seemed as though they were conscious of no impatience for its arrival—as though any change in their present circumstances must be for the worse.

But time was gliding on all the while; and unless Herbert's letter had missed Sir Gervase

at the place to which it was addressed, and followed him elsewhere, he ought to have received an answer to it. The arrival of a long journal from Gertrude, bearing different dates, and making no allusion to Herbert's, seemed to render this conclusion probable. Another foreign post or two would probably decide the lovers' fate; and Mrs. Monro especially began to feel anxious and uneasy to a degree, which she herself acknowledged to be unreasonable. It was at this time that Florence fell upon a device for occupying the thoughts of all parties, in the execution of which she found a most willing coadjutrix in Miss Marjory Brodie.

That worthy old lady had been for the last fortnight the guest of Mrs. Monro, Lady Brooke having gone on a tour of visits in Aberdeenshire, in which her favorite niece had begged to be excused accompanying her, on account of the position of affairs at home. Miss Brodie was now desirous of returning to her own residence at Saltounburgh, and earnestly pressed Mrs. Monro, her daughters, and Grey, to accompany

her—an invitation which Florence eagerly seconded. Mrs. Monro did not at first appear particularly inclined to quit home, but yielded to the entreaties of the rest of the party ; for Florence had managed to render Herbert Grey as eager on the subject as herself, by promising him that if he would go to Miss Brodie's, she should there be able to throw some light upon that extraordinary dream which he had once related to her. It must, she said, be interpreted on one particular spot, or not at all. Eva, when privately reminded by her sister of a conference on the subject between themselves and Alwyne, after hearing Grey's account of it, entered into the proposal with as much keenness as Florence ; and it was finally arranged that the visit should take place.

A beautiful evening found the party assembled in Miss Brodie's residence, one of those large old-fashioned houses belonging to the county gentry, which are still to be found in ancient Scottish towns, and which were once so numerous in such places. This one was the

property of the present head of the good old lady's family, her nephew, and had always been used as a jointure house for the dowagers of the race, in which capacity it had been occupied by her mother, and now continued to be her abode. It was situated in the High-street of the town, but somewhat apart from it; had a paved court surrounded by lofty stone walls, and entered by a handsome old gateway in front; and a large productive walled garden behind, extending down a steep open slope, and terminated by a double row of tall beech trees. Within doors there was the usual number of narrow passages, winding stairs, and unexpected steps at doorways in dark nooks. There were numerous apartments, singularly comfortable, though almost all low in the roof; panelled some of them, in dark woods, some in wood painted white, or hung with old-fashioned paper, and full of comfortable old-fashioned furniture. And the servants were equally antiquated and respectable in appearance with the house and its contents. Tea had

been prepared for the travellers in the drawing-room, a charming apartment, somewhat quaint and formal in its arrangements, but not more so than became the style of the house and its mistress—having its walls covered with an Indian paper, representing many wonderful forms of birds and animals, in bright colours. Several curious antique cabinets in carved oak and other woods, adorned with rare old china, stood in sundry recesses; and the windows, deep in the thickness of the walls, small and narrow, and curtained with rich amber-coloured satin damask, looked out upon the pleasant and well-tended garden. A fire burned cheerfully in the wide chimney, and after being shewn to their respective rooms, and having refreshed their toilettes after the journey, the party gathered about the round table, loaded with all manner of appliances to the evening meal, in a mood to enjoy it to the uttermost.

Miss Brodie, a delightful old lady every where, was especially so in her own house; combining, as she did, so much of the un-

bounded hospitality of Scotland's elder day, with its elaborate courtesy, all vivified by the energy of her own frank and kindly nature. She was enchanted at Eva's engagement to Grey, who had always been a very particular favorite of hers; charmed at having carried her point, and collected all the party under her own roof, and ready to enter into every scheme for enjoyment that could be suggested by any one. Seldom, in short, had a happier evening been spent by any of her guests. It was arranged, ere at a late hour, they separated to go to their respective chambers, that the following day should be devoted to an expedition to visit a fine old monastic ruin some six or eight miles from the town, which afforded vehicles available for such an undertaking; and that on the next again, something should take place—respecting which there had been some whispered consultation, in the recess of the farthest window, between Florence and Eva.

“Prepare yourself, Herbert,” said Florence,

as they emerged from their retreat, and approached the rest of the party, who were collected round the fire; "for on the day after to-morrow we propose initiating you into a mystery connected with your Dream-Castle!"

"What's that daft lassie saying, Mr. Grey?" demanded Miss Brodie. "She's nouthier to hand nor to bind noo that Alwyne Dhu's no here to keep her in order."

"Dear Alwyne Dhu!" exclaimed Eva. "We shall want him sadly that day, shan't we, Florence?"

"Indeed we shall," replied her sister. "But, Miss Brodie, Eva and I are coming to your room to tell you all about it, by and bye."

"Pray don't let me be a restraint upon your mysteries, Florence," said Grey, with an affectation of offended dignity, "I am quite ready to say good-night, and leave you undisturbed."

"No, you are not ready to say good-night," answered Florence, laying her hand on his arm; "for you are going to mix some wine and water for mamma first. And don't you be

uneasy, for we can manage our mysteries quite well, and you never be a bit the wiser, Master Herbert."

Accordingly, an hour or so after this time, when Grey, having dismissed Mr. Davis, had thrown himself into a comfortable arm chair, covered with tapestry work, in the snug old panelled room assigned to him, in order to indulge in a vague delicious reverie, he heard the rustle of female garments, and the tread of light footsteps hurrying past his door, as the sisters returned to their own apartments after their private conference with Miss Brodie.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DREAM INTERPRETED.

THE expedition to the ruined monastery took place as arranged, and gave unlimited satisfaction; and on the following day, after a very early luncheon, Herbert Grey set off with Florence and Eva on a long walk, as they warned him it would be, concerning whose object a mystery was made, which they both seemed greatly to enjoy, and their hostess little less so. Mrs. Brodie and Mrs. Monro were thus left alone.

“It renews ane’s youth to see thae young happy hearts,” exclaimed the former, as the front door was heard to close upon the pedestrians. “But ye seem sad, Florence, my dear, by ordnai, this haille morning? Nae doot it’s a mournfu’ thocht to you whar they’re gaun.

And meikle has chanced since ye were last here even, to raise thochts o' dool—when ane reflecks on the valued freend that we've a' lost, and can ne'er cease to miss. Still, I wad hae ye try an' cheer up. The hand that took awa' hath gi'en largely as well as ta'en."

"Do not suppose me insensible to that, or so ungrateful as to be indulging in vain repinings, dear Miss Brodie," replied Mrs. Monro. "I assure you it is not so; but I have been oppressed this whole morning in a way that I cannot shake off, by a most painful dream, which visited me last night for the second time. I am ashamed to say so—you will think me so very weak and silly."

"My dear, far be any sic presumptuous thochts frae me!" solemnly replied the old lady. "What was yer dream?"

"It was one," replied Mrs. Monro, shuddering, "into whose particulars I cannot bear to enter—connected with—with a never-to-be-forgotten incident in my life——"

“I see, I see; say nae mair, my dear. Dinna’ try to repeat it.”

“No, I do not think I could. Indeed it was all wild confusion and horror; but leaving an impression of pain and anguish perfectly indescribable; and all connected too with Eva—my own poor, poor Eva—my sister. And both times that the dream has occurred, I have wakened with the impression that she was close by me, and that she said something—something ineffably painful and terrible; but which I have not been able to recal when I awoke—only I have remained under a haunting sense of sorrow and impending evil, which, unreasonable as it sounds, I cannot shake off, and which has been almost worse than any real tangible trouble.”

“Nae doot, nae doot,” replied Miss Brodie. “But try to dismiss it frae your thochts, my dear. Ane would almaist think they could trace a very plain origin for it this last time, in your knowledge whar the young fock was

bourne for the day ; and in associations lang laid asleep, but startin' up again in strange and unaccountable life, as they do, in the watches o' the nicht."

"It may be so, and I would fain hope it is," said Mrs. Monro. "But what brought the dream the first time of its occurrence? I was exposed to no such reviving of old associations then. No matter. I must try to dismiss it from my thoughts, as you say, dear Miss Brodie."

The conversation turned upon a more agreeable topic, that, namely, of the young lovers and their happiness ; till, after a pause of a few minutes' duration, Miss Brodie suddenly looked up from her knitting.

"Florence," she said, "I maun ask ye a question, my dear, that has lang been on my mind, and ye'll no' take it ill frae an auld friend. Hae ye made that young lad aware o' the haill particulars of your family-history?"

The pale cheek of Mrs. Monro became paler still, as bending down her head, and covering her eyes with her hands, she answered—

“Alas ! no, dear Miss Brodie, I have not. Many times I have wished to do so. I feel that I ought.”

“In troth, my dear, ye should. It’s a bounden duty. Nae doot, nae doot, it’s a painful and a bitter task to rip up sic a tale.”

“It is, it is,” exclaimed Mrs. Monro, tears starting to her eyes. “It is an agonizing task, Miss Brodie ; and I am weak, I know I am—miserably weak on some points ; and I have culpably shrunk from the pain. I feel that I owe it to the happiness of my child, not less than to the open-hearted young man, whose choice has fallen upon her, that there should be no concealments from him of any thing that he might hereafter learn from others.”

“Ye hae said it, my dear. That’s just the risk. I’m nae friend to concealments, Florence. I hae often thocht there had been an error in that respeck wi’ your ain bairns.

It was na like a case that involved dishonor to a parent's memory to name, and there's aye a dread that the knowledge may burst upon them unprepared."

"But oh! Miss Brodie, who could have told them such a tale? And it is so old a story—so carefully hushed up amongst us—so—Who could have borne to trouble the peace of their young minds by suggesting doubts so hideous?"

"Ye hae nae doots yoursell, my bairn?"

"None—none, Miss Brodie, thank Heaven! Under the first overwhelming horror I had, and that was what nearly unsettled my reason; but they are long past, and—"

"And therefore your bairns wad hae imbibed nane. It micht na' ever hae been needfu' to tell them the haill grievous story; but a hint—an inkling that some dark mystery o' trouble rested on the name o' him they sae justly honored—micht hae been advisable, just to save them frae possible after-grief o' a worse nature. But I dinna presume to blame

that, my dear. There was meikle to be said on baith sides, nae doot. The case in hand is far otherwise. Ye did muster courage to tell Alwyne Mackenzie ?”

“Yes, just before his last visit to you, I did.”

“I ken—I ken. We spoke lang on the theme, him and me. And he gaed oot by himsell to Castle Stennis, and visited every spot. He felt it a kind o’ satisfaction, he said.”

“But I knew—I was aware—that Alwyne had some previous knowledge of the story, though not of all the particulars. And he is so completely one of ourselves. With Herbert Grey it is so different. Oh ! if I had but courage ! My nerves are so shaken ; I cannot trust myself. My heart fails me in any emergency. And to relate such a narrative to one who has no idea—no previous suspicion ! What would I not give to have Alwyne here, to take the terrible task off my hands.”

“My dear,” said Miss Brodie, laying down

her knitting, and earnestly regarding her friend, "would it be ony ease to you—for weel do I ken, Florence, that your strength has been e'en ower sair tasked already—if I undertook the office? Will I tell the lad the story?"

"Oh! if you would, dear Miss Brodie," exclaimed Mrs. Monro, in an accent of extreme relief. "You do not know how deeply grateful I should be. It would take a mountain off my heart."

"Aneuch said then. I'll do it," returned the old lady. "I'll watch for a fitting opportunity, and set it a' in order afore him. He's a leal and a gentle-hearted lad; and ye need hae nae fear that he'll ever cast it up to Eva, puir bairn! It'll be in safe hands, or I'm far mista'en."

Little dreaming of the subject of the conversation between those whom they had left behind, the walking party were all the time proceeding, with hearts as light as their footsteps, along a high road which ran through a

bare bleak country, at no great distance from a wild and rocky coast. About a mile and a half from the town they quitted this road, and pursuing a winding path amongst sandy hillocks, clothed with coarse scanty grass, soon found themselves descending rapidly towards the sea. The hillocks became higher and more abrupt, then gave place to rocks, from whose barren surface all trace of vegetation had disappeared, till, turning a projecting cliff, the firm, hard sand of the sea-shore was beneath their feet, and far and wide outstretched before them the vast expanse of the German Ocean, whose billows, now about the turn of tide, were ebbing quietly from the coast. The day was very calm, and the mighty mass of waters, unbroken to the far horizon by a single speck of land, lay weltering in the sunshine, and reflecting back the blue of the sky ; but it was impossible not to fancy what a very different scene the same spot might afford in stormy weather, when looking landwards at the prodigious barrier of dark cliffs which girdled in

the coast, still rising and towering in the distance into loftier ruggedness. An exclamation of delight and astonishment escaped from Herbert Grey, as he found himself thus abruptly introduced to an aspect of the country for which the beginning of their walk had very little prepared him, and he eagerly questioned his companions whether they were not conducting him to their own former home, Castle Stennis, which he was aware was on the sea-coast, and not far from the town where Miss Brodie resided. He could obtain no positive satisfaction on this point, however, beyond an assurance that all would be explained by-and-bye; and in a full flow of light and lively talk, they all proceeded over the moist, yet hard, sand, which paved the bay, along whose winding line they were now advancing.

At the farther extremity of this bay the cliffs stood out so far into the sea, that at full tide it would have been a difficult matter to get round them; but the waves had now ebbed so far as to render the footing secure, if not par-

ticularly smooth, and stumbling and scrambling amongst slippery rocks, and stones worn into roundness by the action of the waves ; the joyous party at last rounded the horn of the bay, and stood on another narrow strip of sand, at the foot of the cliffs, which here rose very abruptly from the shore.

“ Now, Herbert, look up !” said Florence.

But his eyes had already been directed upwards. With intense and silent interest, the sisters watched him as he looked, marked the first doubtful glance gradually changing into a bewildered gaze—an expression of wandering recognition, an eager, re-iterated scanning of every feature, every line of the view before him. Again and yet again “ he looked to Heaven, he looked to earth.” Then at last he turned his eyes upon Florence and Eva.

“ Most amazing ! Most unaccountable !” he ejaculated.

“Well, Herbert,” said Florence, “what think you of Castle Stennis?”

“That is Castle Stennis?” enquired Herbert, pointing to the object of his wandering gaze.

“Aye, marry is it?” she replied.

“And—it is the original of my Dream-Castle!” said Herbert.

“It is, is it really, Herbert?” exclaimed Eva. “We were both sure it was.”

“It is, as certainly as I stand here,” he replied, “and very nearly the same point of view in which I have always seen it. Of all the extraordinary—incredible circumstances I ever knew in my life, I think this is the most so.”

And the Dream-Castle, as Herbert had so often seen it, Castle-Stennis undoubtedly was, situated precisely, as it had appeared to him in his feverish visions, and subsequently in the drawing of his uncle; only that he beheld it now under the softening influences of sunshine and calm weather; but each minute particular

was the same. The ruinous part of the building overhanging the very verge of the precipice; the lofty centre tower behind; the lower buildings beyond; the same terraces and steep winding paths conducting from point to point of the precipice down to the shore; the same tremendous range of iron bound rocks ascending high above, on the very summit of the highest of which, at some distance along the coast, was perched a light-house. All, down to the line of white sand, edged by the tide-mark which shewed how close the waves flowed to the base of the precipice, was the same as has already been described in Herbert's own words; all, even to the sea-fowl, which filled the air with their wild shrill cries, as they perched upon the rocks, or poised themselves on their wings above the sea.

Long did the trio sit, upon a dry ledge of rock, discussing this extraordinary circumstance; and neither Eva nor Herbert at all disposed to coincide with a solution of the

mystery which Florence at last propounded. It was, she said, a spot so singular, even on that wild coast, that many views had been taken of it by Northern tourists ; she perfectly remembered an artist coming there to sketch the castle just the year before she left home ; and was it not possible that Herbert's feverish visions might have been suggested, by some such view, though not his uncle's—seen in early childhood, and subsequently forgotten ? No, Herbert declared himself satisfied that he *never* could have forgotten such a view if he had seen it ; and Eva, who had read extensively, on all such subjects, was ready with many tales of dreams of a similar character, for which no natural solution could be found, and some of which had always remained obscure as to any reason why they should have occurred. She spoke of the English Opium Eater's dreams, and of the visions so rife in the Highlands ; and, in short, both Herbert and she seemed inclined to the idea that his being haunted by a dream of Castle-Stennis, had some hidden

reference to the chain of circumstances which had linked his fate with that of a daughter of the house.

The theme was a very entrancing one, but time was running on, and they at last became sensible that it was necessary to move. Florence then informed Herbert that at her request Miss Brodie had sent to ascertain if the family of the new proprietor were at present at the castle; and had learnt that they were from home, and that the party from her house would be at liberty to go over it and the grounds. She, therefore, proposed that they should ascend by the terrace walks above-mentioned; and, having seen all that they had time for, return home by the road. Rising from their seat accordingly, they followed the narrow path-way of white sand, till it brought them to a point where a small quay, built of the rough stones which were lying so plentifully scattered about, seemed intended for the convenience of launching a couple of boats, which lay high and dry under cover of

a rude shed, constructed against the cliffs, a little way above. Upon this quay the lowest of the walks came to a termination, and by it they began their ascent, a steep and tedious one, even with the relief afforded by the levels of the successive terraces, or rather pathways cut out of the rocky ledges ; for the word terrace conveys an idea too formal to be applied to so wild a place. Here, with the sea-fowl screaming over-head, and the long, long murmur of the waves far below their feet, poised in some places in mid-air above the rolling tide below ; and, from the precipitous nature of the ground, seeing nothing above them but the dark heavy masses of impending rock, some idea was conveyed to the mind, even on this calm sweet autumnal day, of what the storms so constantly occurring there must be ; and of the awful sensations which they must awaken on such a spot.

But no awful sensations were in the heart of Herbert Grey. Here, on the very scene of his most terrible dreams and visions, his soul was

absorbed in a trance of the sweetest enjoyment. He had often heard Florence and Eva allude to their early life at Castle-Stennis ; and the place was invested in his eyes with all the mysterious interest attaching to the abode of one we love. Now he was on the very spot where the childhood and early youth of Eva had been spent, and he listened to her reminiscences and those of Florence, until he could have believed himself to have been a child along with them. Here was the sheltered nook in a hollow of the rock where they had constructed a house of their own, with the aid of Frank and Alwyne Mackenzie, and where they had nursed and tended a sea-gull with a broken wing, which Colin had found lying helpless on the craigs beneath. There was the projecting ledge where their father never could bear to see them standing, (and, indeed, neither their father nor their mother liked those terraces, and very seldom came thither with them), but where, nevertheless, they did often used to stand and watch for the return of

the boats, when their cousins and Colin, attended by a trusty old servant, had been out in them, fishing, or shooting sea-fowl. There, farther up and more removed from the dashing spray and raging wind, was the seat cut out in the hollow of a cliff, which enclosed it like a sheltering wall, where Eva, after she was left companionless, had been wont to sit, on warm summer days, or calm ones in autumn, reading whatever book happened to be absorbing her attention at the time. There were still her initials, and those of Florence, chiselled out on the rock with infinite labour by the hands of her cousins ; and tears stood in her dark blue eyes, as she pointed out to Herbert, the memorials which had survived the living presence there of those whom they commemorated. Many a sweet recollection of early youth dwelt among those dark-browed rocks and rugged clefts. Many a bright and beautiful dream, belonging to that period of existence when our dreams are white-winged like the angels, lent its own indelible lustre to the gloom and soli-

tude of the scene ! Associations hung about those beetling crags, which would have lent additional loveliness to the loveliest of Nature's most favored spots, and which, in the eyes of those to whom they were familiar, did away with every impression of the dreariness and desolation which must otherwise have belonged to the place. Both sisters, in fact, but Eva especially, as having spent her whole early life there, expressed, in eloquent terms, to their companion the sensations of longing for the sea, which haunted them amongst the most beautiful of inland scenes ; a sensation well-known to those whose dwelling has been by the deep waters. Often, Eva said, amidst the woods and glens, and glorious mountain scenery of Glenandarroch, did that longing come over her ; no other sound seemed capable of rightly filling her ear, when that long continuous murmur, that deep, grand, never-ceasing undertone, resounded in it no longer ; and the purest and most delicious of the

mountain breezes, sweeping over pine and birch, and sweet gale, over heather and wild thyme, still to her feelings lacked something of the freshness imparted by the brine.

“And the sunsets, Herbert!” exclaimed Eva, as having attained the summit of the cliffs on which the castle was built, they all stood beneath the mouldering gateway of the ruins, which opened upon these singular terraces, looking out over the boundless sea-view, expanding so far beneath their feet, “what sun-sets inland can ever equal them? What object in the world can ever equal a summer sun-set over the sea, or that of a stormy day, when the wind has fallen, and the long ground-swell breaks like thunder on the cliffs, and far away over the tumbling waves, the heavy clouds have opened a pathway for the great red sun, and seem gathered in masses around to watch him sinking slowly down? How I wish I could have shown you a sun-set here, Herbert?”

“You have shown me much, and will show

me more, that I shall never forget, my own Eva," answered he. "I cannot sufficiently rejoice that we have been able to visit your early home together, for actually to see the scenes described by those one loves, gives a reality to our impressions of them, that no descriptive powers can convey. I shall think I know you more intimately now, if that be possible, after having been with you at your own home. But I fear you are making a painful effort to show it me, love," he added, looking at her tearful eyes, "and that it causes you a great deal of suffering to return to a place which you loved so dearly, and which is now no longer your own?"

"No, Herbert," said Eva, "not now. It did the first time that I came back, I confess; but not unbearable suffering; for I am not one of those people who dread recalling bye-gone sorrow. I think there is something so soothing and softening in doing so, after the first bitterness is over! But I have frequently been at Castle Stennis since we left it. I

always come whenever mamma and I are on a visit to Miss Brodie ; so this is not the first time of revisiting it. And—I don't think I could feel—I am so glad to come with you, Herbert ! I could not be unhappy if I tried."

Herbert's reply to this speech was one which required no aid of words ; and the lovers presently moved on in search of Florence, who had left them for a few minutes, while she, too proud to shew her feelings, repaired alone to a spot, another seat amongst the rocks, invested with a very peculiar degree of interest for her. It was there, that on occasion of one of her visits home, a girl of sixteen, her cousin Alwyne had first openly avowed his love for her ; and thither they had often repaired together afterwards to exchange the confidences of their young hearts. It were hard to tell what thoughts—or how many of them painful ones—crowded on the memory of Florence, as she stood there alone ; but she resolutely sent them from her—drove back the tears which would gather in her eyes, albeit unused to shed

them ; and answered the summons of her companions in a light and cheerful tone, as she advanced from her place of concealment to conduct them within the castle.

The inhabited portion of the building was, as we have seen, beyond the ruins, the interior of which was neatly turfed, and kept in perfect order ; and the strong masonry of whose remaining walls served to defend the more modern building, in some measure, from the sea breezes. The latter portion of the castle, gained by an arched door conducting round to the side of it, consisted of the lofty tower already mentioned, a tall, square erection, with flanking turrets, of great antiquity, to which various additions had been made of different dates, the latest somewhere about the end of the seventeenth century ; and of different heights and forms ; so that the whole pile now presented a most picturesquely-irregular appearance. It fronted landwards, and on that side opened upon the usual square court belonging to old Scottish houses, looking down a

straight avenue of trees, which being in some measure sheltered from the blast, had grown to a tolerable size, as was the case with the many plantations which had been formed beyond that side of the house, wherever a spot tolerably well defended could be found for them. The ancient garden, also, extending beneath the shelter of a lofty cliff, and farther protected by a high wall on the seaward side, had thriven better than might have been looked for in such a situation. There was little, in short, in the front of the mansion, to prepare a stranger for the extraordinary scene displayed to his eye by turning the angle of the tower, and passing through the ruin out upon the summit of the precipice.

They were admitted to the interior of the castle by the servants of the present proprietor ; and here it was a new delight to Herbert to accompany the sisters from room to room, to learn what, in their time, had been the destination of each, and to listen to all the reminiscences called up by those well-known apartments, unaltered in form, though changed

as to furniture. Nor were the more singular features of the dwelling forgotten in the course of their perambulations. The haunted-chamber in the tower was duly visited, and the legend narrated, of the lady in robes of rustling silk, who had sometimes been seen, but oftener heard, though invisible, to glide across its floor.

The dining-hall, in the same part of the mansion, was shewn, which, looking towards the sea, and being in the part of the building nearest to the cliffs, was wont, on stormy days, to have its windows crusted white with salt, from the spray which flew far above the very summit of the tower ; where defences of barred iron were requisite to keep the windows themselves from being dashed in by the tempests of that coast—and where the very glasses and decanters on the table had been known to vibrate during the prevalence of an Equinoctial gale blowing directly that way.

Tenderer and lovelier memories there were also, mingled with such as these—the East

room, the scene of Morag Mackenzie's labours with her spindle and distaff;—the old nursery of childish days—the apartment which had been their parents'—the school-room where Kenneth, Frank, and Alwyne, attended by the inseparable Colin, had studied under their tutor.

Not a spot was left unvisited; and at every step, while Herbert's regrets for the loss of so fine and singular a place to the family so long its owners became stronger, he felt more and more closely drawn to Eva and her sister, by thus becoming a partaker, with them, of the sweet and hallowed memories of their childhood.

But, at last, it was time, full time, to be gone; and with many a sigh, many a lingering, reverted look was the castle left, and the path down the avenue trodden. The party emerged from it upon the high road, by an old gateway, which Herbert now recollected having passed in their morning walk, when his question of what place it led to had been evaded by the

sisters. Less than half-an-hour's walking brought them thence to the town.

Miss Brodie's dinner hour that day had been postponed, in consideration of this projected walk, to six o'clock, a most unheard-of innovation in her regular abode; but her complaisance was fully repaid by the happy looks and gay spirits of the party who at that hour assembled round the table. It was true that Mrs. Monro was not one of them. A headache had compelled her to retire to her own room before their return; but her daughters found her indisposition too slight, and herself looking and speaking too cheerfully, to cause them any anxiety; and it appeared during the evening which followed this joyous dinner, as if the young people had, by common consent, discarded the pensive shade which had hung over all their looks and conversation as they returned from Castle Stennis; and resolved to vie with each other, which should be most full of mirth and gaiety.

The history of the Dream-Castle was related

to Miss Brodie in the course of the evening ; and although the old lady looked grave and almost perturbed over it—Florence laughed—Eva smiled—and Herbert himself poured forth a flood of lively nonsense on the subject, which, in a graver hour, he would have been very far from uttering, but to which it seemed to him as if he were impelled by the irresistible impulse to give vent to an exuberant flow of spirits. Never had he felt so elate—so light of heart—so full of happy confidence ; and never had he looked it so much.

“ Preserve us ! ” ejaculated Miss Brodie to herself, as from her arm-chair by the fire her eye dwelt unnoticed on the young man, who having seconded her request that the sisters would sing to her, was now bending over Eva at a table a little apart, and assisting her to look for some particular song. “ Preserve us ! ” glancing at his beaming eye and glowing cheek, and watching the arch laugh with which he uttered some observation to Eva, which made her turn away with a smiling blush. “ I

never saw the laddie look as he does this nicht. I wish he binna fey."

The songs were sung, the wine and water brought in, and the sisters arose to say good night. They all lingered a few minutes over the fire, in calmer and more subdued talk, then took up their candles.

"Mr. Grey," said Miss Brodie, ere she followed Florence and Eva from the room, "are ye disposed to sleep immediately?"

"Never less so in my life, my dear Miss Brodie," was the reply.

"May be then," she added, "ye would wait here on me two or three minutes? I hae some little thing I want to say to ye."

"With the greatest pleasure," he replied.

And Miss Brodie left the room.

Herbert flung himself into an arm-chair on the opposite side of the fire to his hostess's usual seat, and remained, his eyes fixed on its glowing embers, plunged in a vague delicious reverie, till her return, which took place within a quarter of an hour.

Closing the door behind her, Miss Brodie slowly advanced up the drawing-room, seated herself in her chair, and spread out the folds of her grey silk dress; while Herbert, raising himself upright in his seat, fixed his eyes, with some curiosity, upon her movements. Some few minutes elapsed before she spoke.

“Mr. Grey,” she said, at last, “my friend, Mrs. Monro, has deputed me to a task which I would not o’ my ain free will hae chosen; but out o’ regard for her, and consideration for her weak health, in consequence o’ meikle grief and care, I would be laith to shrink back frae it. She considers it only fair to you and to her dochter, that there suld be nae family secrets amang ye—and wishes me to relate to you the partiklers o’ an occurrence o’ a very lamentable nature connected wi’ her late husband—the scene o’ which was Castle Stennis, the place ye hae this day veesited. Hae ye never heard any surmeeses o’ sic a tale?”

Deeply interested as well as surprised by this

preamble, Grey replied by mentioning to Miss Brodie the particulars of the conversation which he had held on this very subject with Alwyne Mackenzie; and the old lady, finding him thus far prepared, informed him that she should relate the story from the beginning; and after a moment's pause, to collect her thoughts, commenced her tale.

END OF VOL. II.

