KINGSCONNELL,

A TALE.

BY MRS. GORDON,

AUTHOR OF

"THE FORTUNES OF THE FALCONARS."

"The solemn curse of a widow sad,
Above the grave of her darling dead,
Will fester and wither the joy and fame
Of the fairest lands, and the proudest name :
Nor years, nor tears, will efface the shame."

REV. J. C. EARLE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO THE BELOVED MEMORY OF

M. S. W.

THE FOLLOWING TALE, BEGUN AT HER REQUEST,

AND CONCLUDED IN HER SOCIETY,

Is Inscribed

BY THE SISTER, WHOM HER DEPARTURE HAS TAUGHT

THE FULL MEANING OF THOSE WORDS,

"THE ONE SHALL BE TAKEN AND THE OTHER SHALL

BE LEFT."

. . . . . "WHAT 'VAILS THE WORLD SHOULD KNOW
THAT ONE POOR GARLAND, TWINED TO DECK THY HAIR,
IS HUNG UPON THY HEARSE, TO DROOP AND WITHER THERE."

KINGSCONNELL,

A

TALE.

CHAPTER I.

" 'Tis true, bright hours together told,
And blissful dreams in secret shared;
Serene or solemn, gay or bold,
Shall last in fancy unimpaired.

Even round the death-bed of the good,
Such dear remembrances will hover,
And haunt us with no vexing mood,
When all the cares of earth are over.

But yet our craving spirits feel
We shall live on, though fancy die:
And seek a surer pledge—a seal
Of love to last eternally."

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

"How happy they are, Helen! Look at them, innocent creatures; like two little lambs at play, are they not? How impossible it is to believe that we were once the same! If poor Harry could but see the darlings now."

"And what shall you do, Beatrice, when I am gone as well as Harry? My own Beatrice, why must I go and leave you? Who will ever love me as you do? Who, next to Harry, will ever love you and these darlings like me?"

The speaker, a lovely girl of two-and-twenty, turned from the window at which both were seated, watching the gambols of two little children on the grass-plat in front of the house: and as her sister, who might be about four years her senior, entwined her arm around her, hid her face upon her bosom.

"My own little Helen!" exclaimed the elder, "don't say so;—don't make me think you regret. You do not mean that, Helen? I trust you will be very happy, dearest. And it is not as if you were going to a very great distance. I shall miss you sadly, my Helen; you know I shall——." She paused abruptly, then resumed in a faltering voice, "But to think of you as happy will be the greatest consolation I can have. To do otherwise would be too dreadful. And yet at times I cannot help feeling so anxious! My Helen, you have no one but me to advise you;—do not have any secrets from me. Tell me the whole truth

whilst there is still time. You do not *regret* having accepted George Sempill."

"No, Beatrice," replied the younger sister, raising her head, and wiping away the tears which had been silently falling during these words; "no, dearest, I do not indeed. I shall try all I can to be happy, and to make him so. I told him the whole truth, you know, and said I could never feel again as I had once felt; but *that* was all over, all at an end; and I knew myself well enough to be sure that I could love him, and be happy with him; and with this assurance he was satisfied: and I know I can. It is not difficult to gain my affections; a little kindness goes a great way with me. I don't think you need be uneasy about my future lot with him. But there are times, Beatrice, when such a choking recollection comes over me, that I must leave you and these children, and this house, where we have lived together, and never be to you again what I have been. And you so solitary—so sad; Harry's return so uncertain! To think of you sitting here alone, and I far away! And my little darlings—dear, dear little ones! Who will help you then to nurse and play with them? I wish he had never

asked me to marry him. Beatrice, I cannot bear to leave you. There never were two sisters all we have been to each other. Why did I promise to leave you?"

As she uttered these broken sentences, the tears again burst forth, and were mingled with those which Beatrice could no longer restrain. They were nearly all the world to each other, these orphan sisters; and it was little wonder that the idea of their approaching separation, though from a cause usually deemed matter of congratulation alone, should fill both their hearts with sadness. It was some time ere either could again command her voice to speak. The elder was the first to regain composure.

"This will never do, Helen," she said. "It is weak in me to give way; I, who ought to encourage you. Let us remember how much we have to be thankful for: how different things might have been! We have had many many happy days together since I was married, Helen, though some sad ones too; and now that you must leave us, it is not to any immeasurable distance, not as if you were going abroad. You will sometimes come down from London to visit us, as all George's friends

are in Scotland too; and think of the delight of meeting! Poor Harry, too, may have returned by that time. I trust we have many happy days before us, Helen."

"God grant it, dearest!" ejaculated the younger sister. "And I believe it too; but there are times when one feels such strange forebodings: and why should we not relieve our hearts by speaking the truth to each other? We are alone, and we have not many nights to be alone now. The memories of our youth come crowding upon us at such a time; and soon, very soon, Beatrice, neither you nor I will have any one near us to whom we can say, 'Do you remember?' A husband's affection may be very delightful; I know it is, because I have seen what Harry is to you; but in that respect, it cannot equal a sister's or a brother's, what I imagine a brother's love, and what I know a sister's to be."

"It is very true, Helen. Certainly it is not so with all sisters. How unlike Harry's sisters are to you and me in that respect, though I am sure they are attached to each other in their own way. How unlike they are to him! But we two, orphans before we knew the meaning

of the word, and meeting with so little tenderness, though much real kindness, there has been something in our situation which has drawn us so closely together. No after-tie can ever replace that one. And why should it? I cannot understand why it should be supposed, that because you love your husband with your whole heart, you are to cease to love your sister so dearly as before. Is one's heart not large enough for both affections, and many more besides?"

"Some people think not;" said Helen. "How they mistake! That selfish, exclusive affection which can love only one object, is not worth having; and no more is the affection which would have you sacrifice every other object to it; and yet I suspect many men feel so, Beatrice. It has been the great blessing of our lives that Harry is not one of them."

"So it has;" exclaimed Beatrice. "Harry is as much your brother as I am your sister, Helen. He does not know the meaning of the word jealousy."

"And I am going from all this affection! Can I hope to meet with its like again?" was Helen's mournful rejoinder. She leant her

head upon her hand, and sat in silence for a few minutes, her eyes brimfull of tears, which it wanted but a word to set a flowing, fixed upon the sports of her little nieces, as they rolled and tumbled over each other on the grass. Suddenly the little one tripped her feet and fell, uttering a loud cry.

"My darling, my pet!" exclaimed the young aunt, springing out of the small French window of the little drawing-room where they sat, and catching up the crying infant. "Did aunt Helen's pet hurt itself? Never mind; we'll kiss it and make it well. Come and have a romp with aunty."

"Come and have a romp with aunty Elly," repeated the elder of the two little rosy children, jumping and clapping her hands: and while their mother sat watching them with a sweet sad smile, they chased their favourite playfellow, now laughing as gaily as themselves, from walk to walk of the little garden; now playing at bo-peep behind a bush of fragrant lilac, now shaking down a shower of white and golden blossoms, as they scrambled through a miniature thicket of syringas and laburnums, loaded with the rich luxuriance of their

lovely flowers; and at last, panting and breathless, sinking all together on the grass-plat, the children clinging round the neck of Helen; their golden curls, as their little bonnets fell off in their sport, mingling in beautiful confusion with her long dark brown ringlets, and their soft cheeks, and bright red lips pressed to hers in innocent endearment. It was an exquisite picture; illuminated as it was by the warm beams of one of the loveliest sunsets of early June; and enhanced by the atmosphere of fragrance around, the delicious scent of the flowers, and by the evening songs of the thrush and blackbird from amongst the shrubs and trees of the garden. Long did its memory remain with her who sat gazing upon it; long after the flowers had faded, the birds ceased to sing, and summer and sunshine departed with Helen.

The game of play was brought to a conclusion by the appearance of the children's nurse, to announce the unwelcome arrival of bedtime; and the little Beatrice and Helen, one five, the other two years old, were dismissed with many a tender kiss, after each in turn had knelt at her mother's knee, and lisped out the

words of the simple evening prayer. The sisters then drew their chairs to the little round tea-table, placed near the window, which was their favourite seat, and lingered long over that pleasant meal, forgetting the time in talk half sad, half hopeful, as recollections of the past, and anticipations of the future in turn predominated.

The removal of the tea equipage was at this sweet season the signal for the evening walk, which was the great enjoyment of their quiet day; and it was not omitted on this night; though from the hour being later than was customary with them, they did not extend it to its wonted length.

Mrs. Henry Lockhart, the elder Beatrice of our narrative, occupied a small house at Morningside, one of the southern suburbs of Edinburgh, during the absence of her husband, a young naval officer on foreign service. In these days—for we are speaking of six-and-thirty years ago—this place, now so populous, was almost the country; and the sisters loitered unmolested out of doors till long after moonlight had succeeded to the lingering splendour of the sunset sky. Then they reluctantly turned

their steps to the house; and after a visit to the nursery, to look at the innocent sleepers there, each in her little white nest, they re-entered the sitting-room; and with one consent agreeing that this was not a night to be shut out for candles, they placed themselves side by side on the small couch by the window, and while the moon looked in upon them through the tall shrubs round the grass-plat, sat talking there together, as those talk who feel that the hours of unrestricted intercourse are numbered for them.

Their conversation turned upon the children, that inexhaustible theme of interest to a mother's heart; and scarcely less so to that of the youthful aunt, who almost regarded them as her own.

"Strange, would it not be, Helen," said Beatrice, "if this second Beatrice and Helen were to resemble the first in more than their names; if our fate were to be, as I sometimes cannot help fancying it will be, repeated, acted over again in them!"

"Our fate, my own Beatrice! Orphans from early childhood—left to the kindness of, not strangers certainly, but something very

different from parents! Our fate, in all the trials of motherless youth,—unloved, unguided as we were! My fate,—in—in what I never can forget! Oh, Beatrice! why do you even dream of such things? Why, full of life and youth, and health, indulge for a moment in such causeless forebodings?"

"I don't indulge in them, dearest. May God forbid they ever should be more than causeless forebodings. I know the future is in a Father's hand; I am almost always able to leave it with Him. What, as my poor Harry says, would a sailor's wife be, if she could not trust in the protecting care of Providence? But I do believe, Helen, that there is sometimes a prescience about a mother's heart, with regard to the future lot of her children, greater than can be accounted for by reason. This fancy, if it be so, of mine, though I never named it to you before, has come upon me many a time, with as little apparent cause as it has just now. I do not think, somehow, that I shall live to see my girls grow up to womanhood; and yet you know I have no reason to say so. Now don't cry, Helen darling! your tears are very near your eyes to

night. It *may* be only a fancy. I never allow myself to dwell upon it, I assure you, dear."

"Do not name it, Beatrice! I will not think of such a thing. We know what it is to be motherless. Did it ever strike you, Beatrice, that while there are many promises in the Bible to the fatherless, no mention is ever made there of the motherless child. It would almost seem as if the one were an affliction occurring in the ordinary course of God's providence; the other an extraordinary manifestation of his judgments."

"Perhaps, dearest, that is scarcely a safe or right thought," replied the sweet earnest voice of Beatrice. "There are many other afflictions of which no particular mention is made in the Bible; but we are commanded to cast all our burdens upon the Lord, and He shall sustain us. Certainly no heavier calamity can befall a young girl, or one involving consequences that may more completely affect her whole after life. All the dangers against which a mother can warn her child, all the sins and follies of unbridled youth, which she may check in her, the motherless girl must too often encounter, unarmed, and learn to shun by harsh

experience. And how few people ever consider this in judging of creatures so left to themselves."

The sisters remained silent for some little space—a silence full of many thoughts. Their hearts were overflowing with all the painful tenderness called forth by the subject of their conversation, and the memories to which it gave rise; but one hope, one prayer, predominated over all. If it were so ordained, that the creatures they so dearly loved were to tread in the paths they had done, might it be granted that the same alleviation of all its ills, the same fullness of sisterly love and union might also be bestowed on them!

"No one knows, my Helen," said Beatrice, "what we have been to each other. We must soon be parted now; but is it not a blessing to be able to reflect that we have never embittered the time we have spent together by any unkindness, that we have done all we could to make each other happy? Often shall I recall you, Helen, when I sit in this silent room, and you are far away; and you, too, will recall me in your distant home, darling. Often may we have to weep over days of such unre-

strained intercourse as never can return again; but at least there will be no self-reproach—no remorse in our sorrow; and all sorrow can be patiently borne save that. Oh! may such affection as ours be the portion of our l ttle ones! and then they will possess a balm for every trouble that may be sent them."

The mother's foreboding heart had not deceived her; but her prayers were not in vain. The blessing they called down bore witness to their efficacy, long after the loving lips which breathed them had mouldered in the dust.

CHAPTER II.

"Spite of tempests, spite of danger, hostile man and hostile sea,
Gory field of lost Culloden! I have come to gaze on thee!"

MRS. D. OGILVY.

"He was among the prime in worth,
An object beauteous to behold;
Well born, well bred; I sent him forth
Ingenious, innocent, and bold.

WORDSWORTH.

BEATRICE and Helen Alexander, were the descendants of an ancient family in the north of Scotland, Episcopalians, and, of course, Jacobites, for the terms in Scotland were in old days nearly synonimous. Their great grandfather, Alexander of Blair Alexander, already an old man when Prince Charles Edward's landing kindled the flames of war in the highlands,

might have stood for the original of this noble picture.

"He was the first that bent the knee when *The Standard* waved abroad,
He was the first that charged the foe on Preston's bloody sod,
And ever, in the van of fight, the foremost still he trod,
Until, on bleak Culloden's heath, he gave his soul to *GOD*,
Like a good old Scottish Cavalier, all of the olden time."*

Happier than many equally devoted adherents to the cause, he did not survive the fatal day which witnessed its ruin. He fell at Culloden; and his eldest son, a young man of five-and-twenty, who had accompanied him to the field, managed, after innumerable perils, to effect his escape to France. Another son, then a mere boy, was protected and maintained, after the forfeiture of his father's property, by some distant relations, who subsequently placed him in a mercantile house in Glasgow.

The exiled chief of the name meanwhile obtained a commision in Lord Ogilvie's regiment. He was a man endowed with great attractions of person and manners, enhanced by the interest attaching to his romantic his-

* W. E. Aytoun.

tory, and the strange tale of his adventures and escapes, between the hour that saw him drag himself wounded and despairing from amongst the heap of slain around his father's body on the field of Culloden, to that in which he turned on the deck of the vessel which bore him away, to fix one last look on the hills of Scotland; and ere he had been above a few years in France these attractions had won him the heart and hand of a young widow, possessed of considerable fortune. Part of her income died with herself, within ten years after their marriage; but a sufficient portion had been secured to her husband and only son to support the former in a state of independance during the remainder of his own life, which enabled him not only to extend assistance to many of his less fortunate brothers in loyalty and in exile, but to procure for his son every advantage of education which was within the reach of one so situated. It is not necessary to our narrative to pursue his history further than merely to say that he died in Flanders, in the year 1773; and that his son, Charles Louis Alexander, then a lad of twenty, shortly after arrived in Scotland; having been recom-

mended by his departed parent to the guardianship of his brother, with whom he had kept up a frequent correspondence; and who was now a wealthy partner in the firm already mentioned.

Mr. Alexander was a Glasgow merchant of the old aristocratic school, existing at a time when cadets of the best families in the west of Scotland were to be found in the mercantile houses of that city, but of which no trace is now left. Living in the very strong-hold of Presbyterianism and whig principles, he still cherished in his heart of hearts two separate mines of romance, which formed the elevating and softening elements in an otherwise stern and rigid character. These were loyalty to the House of Stuart, albeit now dwindled to the shadow of a shade, and devoted attachment to his own proscribed Communion. During these dark days for the Church in Scotland, which ensued after the victory at Culloden, and continued with little abatement of the rigour of persecution for many subsequent years; when fine, imprisonment, outrage of every description, were the prices exacted from her sons for their allegiance to her, Mr. Alexander's house

in Glasgow was a private rendezvous for all Episcopalians who chose to resort to it; and became, under cover of the most profound secrecy, the frequent scene of the ministrations of an Episcopal clergyman. The same feelings and principles which actuated himself on this subject he sedulously inculcated on the son and daughter who comprised the whole of his family; the former about three years his cousin's junior, the latter, Miss Violet Alexander, a year younger than he.

Such being the sentiments of his uncle, it need scarcely be doubted that young Alexander, the living likeness of that brother who had so heroically devoted himself to the good cause, and now himself the head of their ancient house, met with a warm welcome under the roof to which his father's dying wish had consigned him as a home. It would, indeed, independently of such considerations, have been difficult to withhold affection and kindness from a youth who inherited all his father's fascination of person and address, heightened by the vivacious temperament of his mother's country. Yet these very circumstances, after the first excitement of novelty was over, and

the edge of grief for his father in some measure taken off, tended to revolt him—educated as he had been where the amenities of life are so much more studied than at home,—with the strict discipline, almost the gloom of a Scottish household in those days. He looked back to the fêtes, the social intercourse, the sunshine of life upon the Continent, with the keenest regret; and with something very like disgust upon the very different manners and habits around him; positively declined following his uncle's profession; and as his political principles excluded him from that of arms, which would otherwise have been his choice, finally resolved upon repairing to Edinburgh for the purpose of studying for the Scottish bar, the only resource which appeared open to him, as to most young men of family at that period.

Departing, therefore, from the grave and sombre house in Glasgow, young Alexander turned his steps towards the ancient capital of Scotland, carrying with him, along with the warm interest which his uncle's reserve and austerity of demeanour obscured, but could not altogether conceal, many anxious fears and

forebodings on his part respecting the future of one, beneath the charms of whose exterior he had not failed to discover the germs of strong passion, love of expense and show, and wilful impatience of restraint. Unconsciously to himself, he carried with him something more than this, the hidden, but not less intense affection of his cousin Violet. Nothing would more have amazed him than the discovery, had he ever chanced to make it, of the feelings with which he, by far the most attractive person she had ever beheld, had inspired this shy, plain, silent girl of sixteen, educated by a rigid mother in a sedulous discharge of domestic duties, and with a degree of reserve and sternness which effectually implanted the habit of concealing every thought or feeling likely to call down reproof, as every thought and feeling at all out of the beaten track was certain to do. Not even her mother ever penetrated her secret. Her father, strange to say, perhaps from a stronger sympathy between them on that point, had a deeper insight into his daughter's heart; and at an after period he came to suspect it, though the subject was never breathed between them. It dwelt in

silence within the very depths of her soul; a passion whose roots struck farther down as its outward manifestations were restrained; fed by brief occasional visits from its object to her father's house, after it ceased to be his home, and kept alive by the brooding dreams of memory more than of hope; for of that element, from the first, it had contained little. But to see Charles Louis Alexander, to hear his voice, to hang upon his words, to catch his sunny smile, however limited their individual intercourse, was joy enough for Violet; to meditate over all these when he was absent, her dearest solace. This was the *one* ingredient of poetry in a prosaic existence, the *one* romance in her still and quiet life of needle-work, housekeeping, formal intercourse with a limited circle, and devotional exercises. On this the repressed feelings of a strong character expended themselves; its anxious fluctuations kept her mind for some years in a state of perpetual tension beneath her calm exterior; and its final termination, the downfall of all her dreams, performed in a few days the work of many years; and left her a stern, stately, prematurely-aged woman. How many such

histories of passionate devotion and bitter disappointment lie hidden beneath the surface which is all that meets the eye in daily life, and which is frequently so false an exponent of the depths beneath! The unconscious object of her preference, from the period of his establishing himself in Edinburgh, was daily less likely either to discover it, or if he should do so, to value it as it deserved, for every day found him becoming more and more a magnet of attraction in the best circles there, and more and more involved in the gaiety and dissipation of that time. And however much, with our modern ideas, we may marvel how our grandfathers and grandmothers contrived to live through the day, and sleep at night within the narrow limits imposed upon them by the small size of their crowded dwellings in the Edinburgh of those days, however we may puzzle our brains over the most difficult problem of all, *where* a party of ladies collected in a sitting-room of that period, managed to find room for their hoop petticoats,—there is no question that the highest class of society then to be found within the walls of the Good Town, was of a stamp for which we may look

in vain through the elegant abodes of modern Edinburgh. The unjust and pernicious system of centralization, which is fast reducing the metropolis of an ancient kingdom to the condition of a provincial town, had not then begun to exert its evil influence; the wealth which increased so rapidly during the war, had not yet been poured forth upon the landholders of Scotland; and her nobles, and the highest class of her gentry, were not as yet ashamed to take up their winter quarters regularly in her capital. In such society, and entering freely into all the license sanctioned amongst young men by the manners of the day, Charles Alexander shone as a star of the first magnitude; and during his visits to his uncle's house, still diminishing in length and frequency, the latter perceived, and made many ineffectual efforts to arrest the rapid growth of lawless impulses in his character, and the ascendancy of error and wrong principles over his mind. At last his wild and faulty career as an unmarried man came to an abrupt conclusion in his elopement with a young lady of family, whom he carried to France, as much in order to shield her from the indignation of her connexions, as to renew

his own acquaintance with the scenes of his youth. There they remained until the act for restoring the forfeited estates enabled them to return, not to Edinburgh, but to the north, to take possession of the mansion and lands of Blair Alexander. Thus was fulfilled his uncle's fondest wish and prayer; and in its fulfilment it did but afford another of the many striking lessons which this life reads to all, of the folly, to call it by no sterner name, of placing any worldly object whatever before the mind, as one of inordinate desire; for from the hour which restored the dispossessed heir to the inheritance of his ancestors, his doom appeared to be sealed. It were a painful and needless task to trace the progress of evil in one so richly endowed with natural good,—the downward career by which the amiable and fascinating youth gradually merged into the gambler, the profligate, the reckless spendthrift. Suffice it to say, that the wife who had sacrificed for his sake the regard of every one connected with her by ties of blood, and whose enduring affection had remained alive through all the shocks which his conduct had inflicted

upon it, only to render her trials more agonizingly severe, when she at last sank broken-hearted into the grave, might, but for the bitter pang of leaving two helpless girls behind her, have echoed the last words of Margaret of Scotland, when mocked in similar circumstances with a prognostication of lengthened life: "Fi de la vie, ne m 'en parlez plus!"

She died in giving birth to her youngest daughter, having already seen three sons precede her to the grave; and the frantic, but short-lived, remorse and despair of her neglectful husband, once over, the remaining reproaches of conscience only urged him into still wilder excesses, whereby to stifle its voice. Abandoning his children to the care of servants, and his property to the tender mercies of a "man of business," he quitted Scotland; and for three years after, his various changes of residence were only to be traced by his incessant demands for money. At length, just as it was becoming impossible to answer these by any other means than that of bringing the whole estate into the market, the appalling tidings arrived that its proprietor was no more.

He had been shot in the neighbourhood of London, in a duel, having its origin in a gambling quarrel. Thus miserably and disgracefully perished the grandson of that stainless loyalist, who had given his noble heart's blood for the son of his king; thus, in the very prime of life, ruined in fortune and enslaved by sin, died one whose early youth had held forth the promise of all that was good and generous, had but his actions been under the restraining force of principle. He perished in his sins, the young and vigorous man; and the aged uncle who, two generations back, had witnessed the ruin of his father's house in the cause of the Stuarts, survived to behold another and a sadder ruin, through the madness of him whom he had loved as a son of his own, and regarded as destined to restore the faded honours of his name.

Beatrice Alexander was old enough at the period of her father's death, to retain the most vivid recollection of the scenes which followed the arrival of the news; though of himself, so little had she ever seen of him, she could recall no distinct trace. She remembered the tears and lamentations of the old servants, the

deep mourning in which she and her little sister were dressed; the stillness which brooded over the old dilapidated house for many days, and which was at last broken by the slow rolling wheels of the funeral train which had brought her father's remains from London. For years after the dull hollow sound of those wheels entering the court-yard would haunt the dreams of the orphan-girl, combined with all the vague, dim, fearful associations with which the paraphernalia of death are connected in the mind of a child. Then came her first interview, within her recollection, with the tall, stern, sad, old white-haired man, whom she was taught to call uncle, and into whose presence, and that of his son, who had accompanied him, she and the little Helen, timidly clinging to her hand, were ushered by their attendants, and greeted with grave kindness, which yet left a strong impression of awe on their childish fancy. This was followed by the funeral, the prodigious concourse of people, high and low, assembled, some of them from incredible distances, to offer in old Scottish fashion, their tribute of respect to the remains of one whose charm of manner had won him

many hearts in spite of all his faults, and left an abiding impression behind. More distinctly than all the rest did Beatrice recall the reading of the Burial Service, which in Scotland, at that period, and even much later, was only attempted within doors, ere the removal of the corpse from the house. On this occasion the ceremony took place in a large empty room where the coffin had been placed on its arrival, and *waked* night and day until the funeral, according to the custom of the country. Here were assembled all the Episcopalians amongst the company, and the whole of the household, male and female, including the two children and the nurse; and every particular of the scene remained in the memory of Beatrice, burnt in, as it were, upon her soul throughout the remainder of her life. Years after, it would arise unbidden, when some thought connected with that time struck "the electric chain" of association, and stand before her with the vividness of a picture. Again she seemed to see the large, old dusky room, imperfectly lighted by three high narrow windows, its lower half in deep shadow, and thronged by the silent reverential audience, amongst whom

were many old retainers of the family, and women who struggled with the tears which would have interrupted the solemnity of the service, but still kept stealing, faster than the corner of the plaid could wipe them away, from many an eye amongst them. Again she beheld, where at the upper end of the apartment, one long ray of sunshine fell full upon her father's coffin, then seen for the first time; (and who does not know the awfulness of that first sight!) tracking the silver hairs of that venerable man, who stood at its head—his aged brow bent down in reverence, in grief, and in thoughts more bitter still than grief,—and seeming to shed a glory on the white robes of the ministering priest, and add, if anything could add, to the thrilling sublimity of the imperfectly-understood words he uttered.

The service ended, the awe-struck children were led away; and soon, by the side of their weeping nurse and surrounded by other females of the household, all clamorous in their grief, they watched the long interminable course of the funeral procession, as it slowly wound its way up a steep and rugged road which led to the last resting-place of the last Laird of Blair Alexander.

CHAPTER III.

"I leave thee, sister!.....
.... Thou and I, in grove, on shore,
In song, in prayer, in sleep,
Have been as we shall be no more.
Sweet sister! let me weep!"

MRS. HEMANS.

ALL was over; every one of the arrangements which follow after death, and too often drag the mind from the very side of the grave back into all the most revolting worldlinesses of life, was at length completed; the whole miserable revelation of debt and ruin laid bare; and for the last time, Norman Alexander departed from the house of his forefathers. He recalled the time in the fatal—46 when as a boy of sixteen, he had fled from it, his heart bleeding, bursting with the passionate agony of youth; but what were these keen pangs to the deep,

hopeless, concentrated bitterness of spirit with which he now looked his last upon those venerable walls? "I have lived too long," was his internal ejaculation. "Gladly, were it the will of God, would I depart from a scene where all indeed is vanity and sorrow."

The orphan children, with their old nurse, accompanied their great uncle on his return to Glasgow, and after his death, which took place within a year of his nephew's, they remained under the guardianship of his son, but resided in the house of his sister; he himself having been many years a married man. The whole of the family estate had necessarily been sold, such was the extent of the liabilities incurred by their unhappy father; and his cousin, a wealthy and prosperous merchant, hoped to have become the purchaser. But it seemed as if a decree had gone forth against the race of Alexander, and that their name was to be known no more amongst their native hills, for by some mistake or mismanagement on the part of his agent, the bargain failed, and the property went to another bidder, to the deep and lasting mortification of himself, and even more so of his sister. A sum of about eight

thousand pounds, after all the debts were paid, remained for the children, and out of the interest of this money their cousin received an allowance sufficient to defray the expenses of their board and education.

Miss Violet Alexander quitted Glasgow after the death of her father, and retired with her little relatives to a house in the outskirts of a town a little farther north, situated in a most beautiful and picturesque part of Scotland, and possessing the requisite, which she rightly deemed indispensable, of containing an Episcopal clergyman. Here, with little variation, passed the childhood and girlhood of the two sisters, if not in actual *unhappiness,* yet certainly, as Beatrice had said, with a total absence of that genial atmosphere of tenderness in which the sensitive heart of early youth expands, like a flower opening to the sun. So long as their old nurse lived, even this was not wholly wanting. But May died about four years after her transplantation to the lowlands, and with her died the last remnant of mother's love or tenderness for the orphan children, whose agonizing grief for her loss was at first permitted to find vent undisturbed, though un-

soothed; but ere long sternly rebuked and driven back upon their own little aching hearts.

And yet Miss Violet Alexander did not mean to be cruel or harsh to her young cousins, nor would she, for worlds, have been guilty of anything she felt to be unjust towards them. She conscientiously resolved to do her duty, and she did it. Their health, their food, their dress, were carefully attended to up to the best of her enlightenment on such subjects. They were educated to the extent that she or any of her advisers deemed necessary; taught grammar and geography, writing and cyphering, by the best master the town of St. Michael's afforded, and French, music, needlework, and other devices, by a governess who resided with them. Miss Violet was considered, and considered herself, a pattern guardian for two young ladies of family, so high was her own self-respect, and her rigid inculcation of the feeling on them. There was but one thing wanting—one little grain of leaven, and that was love. The bitter sorrow of her youth had not taught Miss Violet gentleness. Her's was one of those strong, iron-like natures, which if at

first softened, are ultimately hardened by the fire. Her heart had contained a power of silent, concentrated affection, little suspected by any one around her; for indeed, in her day, the idea of parents studying the real characters of their children, and conducting the education of the mind and feelings accordingly, had not yet been promulgated. A Procrustes' bed of stern domestic discipline, a distance between child and parent which rendered such a study impossible, drove a sensitive disposition, where such existed, in upon itself; and where there was an original want of softness, added to the deficiency. The one strong feeling of life had in her case been turned to agony, the greater because of necessity it must be hidden from every eye, and that agony *grieved down,* she might with truth be said never to have really *felt* again. In her secret soul, despite indifference, neglect, and sin, the image of Charles Alexander, the ideal of her youthful fancy, never was displaced; like a true woman, she never forgot him. But this very circumstance, which in a gentler nature would have induced love for his children, in her had the contrary effect. To her they were the children of his

wife more than of himself, and the very intensity of her love for him had rendered her, as such feelings too often do render women, unjust to her own sex in the person of that unfortunate lady. She pictured to herself how different he *might* have been with a woman of stronger mind, who had possessed more influence over him, till she almost learned to exculpate him at the expense of his broken-hearted victim. Her high sense of justice had never been more severely tried than when she strove against, and finally overcame, her actual dislike to the sight of these children. She did, however, achieve that self-conquest, but farther she never went; she could not, and never did love them. And little can those whose path has always been gilded by the sun-beams of domestic affection dream of the worlds of suffering, and of injury, telling most severely on the finest natures, involved in those words—an unloved youth. Little can those who have never known it called forth, guess at the fearful capacity for suffering of such a nature, contained in the heart of a sensitive child.

Well indeed might these sisters say that no one could tell all they had been to each

other! No one but themselves could. No one more happily situated could imagine the blessing to both, of their warm, trusting, devoted, perfect affection. Wanting that channel for the love which was the very element of her soul, the gentle, timid Beatrice would have pined into apathy beneath the freezing influence of continual hardness and strictness; or died, for such things have been in childhood, of the vain unsatisfied yearnings of her own heart; whilst the more fervid and passionate Helen, inheriting much of her father's vivacity of nature with his personal beauty and peculiar fascination of manners, would have been hardened into pride and assumed heartlessness from the same causes. But their mutual love, their entire confidence in each other, were at once their solace and safeguard. And as the trials and difficulties of opening youth beset their paths, the sweet blending of something almost maternal with the sisterly affection of the elder girl became an incalculable blessing to the younger. Beatrice was less richly-gifted than Helen in point of talent and quickness of fancy, but there was a calm, holy singleness of spirit in her, a clear

perception of right and wrong, and a total absence of everything like narrowness or prejudice, which gave her much greater influence than many more largely endowed. And although their path was one of comparative seclusion, it was far from being either solitary or free from trials and difficulties such as meet the motherless girl at every turn. Miss Violet Alexander's birth, and tolerably easy circumstances, entitled and enabled her to mingle in the best society of an aristocratic and populous county; and in those days, with infinitely less of ostentation and pretension, there was infinitely more of hospitable sociability in the county society of Scotland than there is now, when so many of the ancient proprietors of the soil are ruined, and their estates gone into other hands; so many embarrassed and compelled to live in retirement, and so many more too fine to visit their neighbours or invite them to their houses in the easy way of former times. The two sisters, with their guardian, were welcome and courted guests wherever they were known; even deriving a species of distinction from the notoriety of their father, who with the world's frequent lenity of judg-

ment on offences such as his, when coupled with agreeable social qualities, was remembered as "the handsome Alexander, who turned the heads of all the Scotch ladies by his foreign graces, and was one of the most celebrated rakes of his day." More than one advantageous establishment by marriage had been offered to his eldest daughter, for Beatrice, with little of Helen's striking beauty, was singularly attractive and loveable, and many and bitter had been the private sufferings inflicted on her gentle heart by Miss Violet's favouring of those suits, and indignation at their rejection. More bitter still was the ordeal through which she had passed to her marriage with Harry Lockhart, to whom her affections had been engaged from very early girlhood. He was the younger son of a country gentleman of moderate fortune and respectable antiquity of family, though not to be compared to her own far descended line, who had nothing but the very small patrimony bequeathed him by his father, and his lieutenant's commission in the navy, not to mention a warm heart and most amiable temper, which did not weigh for much in Miss Violet's

opinion against the solid recommendations of wealthier rivals. On the other hand, his mother, Mrs. Lockhart, a true-blue Presbyterian of the old uncompromising school, who perceived very little difference between an Episcopalian and a Papist, by no means relished her son's marriage with one of that persuasion, whose fortune was not large enough to cover the enormity of the sin, and her declared hostility to a match which Miss Violet pronounced to be much too good for him, only embittered the feelings of that lady still more against it. Long and dire, and heart-sinking were the feuds thence arising, but they were past; and when her husband was at home with her, Beatrice only looked back upon those miserable days as enhancing the contrast of her present happiness. Time, and her own sweet and winning nature, had softened the hearts of her mother and sisters-in-law, and induced them to forget, or at least to dismiss from their minds, the fact that her influence had seduced Harry from his allegiance to the Kirk; so that although there was little or no community of feeling between them, they got on harmoniously when together. Mrs. Lock-

hart continued to reside at the Grange, the family-place, after the death of her husband, her eldest son having married an heiress, and living either in Edinburgh or on her property in its vicinity. The two daughters, both older than their brother Harry, remained there with her; and during the summer or autumn months, he, when at home, and his wife and children, generally visited her, accompanied by Helen, whom Miss Violet had willingly permitted to exchange her protection for her sister's at the time of Beatrice's marriage. A species of armed neutrality had even been patched up by the exertions of Beatrice, between her cousin and her mother-in-law, so far as that Miss Violet would condescend to visit the Grange at intervals during the residence of her young relations there, and would, in return, give various entertainments in honour of the Lockhart family at her own house, where she was now saved from total solitude by having as companion a former governess of her nieces; who having left them two years before the marriage of Beatrice, was now recalled to the house as her permanent home.

Young as Helen Alexander was at the time

of her sister's marriage, her fate had already been fixed, so far as regarded that feeling upon which the after-course of woman's existence generally turns. She already loved with all the fervour of her nature, and had reason to believe herself loved again. The object of her affection was the son of a wealthy and distinguished family in the same county, a young man highly-gifted by nature and education, and to whose union with her charge Miss Violet would at once have yielded a joyful assent. But as this incident in Helen's life has nothing to do with the thread of our narrative, it is not necessary to spend many words upon an old and oft-told tale. Suffice it to say, that after four years of alternate happiness and depression, the young girl found that her affections had been wantonly trifled with; that at least, she might have been loved at one time, but not as *she* loved. Her affection had been a part of her very soul; her lover's "the perfume and suppliance of a moment, no more." He married another; and at twenty, the romance of Helen's life was over.

Her high, proud spirit, and the strong interest kept alive in her mind by her devoted

love for her sister and her little nieces prevented her from giving way beneath this heavy trial, and the extent to which it had sunk upon her heart was known to one human being alone—to Beatrice. But that gentle and loving being possessed a degree of penetration into character for which few who did not know her intimately could have given her credit, and knowing her beloved Helen's sensitive pride of nature, feeling that there was much in her still unsubdued, much of that tone of mind which makes the experienced tremble for the future of the possessor, it was with fully as much of anxious foreboding as of pleasure that she contemplated her engagement to the gentleman mentioned in the first chapter, Mr. Sempill. He was the second son of a large proprietor in ——shire, a very near neighbour of Mrs. Lockhart's at the Grange, and was about ten or twelve years Helen's senior; a partner in a wealthy mercantile house. He had visited his father's house the previous autumn, for the first time after a residence of some years abroad, having returned with a view of henceforward conducting the London branch of the firm. Having paid Helen much devoted attention during her

residence with the Lockharts at that time, he had concluded by proposing to her, and she by accepting him at the end of a two months acquaintance, a circumstance which afforded unmingled satisfaction to all parties connected with them, including Miss Violet and the gentleman's own parents: and Helen, as the affianced wife of a wealthy and well-born man, found herself invested with a degree of importance to which her previous life had been a total stranger, and which naturally contributed to making her view things through a somewhat delusive medium. One person alone was not entirely satisfied. And yet Beatrice would have found it hard to say why. An undefinable feeling there was of imperfect sympathy between her sister and Mr. Sempill, an impression of something cold and guarded in the latter, strongly contrasting with Helen's impetuous warmth and passionate earnestness of nature, aud withal a dread that a lingering feeling of womanly pique had had some share in inducing her consent to this marriage. But the deed was done, and the anxiety of the elder sister had never shaped itself in words till the night with which this story opens,

when her questions seemed irresistibly impelled by Helen's evident misgivings. Various business arrangements had compelled Mr. Sempill to postpone their marriage to the summer, and as he had been all winter in London, their intercourse had been by letters alone, but now in a couple of weeks he was expected at Sempilltower, his father's seat, and it had been arranged that a week previous to his arrival, the sisters, with the little children and their maid, should remove to Miss Alexander's house in the town of St. Michael's, from which Helen's marriage was to take place; the brother of that lady acting the part of father by her as he had done by Beatrice.

No further explanation is required to show the reason why every one of the numbered evenings in that lovely month of June was clung to, as if the grains of Time's sand-glass during its passage had indeed been "diamond sparks." But the numbered evenings came to an end, the marriage was over, and the beginning of winter found Beatrice once more installed in her now companionless home, and Helen beginning her career as a wife in her handsome residence in London.

Eight years had elapsed since that lovely month of June, and a small portion of the mysterious scroll of the future on which we found the sisters speculating in the summer twilight previous to Helen's marriage, had been unfolded by the hand of time. Be it our task to trace the gradual unrolling of the remainder, in a tale of "mingled yarn, evil and good together," too happy if our humble efforts prove the means of inducing any one reflective mind to look more closely into the fine threads which connect human destinies one with the other, and to learn by such observation to mark the course of Providence, "and vindicate the ways of God to man."

CHAPTER IV.

"When his reason yieldeth fruit, make thy child thy friend;
For a filial friend is a double gain, a diamond set in gold.
As an infant, thy mandate was enough, but now let him see thy reasons;
Confide in him, but with discretion; and lend a willing ear to his questions.
More to thee than to all beside, let him owe good counsel and good guidance;
Let him feel his pursuits have an interest more to thee than to all beside." PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

IT was a beautiful evening in the month of August, 1820, when, between six and seven o'clock, the party at the Grange drew round the tea-table. Captain Lockhart was at this time absent with his ship; but his three years were nearly expired, and in the course of a month or two at the farthest, he might be expected at home. Beatrice and her children were, as usual at this season, inmates of the Grange, but she alone was at present in the parlour, with

the elders of the family, the two children not having returned from a ramble in the woods.

The Grange was a long, low, old-fashioned house, rich in the picturesque inconveniences of dark passages, with short flights of steps in unsuspected places, apparently contrived for no other purpose than to serve as traps for the unwary,—deep narrow windows, and small oddly-shaped rooms, furnished in an antiquated and somewhat scanty style, to which no modern addition or improvement had been made since nearly half a century ago, the date of Mrs. Lockhart's marriage. The small jointure of the widow of a Scottish Laird in the days when hers was settled, left no superfluous money to be expended upon furniture; and, in fact, scarcely admitted of a style of living suitable to the character of the place, though it had no very high pretensions. It lay rather in a hollow, in a sheltered nook, as most old buildings do, having the court of offices immediately behind it, at once attached to the back part of the house, and screened from public view by a high wall covered with ivy, and having an arched gate, wide enough to admit carts and carriages within, on one side of the house. On the other,

the wall, so far as it extended, served as a boundary to the old-fashioned garden, elsewhere fenced by magnificent beech-hedges alone, and stretching from the broad terrace-walk beneath the side windows, down a sunny southern slope, celebrated for its unrivalled strawberry-beds. The ground about the house was all in grass; a park-like lawn of considerable extent, shaded by a number of fine old trees; the long straight beech avenue led directly from the front of the house to the lodge, about half a mile off; but many winding walks had in the old laird's time been cut in various directions through the grounds; and though neglected and overgrown of late years, were still distinctly to be traced, and led to many a dilapidated seat, or bower once carefully trimmed, now falling into ruin and decay. The late Mr. Lockhart had been a man of considerable taste, with a fine eye for the picturesque, as all his plantations and other improvements testified; indeed he had frequently been accused by his managing lady, who had no eye for the picturesque, of spending money in that way which might have been much better bestowed; and the event seemed

to have borne out her words; for now that her eldest son had no longer the same interest in keeping up the places, all, except the garden and the avenue, was suffered to run wild; and the lawn being pastured by highland cattle, had a rough untended appearance which would have grieved its late owner to the heart in former days. Still there was beauty in the unpruned luxuriance of the shrubs around the desolate bowers; and in the devious pathways through the woods, with every one of which Beatrice Lockhart and her children were intimately acquainted, especially with one by which many an interview with Helen had been attained when she happened to be at Sempill-tower, the seat of her father-in-law, without involving the necessity of a formal visit to one house or the other. This was a path leading directly from a gate at the foot of the garden for about a mile amongst the trees, to the banks of a small and rapid river, which for some distance formed the boundary, or *march*, between the lands of the Grange and those of Kingsconnell, a very fine old place, belonging to an aged and eccentric baronet, who lived there in complete seclusion. A rustic

bridge crossed the river at the termination of this path, and the Grange family had permission to walk in that part of the grounds adjoining it; of which Beatrice had frequently availed herself so far as to traverse them, and so make a short-cut to the road some little way beyond, by which to reach the grounds of Sempilltower. It was along this very path that young Beatrice and Helen were now returning, their hands full of bunches of the late-flowering honeysuckle, and their minds somewhat troubled by misgivings that they should be too late for tea. Prophetic fears they proved; but we shall leave them hurrying through the woodland walks, yet every now and then diverted from the object of their haste by the sight of another irresistible cluster of odoriferous blossoms, "which it would be such a pity to leave behind!" and precede them to the parlour, for the purpose of introducing the party who occupied it.

This parlour was a nondescript apartment, which all the year round performed the double duty of sitting and eating room, unless when visitors of ceremony happened to be in the house. A drawing-room there was, a long, though

rather narrow apartment, with three windows opening upon the terrace at the head of the garden, which the addition of some few articles of furniture, or even a more easy and tasteful arrangement of what was already there, would have rendered charming as a sitting-room; but Mrs. Lockhart and her daughters would have regarded any proposal to use it, except for the purpose of airing the furniture, or for a solemn entertainment to the magnates of the neighbourhood, as little short of sacrilege. It need not therefore be added that, *when* used, it was the very reverse of charming, or even comfortable. There was also a dining-room of tolerable size, looking out upon the front of the house; a gloomy room, hung with a few family pictures of little merit, which in like manner was devoted to the more formal exercises of hospitality; and was only used as the general rendezvous of the household during those periodical domestic convulsions, denominated "cleanings," when the parlour was under process of purification.

In the last-named apartment, which boasted of two windows, one looking to the front of the house, the other to the opposite side from the gar-

den, were now assembled the elder members of the family. Mrs. Lockhart, a hale and acute old lady, though in her seventieth year, sat with her knitting in a large arm-chair near a window, her attention divided between the party within, and the proceedings of her old gardener and man-of-all-work, Lowry MacFyke, without, the latter being at that moment engaged in cutting grass for the use of her horses, close by the entrance to the court behind. Mrs. Lockhart was a managing lady of the old school, who exercised a minute supervision over all her domestic concerns, and understood nor cared for little beyond. She had grown up before the days when intellectual cultivation was considered necessary for females, and had no original refinement of character to induce its after acquisition. She had passed through an active and bustling life to a vigorous and still active old age, and made it her frequent boast, that at this present moment she herself was of more use than both her daughters put together; a fact which no one could deny, and no one had any right to wonder at, as she had all along prided herself on never asking or accepting any assistance from them or any one else

in her household labours. Sociable and inclined to hospitality, she was yet careful and even penurious in her habits, as much from natural disposition as from the necessities of a limited income, and her want of refinement in character prevented her managing her economies in a graceful and unobstrusive manner; so that with much real pleasure in entertaining guests there was mingled a want of attention to minor comforts and elegancies, which often made itself be sensibly felt in her house. And yet, compared to her eldest daughter, Mrs. Lockhart was a pattern of liberality. Miss Wilhelmina, or, as she was usually called, Miss Willie Lockhart, a grave, cold, severe person, of a certain age, and looking older than she need have done, by dint of the most magnanimous disregard of all the arts of the toilette, was indeed but little addicted to giving in any shape, save only that which all mankind are more ready to bestow than to accept, namely, advice. She was one of those people whom the world is in general agreed to call "excellent," — "really well-meaning," and other such terms, as if to make amends for privately feeling them to be very disagreeable.

Miss Willie enjoyed, moreover, the reputation of being what is denominated "very serious;" and as such, conceived herself entitled to give vent to much unsparing denunciation of all whose ideas or practices in any way differed from her own, and to sit in judgment on disputed points of doctrine, religious works, and the character and qualifications of clergymen. One Christian grace, the grace of love—the charity which thinketh no evil—which beareth and believeth all things—was unhappily deficient in her rigid Calvinism; and the deficiency rendered her religion a hard, stern system of doctrine and self-righteous exclusivism, which left the heart and temper completely unsubdued.

The younger of the two maiden sisters, Miss Grace, was in many respects a complete contrast to the elder. In consequence of *being* the younger, and of a certain juvenility of manners and ideas which had not departed with her youth, she had never, in the eyes of her mother, or even of her sister, attained to the dignity and responsibility of full-grown womanhood, and was still designated as "that lassie Grace," —occasionally, as "that useless lassie Grace,"— by the old lady. She had been extremely

pretty, in that fair, soft, expressionless style of beauty, which fades and disappears with the loss of youthful freshness, and leaves nothing more imperishable to replace it. But still it was a pleasant face to look at; and there was little positive harm in Miss Grace. A hasty temper, an implicit belief in the wisdom and perfection of her sister, even though occasionally rebelling against her severe and dictatorial propensities, and a species of slip-shod affectation of youthfulness in her by no means very tidy dress, and in her deportment, were her principal characteristics. For the rest, she was a good-natured and soft-hearted soul, whose wrath, if easily excited, was quickly over; and who, having in early life sustained a disappointment in her affections, had ever since felt the most intense interest in everything approaching to a love story; and cherished, in spite of Miss Willie, the most inveterate habit of novel-reading, as an outlet for this leaning to romance, of which her every-day life afforded none in any other shape. She was at the present moment engaged in making tea, Miss Willie, upon whom that office usually devolved, having delegated it to her sister, in order to be left at liberty to finish the winding of a huge ball of

worsted, to supply the old lady's knitting. Mrs. Henry Lockhart sat with her work in the window looking towards the front of the house, occasionally glancing her eyes down the avenue in search of her truant children, but as yet in vain.

"Do you see the bairns, my dear?" inquired her mother-in-law.

"I do not, Ma'am," replied Beatrice; "and indeed I don't very well know in what direction they went; but I hope they may soon turn up. It is such a lovely evening! and they forget time altogether when they get off to the woods."

"Weel," said Mrs. Lockhart, "we'll no wait tea for them. Grace, lassie, what are ye daidling at? Oh, Willie! how came ye to leave *her* to make the tea? It'll no be drinkable."

"I can't both make tea and wind worsted, Ma'am," replied Miss Willie with dignity. "It is a deplorable thing if Grace is never to learn to make tea fit to drink."

"I think," observed Beatrice, with a smile, "the tea does Grace much credit. Does it not, Ma'am?" she added, appealing to the old lady,

who having now tasted her cup, pronounced it "not bad, considering ——."

"Well, I'm glad of that!" exclaimed good-humoured Miss Grace, without in the least resenting the imputations cast upon her, to which indeed she was quite accustomed.

"And here come the wanderers," said Beatrice, as the door opened, and breathless with the speed at which they had walked, the two girls stood before them, their cheeks glowing like damask roses, between exercise and blushes, and each armed with a bunch of honeysuckle larger than her own head.

"Grandmamma," said the elder, "we are very sorry that we are so late; but——"

"We've brought you all these honeysuckles, grandmamma," added the younger. "May I put them in water, in the large jug, on the staircase window?"

"Oh, aye, my dear," said the old lady. "But they'll fill the house full of earwigs."

"Earwigs!" exclaimed little Helen, aghast. "Do you think there are any earwigs in them, mamma? Beatrice, do you *see* any earwigs?"

"No, no, I see none," confidently answered Beatrice. "But if there were any, grand-

mamma, still one branch of this lovely honeysuckle is worth an earwig or two."

"Weel, my dear, it's a matter of taste," replied the old lady; "and you're welcome to honeysuckle and earwigs baith, as far as I'm concerned."

"Now run and take off your bonnets, or you shall really have no tea," said their mother; and the two girls hastened upstairs to their own room.

"We'll put the honeysuckle on the window-seat till after tea," said Helen. "How beautiful it is, and how it will perfume the whole house! I thought grandmamma would have been so glad to have it!"

"I am afraid grandmamma is a little like Peter Bell," observed Beatrice, thoughtfully.

> "A primrose by the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

Tea was no sooner over, than the young Beatrice entreated her mother to take a twilight walk in the wood with her, and they accordingly departed for that purpose, leaving Helen on the staircase, her heart and soul

absorbed in the occupation which she had bespoken for herself, that, namely, of filling the large jug with her honeysuckle. No other member of the family-party was addicted to twilight walks. Regardless of the beauty and fragrance of the summer evening out of doors, they continued to pursue their occupations in the close parlour, redolent of that peculiarly fusty atmosphere produced by shut windows, and the absence of a fire. Here we shall leave Miss Grace absorbed in the study of a five-volume novel, hight "Santo-Sebastiano; or, the Young Protector;" and the old lady and Miss Willie more industriously employed, whilst we follow the mother and daughter in their ramble amongst the woods.

"Is it not delicious, mamma!" exclaimed Beatrice, as they reached one of the half-dilapidated seats, already mentioned, placed in a nook overhung by the drooping branches of a fine old lime tree, at the summit of a bank which rose above the river, and commanding, through an opening in the woods, a view of the lofty chimneys and gable-ends of the house of Kingsconnell. "Is it not delicious? There is something so musical in the sound of the

water rushing over the stones and pebbles far below; and there is such a hush and stillness amongst the trees, after the hum and buzz that was in them when we were here two hours ago. Mamma, do you remember that description of such an evening—just such an evening as this—in 'The Pleasures of Memory'?"

"I am not quite sure that I do: repeat it to me, dearest," answered the young mother, who dearly loved to listen to the singularly sweet and feeling tones of that girlish voice reciting poetry; and Beatrice did so accordingly.

> "Oft at the silent, shadowy close of day,
> When the hushed grove has sung its parting lay;
> When pensive Twilight, in her dusky car,
> Comes slowly on to meet the evening star;
> Above, below, aërial murmurs swell,
> From hanging woods, brown heath, and bushy dell!
> A thousand nameless rills that shun the light,
> Stealing soft music on the ear of night!"

"Beautiful, indeed, Beatrice. And do you remember Tasso's description of the approach of night, which we were reading yesterday—the night that succeeds a burning day?"

"Do I not, mamma?" A word was

sufficient for Beatrice when the subject was poetry.

> "Usciva omai dal molle e fresco grembo
> Della gran madre sua la notte oscura,
> Aure lievi portando e largo nembo
> Di sua ruggiada preziosa e pura;
> E scuotendo del' vel l' umido lembo
> Ne spargeva i fioretti e la verdura.
> Ed i venticelli debattendo l' ali
> Lusingavono il sonno de' mortali."

"But that is night at a later hour; night when there is no one awake to enjoy it. I prefer the twilight, the *gloamin'*. Mamma, there is a whole volume of poetry in that beautiful old word."

"There is indeed, my Beatrice; and the *gloamin'* itself is an hour more full of poetry than all the other twenty-four. It is the hour of memory. But of that *you* know nothing as yet, my darling. There is no sadness to you in the twilight, save the 'sad fancies' of which Wordsworth speaks. What does he say, Beatrice?"

"Sad fancies, mamma? Oh! I remember."

> "In youth we love the dewy lawn
> Brushed by the owlet's wing;
> Then twilight is preferred to dawn,
> And autumn to the spring.

Sad fancies do we then affect
In luxury of disrespect
To our own prodigal excess
Of too-familiar happiness."

"I dare say it may be very true, mamma. Certainly there is a luxury in these twilight thoughts as if one were playing at being sad. Shall I ever live, I wonder, to know more of the reality of sadness connected with the twilight?"

"Shall you, my child?" The mother gazed on the bright young face, bright amid the shadows of evening, that looked up in her's with its sunny smile, the smile of dawning genius; and as she gazed, a shadow darker than that of evening seemed to pass over her own spirit, and a voice to whisper in her heart, "Oh, when were ever woman's heart and mind gifted as your's promise to be, my Beatrice, that passed through life without having such a question as that darkly and woefully answered?" But she did not utter this thought, though it prompted her reply. "We cannot tell, my darling. He who orders all our paths alone knows where yours may lie. He knows whether you may not, perhaps long ere youth

is gone, Beatrice, recall this present moment, sitting in this very spot, when it may almost seem like a dream to you that you ever were so happy as you are now."

"Dearest mamma," exclaimed Beatrice, "that sounds almost like a prophecy."

"God forbid it should, my child!" replied her mother. "But you know, Beatrice, I never talk to you as to a child; you and I have been drawn so closely together by the frequent absence of your dear papa, and the loss of Aunt Helen, that I daresay I have said much to you which few people would say to a girl of your age, and things like this amongst the rest. There is so much in your character in advance of your age, my Beatrice, that I often feel as if the portion hereafter to be assigned you in life were one involving much to do, perhaps much to suffer; and I feel as if I could not sufficiently impress upon you while I am still with you, the fact that this life is not intended to be all flowers and sunshine, that indeed it would be much to our loss and danger if it were. We must all look for sorrow, Beatrice, though some receive a larger share than others, because it is seen to be

needful for them; and our only prayer should be for grace, so to pass through things temporal that we lose not finally the things which are eternal."

The eyes of Beatrice, while her mother spoke, were intently fixed upon her countenance, and her arm twined round her, "My own mamma," she said at last, "why do you talk of being still with me? Why should you not be with me, or how?"

"My Beatrice, if it be the will of God, I hope to be long with you, but my saying what I did will have no effect upon the future, which is in His hands alone; and in the course of nature, Beatrice, the mother must be summoned away before her child."

"Oh, mamma," said Beatrice, the tears starting to her eyes, "I cannot even bear to hear you allude to such a possibility. What would life be without you, my mamma, to Helen and to me? and with you it is so perfectly happy! It seems as if your own early sufferings as an orphan had only taught you more fully how to make your children's life a blessed one. I cannot even imagine existence without you."

"But, my darling child, should such an existence be hereafter decreed you in the inscrutable providence of God, and we cannot tell, Beatrice—we cannot tell what sorrows He may see fit to send us, though none such appear to threaten you now; should it be so, you would endeavour, should you not? to show your gratitude for the happiness so long bestowed upon you by submission to the decree which resumed it; and you would remember that the best proof of the love you had borne your mamma would be an earnest endeavour to do what she would have wished had she been with you still. You would be both a sister and a mother to little Helen, would you not? My darling, I did not mean to make you cry!"

"Mamma!" sobbed Beatrice, clinging to her mother, "you know I would. *You* know, and God knows. But why do you talk in this way, my own mamma? why do you speak of such misery?"

"Not to make you miserable, my Beatrice. Look up and do not cry. I cannot tell why I spoke of such things, dearest; except that I often think of them; and that, as I said, child

as you still are, I speak my thoughts to you, Beatrice. There is something very holy, I think, and very abiding, in impressions made upon the mind at this still and shadowy hour, and perhaps I might wish to leave one upon your mind which would return in after years. Your early life has as yet been very different, mercifully different from ours; but if sorrow should await you in after years, I can wish you no higher comfort, next to a humble trust in God, than such perfect love and confidence as there has always been between your Aunt Helen and me. It is this feeling which always makes me so anxiously endeavour to draw your hearts closely together; my knowledge of the unspeakable blessing of sisterly affection. And I do think you love each other very dearly; I am sure you do. But I declare it is getting dark; grandmamma and your aunts will think we are lost. We must be moving homewards."

"I do so wonder, mamma," exclaimed Beatrice, as they rose from the seat, her tears, "like the dew-drop on the rose," already dried, "I do so wonder how my aunts can live through these beautiful summer evenings shut

up in that hot stuffy parlour, whilst there are flowers and trees, and sweet air outside, all absolutely running to waste when we are not here to enjoy them! And aunt Grace likes poetry too, yet poetry is always doubly charming in the open air. But," continued Beatrice smilingly, "I don't think, mamma, that she loves poetry for its own sake, as you and I do. It is only if there is some story connected with it, such poetry as I fancy 'The Corsair' to be, that poem of Lord Byron's which you told me not to read. Am I not to read his poems till I am grown up, mamma?"

"I think not, dearest," replied her mother. "I should dread placing poetry like Lord Byron's in your hands, on many accounts, which you cannot as yet comprehend. And moreover, it is a species of poetry which tends to destroy the relish of a young mind for a higher, purer, and less exciting style of writing, so that I should be doing you, in my opinion, a positive injury by introducing you to it at your age."

"But oh! mamma, I am so glad you never talk as aunt Willie does about my favourite books! I hope it is not wicked to hate those

she is so fond of reading, for I am afraid I do; especially those memoirs of good people? They appear to me so grim, so stern, so many things left out in their lives! no romance, no music, no intellectual pleasures! No poetry, except hymns, which might be, I am sure, the very finest of poetry, but their's are not. They seem to me like pictures all painted in grey colours. I always feel the worse for reading them."

"I never wish you to do so, dear child. Indeed I would much rather you did not. Some persons no doubt may find the species of memoirs which your aunt Willie prefers, instructive and edifying, but I do not think them so for a mind like yours. Nor does the teaching of our Church lead us to consider it necessary, in order to our serving God aright, that we should repress or neglect any of the faculties which He has bestowed upon us, or that we should narrow religion into one confined path, as some of these excellent people mistakingly did. Rather does it bring religion to bear upon our daily allotted path, whatever that may be, and pervade our whole life. Books which inculcate a contrary doctrine can only be confusing to a young mind."

"Oh, my own mamma," exclaimed Beatrice, "how glad I am that we live with you and not with my aunts!" She did not hear the sigh which followed this observation, for just as she spoke, their path emerged from the woods upon the more open space of turf at the foot of the garden, and a large beetle of that species which flies at night, dashed full in her face with a drowsy hum, a sound most beautiful to hear in the shadowy twilight of a warm summer's day. They entered the garden and ascended its sloping walks towards the house. It was now dark; the sky overhead was of the deepest blue,

> '—— that clear obscure
> So softly dark, and darkly pure,'

which characterises it at that lovely season; one or two stars faintly visible in its far and hazy depths; the air loaded with perfume from the flowers, all bathed in the dew which drew it forth, and not a movement of living thing to break its stillness, save now and then the noiseless spirit-like flitting of the bats across the path, glancing from amongst the old fruit trees for a moment, and then again disappear-

ing. Just as they reached the terrace walk at the head of the garden, a little form, almost as light and shadowy as the bats', sprang round the corner of the house, and with a glad laugh, Helen flew into her mother's arms.

"Here you are at last, mamma and Beatrice!" she exclaimed, "I thought you were lost in the woods, I declare."

"And here *you* are, my little one," replied her mother, fondly kissing her. "And how come you out so late without bonnet or tippet, my Helen? Surely your aunts don't know?"

"No mamma," said Helen, sliding her little hand within her mother's, as they proceeded towards the upper gate of the garden, to go round by the front door of the house, for all the windows which afforded access from the terrace were now closed for the night. "I have not been in the parlour since you went out. It took me a long time to arrange the honeysuckle properly."

"And did you find any earwigs, Helen?" asked Beatrice.

"Two, Beatrice, and a caterpillar. But I was very brave. I did not scream for fear grandmamma should find it out, and order the

honeysuckle to be thrown away. So then when I had done that at last I thought of coming to meet you, but it had grown rather dark, and I was half afraid to go into the wood by myself, so I went down to see old Kirstie baking oat cakes in the kitchen, and she told me a story about a ghost which was seen at Kingsconnell, which lasted till a few minutes ago; and as I came out of the kitchen I thought I heard you and mamma talking in the garden, and just ran out to see."

"A ghost at Kingsconnell!" exclaimed Beatrice. "I didn't know there were any ghosts there."

"I am afraid I can't tell the story right," said Helen; "but Kirstie can tell it you, Beatrice. Her father was coachman at Kingsconnell long, long ago, she says."

"It is a strange old place, my loves, and there are all manner of traditions about it," observed their mother, as they arrived at the house door, "but I wish Kirstie would not tell you ghost stories, Helen, you are cowardly enough in the dark without her help. Now, children, it is past nine o'clock, I declare! you must only just come into the parlour to

say good-night, and then off with you to bed."

In truth, much as all children and young people dislike being sent to bed, Beatrice and Helen felt that there was little temptation to linger in the parlour. No twilight was there, no soft evening air, or scent of dewy flowers. Since eight o'clock the windows had been barred and bolted, and the party collected round a table on which stood a pair of candles, imparting to the scene that aspect of ineffable dreariness produced by candles in a room without a fire and with closed windows. And dreary in its total absence of grace or refinement was the whole character of the apartment; dry and matter-of-fact were all its details, and most of all the barren surface of the table which formed the point of family re-union, and which owned no other ornaments than old Mrs. Lockhart's enormous knitting-basket, a strange looking green work-bag of Miss Willie's, by the side of which stood a little blue band-box filled with odds and ends of lace, net, and ribbon, from whose contents she was occupied in constructing a marvellously ill-favoured cap, and a Tonbridge-ware work-

box belonging to Miss Grace. It was placed there to save appearances only, for that good lady's heart and soul were absorbed in the well-thumbed copy of "Santo Sebastiano" already mentioned, which, adorned with the stamp of the St. Michael's circulating library, lay on the table before her, and elicited now and then a glance from Miss Willie, speaking unutterable things, and an ejaculation of wonder blent with pity from the old lady, such as "Dear-sake sirs! to see that lassie spendin the haill nicht readin' thae nonsensical novels!" or "Grace, bairn, hae ye nae stockings to darn?" A hint intended to convey more of censure than met the ear, but which fell powerless on Miss Grace, insensible on that score alike to pity and to blame.

From such a group the little girls not unwillingly retired to their own room, next door to their mother's, at the end of one of the long passages and trap staircases in the upper story of the house, and looking out into the garden. Here, having received their mother's tender embrace and good-night kiss, they proceeded to undress; talking the while of the Kingsconnell ghost-story, as related by Kirstie,

their grandmother's old cook; while Beatrice proceeded down stairs to join the working party at the table, until the sound of ten o'clock striking in the hall, and followed by the ringing of a bell, released them.

The bell rang for evening prayers, for which the servants assembled in the parlour, and which were read by Miss Willie. The rigid Presbyterianism of the household was carried to the unusual length of not even admitting of a kneeling posture at family worship, and it was a standing subject of silent, but not the less bitter offence to Mrs. Lockhart and her eldest daughter, that in spite of the example of every one else, Beatrice and her children persisted in kneeling at these periods, during their visits to the house. The former however, with every desire to conform to the ways of her mother-in-law's family in all things else, could not prevail upon herself to be guilty of what she felt would in herself be irreverence, though it might not thus affect others; nor could she permit it in her children for the same reason, and she was very little aware of the accumulating fund of malevolence excited in the mind of her sister-in-law by this very

inadequate cause, or of the full meaning of the looks which morning and evening, she was sensible were bent upon her at the termination of an act which ought to have excited widely different feelings. Soon after prayers the party broke up for the night, and Beatrice, in her own apartment, after a long and tender gaze at her sleeping children in the next, sat down to write the journal which she regularly kept for her absent husband, and then to finish one of the long letters begun the previous night, in which she was in the habit of pouring out her heart to her sister, and from which we shall in the next chapter present the reader with a few extracts.

CHAPTER V.

" —— She, to all but those who love her shy,
Would gladly vanish from a stranger's sight;
Though where she is beloved, and loves, as free
As bird that rifles blossoms on a tree,
Turning them inside out with arch audacity.

" Alas! how little can a moment show
Of an eye where feeling plays
In ten thousand dewy rays;
A face o'er which a thousand shadows go!"

WORDSWORTH.

EXTRACT FROM BEATRICE'S LETTER TO HER SISTER.

"WE shall not leave the Grange, I imagine, until after Harry's return. Is there no chance, my own Helen, that George and you may be at Sempilltower as Autumn advances? It is nearly two years now since you have been in Scotland, and that is a long time to have lived without one meeting. In this lovely

weather, the finest summer we have had for a long time, I do so pine for you! We might meet so constantly in the woods, as we did this time two years. Beatrice and I have been down our old walk to-night; but not across the river. We sat a long while on the seat, which I daresay you recollect, looking towards Kingsconnell House (by the way, I heard yesterday that Sir Peter Bertram is supposed to be dying; poor desolate old man! Dr. Chisholm is in constant attendance upon him), and I need not say how many thoughts of our former rambles there, my Helen, filled my heart all the while. We have these walks, as usual, pretty nearly to ourselves; for no one at the Grange troubles them much; it is sad to see how overgrown they are with grass! Old Lowry Mac Fyke, who is a dear friend and ally of the children's, you know, tells them very frequently how beautifully the place used to be kept in the old laird's time; and how gladly he would do what he could 'to mak' it mair feasibler-like noo; for he just thinks shame to see't;' but he is not allowed to extend his labours beyond the garden in that direction. Beatrice is the old man's especial confidant, and many a long conversation they have to-

gether. He told me the other day that 'it made him young again to look at her bonny face!' And in truth, Helen, it *is* a bonny face! You know we did not expect our eldest pet to turn out pretty; and I must own that if you take her face to pieces it can hardly be called so.

"Miss Menie Mark, who was here the other day, more contradictious than ever, if that be possible, upon some discussion, arising at the tea-table on the children's looks (fortunately they were not present, for it would have made no difference), announced it as '*my* opinion, ma'am,' that Miss Beatrice's forehead was much too large for beauty, and her eyes not large enough; moreover, there was something wrong about her nose; and in short, I forget the rest; but I fully agreed in all she said: upon which she immediately discovered that this might be '*some* people's opinion,' but was not her's; '*she* thought'——, &c. &c. This is not what I was going to say; I was carried away by the recollection of Miss Menie, and her half-closed eyes and dogmatical mouth. I wanted to talk to you about Beatrice, my Helen. In spite of foreheads, eyes, noses, and

fifty other faults, which I daresay might be found with her face, you would, I think, be astonished at the improvement in her looks, the difference altogether. There is a brightness—an intelligence,—a look of candour and purity in her countenance, which is in my eyes its greatest charm; and though I am her mother, I do not think, Helen, that they are partial eyes. *You* know, on the contrary, how very sensitive and quick-sighted I have always been to the faults or deficiencies of my children, and that I used often to see those which you would not allow to exist; and to Beatrice's I think I am particularly so. Not that one of my children is one degree nearer my heart than the other; but that there is less cause for anxiety respecting my little Helen, so far as one can judge of a child not ten years old. She is a sweet, joyous, happy little being,—a sunny-tempered creature, who will create enjoyment for herself wherever she goes, and for all around her; passionately fond of flowers and animals, and all sorts of simple pleasures; with the most affectionate heart, and with good, though not remarkable abilities. But Beatrice, with all Helen's child-like tastes, and love of simple

pleasures, combines so much more! So much that may be the source of happiness or of misery, as it may be hereafter directed, that every day, as it developes her precocious intellect and sensibility, fills me with a more and more profound sense of the responsibility entrusted to my charge in her education; and with more anxious—though I would humbly trust—not *faithless,* consideration of what may be the result for time and for eternity, if I am not permitted to finish the work I have begun. Do not scold me for saying this, my own Helen. I have no cause to say it, or to dread it; and yet you know how for years that idea has haunted me. It is not often that I give it utterance; but to-night, I cannot exactly say how, something in our conversation together during our evening walk has brought it before my mind with such strange distinctness! It seemed to me as if for a moment the curtain of my child's futurity was withdrawn, and that I had a glimpse of a path of trial and tears awaiting her,—the purification and perfecting of her earthly nature, to be accomplished as it were by fire! Forgive me, dearest! I know how any allusion to this subject pains you. It

may be only want of faith in me, and not presentiment, as I sometimes fear. I must try to recollect that if it be the will of God to leave my girls motherless in their youth, He can raise up other guides for them. He "doth not need either man's work or his own gifts." But when you see Beatrice, my Helen, you will better comprehend my anxiety. It is not merely that she is a creature of extraordinary abilities,—that she learns every thing faster than one can teach it to her, and that with almost more than the usual simplicity of her age, she has, though not yet thirteen, a degree of poetical taste, and appreciation of the beautiful in nature and in art, very rarely met with. There is that in her mind which I have read of, and now understand from experience, which constitutes the difference between mere talent and genius; that species of intuition and largeness of comprehension, which belongs to the latter gift alone. And all its credulity—its undoubting faith, and its genuine humility, exist in her. Never was a creature more ready to take every thing and every person on trust; and I do not say that she is not conscious of her own powers (though not of their extent),

or that she is not prone to the rash and hasty judgments into which youth is so apt to fall; but with all this is mingled such a diffidence of herself as to produce a singular anomaly in character. Beatrice's is one of those natures which have such an intense love of pleasing and being loved, that coldness, unkindness, or depreciation, would cause it to droop and wither like a flower deprived of light. And when I think, bereaved of her mother, into what wofully inadequate hands the guidance of a disposition requiring such delicate management would too probably fall; how harshness might chill that warm, loving heart; how a sense of being misunderstood and undervalued might embitter that sweet nature; how her quick discernment of the foibles of those she lived with might drive her into their opposite extremes; and how, above all, that ardent imagination, unguided and unrestrained, might obtain an ascendancy to the ruin of her peace and happiness—when I think of all this, my Helen, I tremble; and I should despond at times, did I not endeavour to recollect that the most adverse human circumstances can be made to work out the gracious purposes of

Providence, in a way which no foresight of our's could have accomplished. These thoughts, too, make me doubly grateful for the time that has already been granted me, and doubly eager to improve every opportunity as it occurs of directing my child's mind and fixing her principles."

The answer which Beatrice received to this letter was a long one, dated, like her own, at different periods; for a letter in those days meant something more than a sheet of note-paper, widely written, and enclosed in an envelope, with a Queen's head upon it. In proportion as people wrote less frequently, they wrote at greater length when they did; and, like all earthly things, the improved post-office system has perhaps its counterbalancing disadvantages in respect of the quality of the augmented correspondence which it has caused.

The concluding portion of Helen's letter was a startling contrast to what had preceded it. It contained an announcement which fell like an ice-bolt upon her sister's heart. Mr. Sempill had decided on transferring his resi-

dence from London to the Island of Madeira! The mercantile firm to which he belonged had its principal branch at Funchal, and there the senior partner had for many years resided. This gentleman was lately dead; and as it was necessary for another to take his place, no one appeared so eligible for this post as George Sempill. Within two months after the time at which Helen wrote, the move was to be made. It appeared that her husband had for some weeks past been weighing this matter in his own mind, unable at once to decide whether he should go himself to Madeira, or allow another of the partners to do so. But this deliberation had its grounds solely in considerations connected with his own comfort and the well-being of the firm. No thought for his wife mingled with it. *She* must of course be ready and willing to go where her husband did; and he did not consider it necessary to say a word upon the subject to her until his plans were all arranged. Eight years of married life had now in a measure accustomed Helen to the chilling egotism of her husband's nature, which had at first been nearly incomprehensible to her warm-hearted and impulsive disposition. In the

course of their correspondence previous to her marriage, his painful absence of sympathy in her feelings and her home-affections, and his total indifference to all whom she loved, had forced themselves upon her observation, and raised those vague fears and misgivings with which we have seen that she was oppressed, and which were afterwards too fully realized. Not that there was any thing tangible in her vexations. Mr. Sempill was an excellent man in the usual acceptation of the words, perfectly correct in moral conduct, liberal to his wife in money-matters, hospitable to his friends; and, although too cold and reserved in demeanour to be popular in society, a model of all the proprieties of life. And yet he was an egotist! one of those whose intense faith in themselves seems to fence them in triple armour against the very necessity or desire for the love of others. He was perfectly well satisfied with the beautiful wife whom he had chosen, and whose presence imparted the last, best finish to his well-appointed house and table; but it was as *his* wife he valued her, not for her own sake. He would have lavished the richest gifts for her adornment, so as to render her more worthy

of the position she occupied; but would not have moved an hand's-breadth out of his own way to gratify her by any attention to feelings which he was absolutely unconscious that she possessed, or to show kindness to any one who was dear to her.

The almost child-like ardour and impetuosity of Helen's sensitive nature, too, was a misfortune to her in dealing with her husband. A woman more like himself would have managed him infinitely better. George Sempill piqued himself upon never losing his temper in a dispute, and when poor Helen's quick feelings would occasionally prompt a few words of reproach for his indifference to her happiness, or more frequently, when they found vent in a burst of tears, he had her at a disadvantage, and never failed to improve it by telling her as he walked calmly off, that when she was composed and reasonable they should resume the subject. Treatment such as this was not calculated to win the affections which even a moderate degree of kindness would have bound to him for ever, but that consideration touched him not. What cared he for the affection of others, who was so largely provided with affection

for himself? *Il pourrait bien s'en passer,* for he never felt the want of it.

Thus time passed on: and slowly, and by degrees, under this irritating discipline, the spirit of Helen improved in faith and patience. Her long and confidential letters to her sister were the safety-valves by which her repressed feelings found a vent; and having no child of her own, her affection for Beatrice and her children continued to be the most engrossing feeling of her heart. The thought of her impending separation from them, too probably for years, was therefore unmingled anguish; and scarcely less painful was her husband's total indifference to all her feelings on the subject.

In the midst of Beatrice's tears and sorrow at the prospect of a trial so unexpected, she found some temporary consolation, as did Helen, in that of a few weeks of each other's society, for it so happened that it suited Mr. Sempill to send his wife to stay at his father's house some time before he himself came down, as he chose to have a fair field for making all the necessary arrangements involved in breaking-up his London establishment, to which he

considered himself more competent than Helen. The latter was only too happy to avail herself of this idea, and the beginning of the third week in August found her at Sempill-tower.

Breakfast was no sooner at an end at the Grange, the morning after her arrival, than Beatrice and the little girls prepared to walk over there to visit her.

"Are you going so early?" asked Miss Willie, as they avowed this intention. "It is not an hour's walk. You'll be there before eleven o'clock."

"Well," said Beatrice, "that won't signify. You know Mrs. Sempill is always delighted to see one at any hour, and Helen will be looking for us by this time, depend upon it."

"I wish I had thought of it in the morning," said Miss Grace, "and I should have dressed myself to go with you, Beatrice, but I doubt this gown wouldn't do?" Beatrice was silent, but privately thought it certainly would not; the costume in which Miss Grace had appeared at the breakfast-table, consisting of an old and not over-clean blue chintz dress, made in the form which in those days was called *a*

wrapper, that is, opening before instead of behind, and having frills of the same material at the throat and wrists; her stays, moreover, very evidently only half-laced, and her head adorned by an old blue gauze cap which had seen service. Miss Grace, having been a fair beauty, retained a strong predilection for blue in all materials, which was not lost sight of in the midst of all manner of slatternly and ill-suited array, whereby she was wont to render unsightly what might still have been a pleasing face and well-formed person, if dressed with tolerable attention to neatness. "And," pursued she, "it would be a great deal of trouble to dress so soon after breakfast; besides that you are in a hurry. So you must just give my kind love to Mrs. George, and say, that I'll be over to wait upon her very soon."

"Oh! Helen won't stand on ceremony, Grace," replied Beatrice. "I shouldn't wonder if she came back with us. And now come, children, and let us get ready."

"Grace," said the old lady, who was much more tidy in her dress than either of her daughters, notwithstanding that she took a very active share in domestic management

every morning, and they none whatever, "Grace, ye're no surely going to appear to Mrs. George Sempill in that auld dud? Gude-sake, lassie, gang and put on a wise-like goon, and a kep like a Christian! Na, if ye sit doon to thae books, it's hopeless."

"No, mother," replied the imperturbable Miss Grace, "I mean to go and dress very soon, but there is no such desperate hurry." And as she spoke, she seated herself on a chair in one of the windows, her feet supported upon the bars of another, and betook herself to the study of a tome bearing the exciting title, "There is a Mystery! Find it out."

"Rise up, lassie!" exclaimed the old lady with indignation; "ye've set yoursell doon on my 'Ready Reckoner!' I declare o' a the glaiket—useless—"

"And you've thrown down that parcel of tracts, Grace, that I've just been sorting, and scattered them! I shall have my whole work to do over again. Upon my word it is beyond patience!" wrathfully subjoined Miss Willie, as the offender slowly laid down her book in the middle of a sentence of awful import, and reluctantly arose to repair her misdeeds.

"Willie," enquired Mrs. Lockhart, "when you were in the Clachan yesterday, did ye deliver the message I bade ye about the livery waistcoat, to Saunders Steek, the tailor?"

"Indeed no, Ma'am," calmly replied Miss Willie, proceeding to the re-arrangement of the tracts.

"Indeed no! And what for, may I ask?" was the displeased reply.

"To tell you the truth, ma'am," answered Miss Willie, I totally forgot it. My mind was occupied with more serious matters. I had just heard of the appointment of the new assistant and successor to Dr. Grindlay; and several people having given a very poor account of him, I walked on as far as Dr. Chisholm's, to inquire Miss Babie Chisholm's opinion, knowing that she had heard him preach once in Glasgow. I also called upon Miss Menie Mark, to ascertain what she thought; and heard a great deal on the subject from Thomas Brodie, the wright, whom I met in the street. Being an Elder, he had of course a good deal of information to give me. My mind was too much, and I am sorry to say, too painfully occupied, to be thinking about livery waistcoats."

"It maun' be confessed," said the old lady, "that I hae a useful pair o' dochters! But—" her curiosity getting the better of her just indignation—"what *did* ye hear about this Mr. what call ye him? Carmichael? Had Miss Babie heard him?"

"She had," was the solemn and succinct reply.

"Weel?" impatiently exclaimed Mrs. Lockhart, as the oracle seemed resolved to delay its response.

"*Well!* I wish we may find it well!" slowly and emphatically pronounced her daughter. "But I wish not to condemn any man unheard, and therefore perhaps the less we say the better."

"What?" persisted Mrs. Lockhart, "there's naething against the man's character, is there?"

"His *character?* oh dear no!" returned Miss Willie with a sardonic laugh. "Don't misunderstand me, ma'am. I was only alludiLg to our chances of spiritual improvement under his ministry, which I am sorry to say I fear are but small, from what I hear of his style in the pulpit."

"They say," joined in Miss Grace, for even

the "Mystery" could not maintain its ground against the all-engrossing subject under discussion, "that Mr. Carmichael was tutor in the family of Mr. Bertram, the next heir to Kingsconnell. I suppose his interest has procured him the promise of the living, though it is a Crown presentation."

"Of course," returned Miss Willie, "any fool might guess that. Mr. Bertram's interest has done it all, as interest does everything now-a-days in the Church. I declare, as Miss Menie Mark says, it is enough to make one turn Independent. But I am very far from asserting that Mr. Carmichael is likely to prove as unacceptable to *all* his congregation, as I own I fear he will be to some amongst them. Every one to his taste. Some people like slavish reading in the pulpit, and new-fangled foreign notions. A minister who has been improving his theology amongst the Lutherans in Germany, and unless I am much mistaken, the Papists in the south of France, is likely to find all the more favour in some people's eyes. There are inmates of this house who I have no doubt will be highly delighted with him. He may perhaps induce them to

attend church a little more regularly, and eclipse the attractions of Mr. Malcolm at St. Michael's. It is an ill-wind that blows nobody good, they say."

"Germany and the south of France!" exclaimed Miss Grace, who seldom listened to more than the half of any long speech, generally running off with the first idea in it which hit her fancy. "Has this Mr. Carmichael been abroad then?"

"To be sure he has," snappishly replied her sister. "How else could he have been in Mr. Bertram's family, who have lived abroad for the last five years? He has been three years abroad with them, and only returned home last spring; since when he has been assistant at ——— Chapel-of-ease, in Glasgow, where Miss Babie Chisholm heard him preach. But perhaps the least said the soonest mended on that subject. I suppose we shall all have an opportunity of judging for ourselves next Sunday." So saying Miss Willie arose, gathered up the *disjecta membra* of her tracts, and abruptly quitted the room.

"Aweel!" said the old lady, "I ken nocht about it. But better read sense in the pulpit

than preach havers, in my opinion, let Miss Babie Chisholm say as she pleases."

"Grandmamma!" said little Helen, looking in at the open window, in her walking dress, "I ran back to tell you that Lowry Mac Fyke is searching everywhere for you. There's a butcher come from St. Michael's to buy the poor dear fat sheep, he says. Oh! dear grandmamma, if you would only not sell them! They are so pretty! Please don't!"

"The bairn's daft?" exclaimed her grandmother, smiling however as she spoke, for it was impossible to resist Helen's sweet *naïveté.* "There's nae word o' poor dear fat sheep when ye see a gude jigot o' mutton at the table. Run awa' and tell Lowry I'm comin'. To think o' me losing sae muckle precious time listenin' to a wheen idle clatters! A' the Miss Babie Chisholms and Mr. Carmichaels in the countryside 'll no sell my sheep for me. Grace," pursued the old lady, looking back as she reached the door at the half-recumbent figure of her youngest daughter, and noting as she did so, the combined effect of each particular item of slatternliness in her appearance—the open wrapper falling apart and disclosing the

half-dirty white petticoat and stockings, and slip-shod shoes; the "unbound zone" of the waist, the throat, still fair and plump, disfigured by the absence of collar or muslin frill, and the soiled blue cap stuck awry above the unkempt front of false curls, doing its best to give an absolutely dirty look to the fresh and pleasing face; all—even to the begrimed and dog's-eared aspect of the novel in her hand, which looked as if just rescued from the "observing thumb" of Lady Slattern Lounger, in the *Rivals*—all eloquent of self-indulgence in its least attractive shape—"Grace! I declare the sicht o' ye would spean a bairn! I just beseech ye, for the credit o' the hoos', to gan and mak' yoursell a little like ither fock! It wad be a richly-merited judgment on ye if somebody cam' in and fand ye as ye are; but for their ain sake, ane would rather avoid sic a catastrophe."

"Presently, mother," was Miss Grace's only reply to the objurgation. And being now left in undisturbed possession of her novel and the parlour-window, she remained basking in the warm sunbeams and revelling in the "Mystery," till, between twelve and one o'clock

the sound of carriage wheels, and the apparition of some visitors, driving up the avenue, startled her from her trance of enjoyment, and sent her in precipitate haste to her own apartment; but not without leaving some traces behind, in the shape of a pocket-handkerchief, of traditionary whiteness, on the floor beneath her chair, a work-bag upset upon the table near where she had been sitting, and the *Origo Mali*, the Mystery itself, flung open on the top of it. And as the carriage contained two very satirical elderly young ladies of the neighbourhood, along with a visitor to whom they were doing the honours of the county, and introducing her to all its characters as well as to its scenery, it need scarcely be added that all these vestiges, not one of which escaped their notice, and the length of time which elapsed ere Miss Grace, in renovated attire, joined the party in the parlour, afforded ample ground-work for one of their most amusing and most highly-coloured sketches, as they drove away from the Grange, at the conclusion of their visit.

CHAPTER VI.

" Come, stately Niddrie, bauld and true!
Scotland has few such Lairds as you!"
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE early sun-beams poured a beautiful variety of light amongst the dancing shadows of the leaves and boughs;—the woods were alive with the "atmosphere of sound," the hum and buzz of insect life, which fills them with such a pleasant murmuring on a warm summer's day, and the little river rushed musically over its rocky bed, as Beatrice Lockhart and her two joyous girls arrived at the rustic bridge which afforded an access to the grounds of Kingsconnell. They crossed it, and proceeded by the usual path, which led towards one of the lodges,—not the principal entrance, but one which communicated with the stables and offices. Just as they reached this house, the

gate was flung open to admit the gig of Dr. Chisholm, the medical practitioner of the neighbourhood, at this time in daily attendance upon the solitary and dying owner of this splendid place, Sir Peter Bertram. On this occasion the spare seat in the doctor's gig was occupied by a stranger, a dark, grave, sallow, but still young-looking man, whose dress bespoke him a clergyman.

Dr. Chisholm drove by in much haste, raising his hat as he passed to Mrs. Henry Lockhart, who stopped for an instant at the lodge, to inquire of the gate-keeper after the health of her master. From this old woman, who held her apron to her eyes, she learned that Sir Peter was worse—much worse;—dying, all his servants thought; and he had been a kind master to them all, though "a man that keepit himsell till himsell. He had seen trouble; but he was a kind man to them that needed; he would be sair missed." The old woman added that a groom had gone off express to fetch Dr. Chisholm some time before, as this was not his usual hour for visiting Sir Peter, whence she concluded that his end was not far distant. The man had also received

orders, so he informed her as he rode through the gate, to request the presence of Mr. Carmichael, the new assistant to the parish minister, who was an old and infirm man; and it was he who came in the gig with Dr. Chisholm.

Beatrice and her daughters walked out by the gate, and along the road in the direction of Sempiltower, after receiving all the information which the old woman had to give, their hearts involuntarily saddened by this instance of one of the most affecting of earth's contrasts—the proximity of death to life,—the glory and beauty, the light and joy of this beautiful August day, thus prodigally lavished upon the scene whose master was lying on his death-bed. Life—the varied life of summer,—the life of bird and beast and insect, of flower and leaf,—was spread profusely all around him; and he, the lord of all, not all his possessions could buy him one half hour's prolongation of that boon, in which the meanest creature on his broad lands was now fearlessly rejoicing.

Such thoughts filled the hearts, and occupied the conversation of the mother and her elder daughter, as they emerged upon the high

road, and took the direction of Sempilltower. They none of them had ever seen Sir Peter Bertram, save once or twice, accidentally. He was a man who lived in absolute solitude, scarcely ever even appeared at the parish church, though he welcomed the visits of the minister, and received those of the Laird of Sempilltower, of Mr. Lockhart during his lifetime, and one or two other old friends. But it was an understood thing that he did not return them, and he was never seen beyond his own demesne. Some melancholy history was attached to the desolate and childless old man, between whom and his only living relatives, the family of the cousin who was his heir, a coolness existed which had kept them estranged for years; and some romantic and mysterious tale was likewise understood to be connected with his splendid residence, though none of our party knew exactly what.

They had now reached the gate-house, as it was called, or lodge of Sempilltower, admitting to this ancient place; as good a specimen of the old Scottish Peel-house, or baronial residence, as might be met with still in repair and inhabited. A long straight avenue, shaded on

each side by a double row of stately beeches, their tall polished trunks rising like pillars, their interlacing branches overhead arched like the aisle of a cathedral, led from the gate to a very old stone bridge, which crossed the river, the same rapid stream afterwards to be met with between Kingsconnell and the Grange, and which ran through a deep and picturesque glen beneath the house of Sempilltower. From this bridge the avenue made a turn to the left, and ascended rapidly through a lawn, whose emerald grass was swept by the low-hanging branches of its huge old limes and sycamores, till it gained a level space in front of the house, which formed, with the stables, three sides of a square; the fourth consisting of a battlemented wall, in which a lofty *porte cochére* gave entrance to the inner court.

One portion of the house, a huge square battlemented tower, from which the place derived its name, was of almost unknown antiquity, and, although kept in repair, uninhabited, save for some servants' apartments in the lower story. The more modern part bore that close resemblance to the old French château, which may be traced in Scottish

houses of the age when it had been erected; tall, thin, and grey, with peaked roofs and flanking turrets, surmounted by extinguisher-shaped summits. A door in one of these afforded entrance to the house, up a winding stone staircase, which, broken by landing-places at the various stories, was continued uninterruptedly to the top of the edifice.

Just as our party appeared beneath the gateway, and crossed the paved court within, a face glanced like a sun-beam from one of the narrow windows in the staircase turret;—there was a rush of swift footsteps, and a rustling of drapery, down the stairs, and forth from the arched door flew Helen Sempill, more beautiful in her fully-developed womanhood than even when we saw her last, a girl on the eve of her wedding, and clasped her sister in a close embrace, from which, with an April countenance of smiles and tears, she only released her to fling her arms around the children, who covered her with rapturous kisses. Disengaging herself at last from their clinging hands, she pushed them gently from her, and gazed earnestly in the face of each.

"My own little darlings!" she exclaimed.

"Why, Beatrice, how they are grown! Who could have thought it? And you, dearest, dearest! you look well, my own Beatrice, indeed you do."

"And so I am, dearest,—quite well;" replied her sister. "And yesterday I had such a pleasant letter from Harry. 'He will be at Portsmouth in a month or less.'"

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed Helen. "I may see him then, in London, before I go. But I do not mean to talk of that to-day. I can think of nothing but the joy of our meeting. Come, then,—come up-stairs, Beatrice; come, my darlings; Mrs. Sempill is expecting you."

They proceeded accordingly up the well-carpetted staircase, which after two turns conducted them to a narrow hall, covered with Indian matting, and containing a stove; its walls hung with swords of various descriptions, armour, and other warlike relics of former times of the ancient race of Sempill, mingled with trophies of the chase, in the shape of several majestic pairs of antlers, and sundry foxes' brushes. A door at one extremity of this hall opened, behind a gorgeous Indian screen, into

the long, low-roofed, narrow apartment, used as the drawing-room; a very paradise of ease and comfort, with its plain, abundant furniture,—its deep, downy arm-chairs, low couches, and ample cushions; and with its three small windows, each sunk so deep in the thickness of the wall, that the recess it formed was like a little supplementary room, and each recess furnished with a soft inviting seat, and a little table or stand of flowers. Notwithstanding the season and the warmth of the day, there was a fire, though not a large one, in the spacious grate; for Sempilltower was a house addicted to all manner of comfortable customs, and fires in some of the apartments were nearly indispensible at all seasons, on account of the extreme cold occasioned by the vaulted stone passages and floors. The windows stood open, and the room was filled with the odour of mignionette and other flowers, from various bouquets which decorated it.

Here the visitors received a most kind and cordial welcome from Mrs. Sempill, and her sister, Miss Penelope Muirhead, a mild and amiable spinster, who for many years had found a home at Sempilltower. Mrs. Sempill

herself was a fine specimen of beautiful old age; beautiful not less in feature, in the softness imparted by an exquisitely fine complexion, still retaining much of its polished grain, and in the gentle dignity of mien belonging to a tall and graceful figure, all enhanced by the most scrupulous purity and nicety of dress, than in the expression of peace and serenity pervading her countenance and demeanour, the aspect of one reposing in the still evening of a happy day,—the tranquil close of a life spent in that unselfish enjoyment of the blessings of Heaven, which accounts them doubled by being shared with others. She was fondly attached to her daughter-in-law, and, perhaps, in her inmost soul conscious that Helen's warmth of heart and capacity for affection were sadly flung away on George. At all events, the only happy days which the former could number in her married life, were those which she had passed at Sempilltower; and next to her sorrow in the prospect of bidding farewell to Beatrice and her children, was that with which she looked forward to the idea of quitting, perhaps for ever, the patriarchal household of her husband's parents.

A protest was very speedily entered by Mrs. Sempill against Mrs. Henry Lockhart's avowed intention of returning to the Grange before dinner-time. She would not hear of it. The two sisters must have far too much to say to each other after so long a separation, to dream of parting in such a hurry; and the Laird, and the Major, and Reginald, would be quite shocked if she permitted it. The Major and Reginald, (her brother-in-law and eldest son), had gone up to the Moss-side Moors, about ten miles off, in the dog-cart early that morning, but would be at home by dinner-time, they might depend upon that, for she had promised the Major a grouse-pie, and he would not forget five o'clock. They dined at five, rather a late hour for their old-fashioned house, but it suited the sportsmen; and the Laird had invited Mr. Carmichael, the new minister, to dinner for the first time, so Mrs. Henry Lockhart would be a prodigious acquisition, to help to entertain him. There was no resisting this importunity of genuine hospitality, even had Beatrice felt much inclined. The objection she made on account of the children was speedily over-ruled, and to their

unconcealable delight, it was agreed that Beatrice and Helen should for once be promoted to the dignity of dining at table. Miss Muirhead was deputed to write a note to Miss Grace Lockhart, accounting for the absence of her sister-in-law and nieces, and requesting her, in Mrs. Sempill's name, to join the party at dinner. This missive Mrs. Henry Lockhart accompanied by a private note to the servant, her little girls' nursery-maid, who always accompanied her to the Grange—desiring her to walk over in the afternoon with such articles of dress as she required for herself and them.

These arrangements concluded, the two girls were desired to make themselves happy in their own way, to go out of doors if they liked, or explore the old tower, if they preferred that, and visit Mrs. Bryce, the antiquated housekeeper, who could tell them many strange legends about it, to pass the time till the gong should sound for luncheon. The latter alternative was the one they chose; and whilst they departed on their tour of discovery, Helen carried her sister off to her own room, a comfortable apartment hung with tapestry, in the second story of the house, having a

turret dressing-room, commanding a beautiful view of the romantic glen beneath. Here they seated themselves on two broad low arm-chairs, covered with what had once, no doubt, been considered master-pieces of needlework, but whose bright worsteds had long faded into an uniform dusky brown and yellow, drawn into the recess of the deep narrow window, where the soft warm air came "wooingly" in; and here they talked over all the events, the thoughts, the feelings, which had befallen each since they parted. But considering the circumstances under which they met, there was a wonderful degree of cheerfulness, after the first inevitable burst of grief, in the tone of their conversation. It was Helen, too, who was the first to enforce it.

"My own Beatrice," she said, "let us try to put aside these thoughts for a little while. Let us cheat ourselves into happiness if we can. I have grown such a miser in happiness! You know my natural love for it, and my dread of sorrow. Under other discipline than that which I have had, the feeling might almost have led to selfishness; but as it is, I am sure it has been mercifully bestowed, to

enable me to find compensation in a lot that needed some. And I have been so very miserable since George informed me of this projected change,—there has been so much of bitterness in the feelings it has given rise to, that do you know, to find myself here, in this dear old kindly house, with you and our darlings within daily reach, and—alas! that I should have to say so! with George away from me, has made me feel as if a mountain were taken off my heart. I am not reminded of what is before me now, as I was hourly in London. I seem to have left it behind, I want to be happy to-day—this beautiful bright day—which has brought you back to me. Let us try to be happy."

And they *were* happy. It is quite possible to be so, even in the midst of sad and anxious thoughts, by the wisdom, and the gratitude, evinced in thankfully enjoying the present moment,—"and through the future hours, sending no busy dream." As to the little girls, the day was to them one of unmixed delight. Years after, the memory of that long summer holiday at Sempilltower, as often as it arose, would waken a glow of beautiful though

sad, recollections in the hearts of each. Often did they recall the eager curiosity with which they traversed every corner of the tower, and the awe-struck silence in which they listened to some miraculous tales connected with it, related by Mrs. Bryce, an aged and almost superanuated retainer of this time-honoured family—where such a thing as turning off a servant was unknown; and who retained her cosey apartment, her easy chair, and her dignity of housekeeper, notwithstanding that all the active duties of the office were discharged by her grand-niece Marjory. Oftener still did they remember the afternoon's ramble; when the two gentle old ladies accompanied them and their mother and aunt as far as the lovely terraced garden, and sat in a quaint arbour, in the sun, bidding them go and gather as many gooseberries as they chose; an injunction which did not require to be twice repeated. And *such* gooseberries! the very bushes bending beneath their rich loads; such gooseberries as only grew in such gardens, in the days when we were young, and are unknown to modern horticulture. Then the extended walk, beyond the powers of Mrs. Sempill or

her sister, who never went farther than the garden,—with its devious paths, each one more picturesque than another, and the many miles of similar paths, cut in all directions through the rich hanging woods which were a distinguishing ornament of the demesne. All were dear to memory, and the evening not less so than the day.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they found themselves once more in front of the house; and there, upon a rustic sofa placed beneath one of the gigantic planes, whose long pendant branches formed a canopy above it, sat Mrs. Sempill, Miss Muirhead, and Miss Grace Lockhart, who had walked over from the Grange, in compliance with the invitation sent her; and who greeted Mrs. George Sempill with much affection. The party was in a few minutes after joined by the Laird, who rode up the avenue, gave his horse to a groom at the gateway, and advanced to greet his guests with all the stately courtesy of the old-school, blended with a warmth and cordiality of kindness peculiarly his own.

Mr. Sempill was indeed a noble specimen of the old Scottish gentleman. Tall and erect

in person, his fine and venerable countenance shaded by the most beautiful silver hair, which he wore somewhat long behind, his large bright blue eye still retaining much of its youthful light, and the vigour of his frame little touched by decay, he looked a picture of honoured years, fit to be the pendant to that presented by his wife. Foreign travel and habitual intercourse, on an extensive scale, with the best society, had combined, with all the advantages of a liberal education, to refine his manners without chilling his heart; and though able to enjoy and appreciate all that was cultivated and polished amongst the highest in the land, the humblest and least attractive, who had any claim upon his kindness, were it no more than the sacred one of misfortune, never had been known to advance that claim in vain. Sempill-tower had been, in the fullest sense of the word, a home to every individual amongst his own or his lady's connections, who had ever stood in need of one; and to his own immediate family it was the natural, and indeed, the only conceivable place of resort under all circumstances. He could have been well content, as could Mrs. Sempill, to have had all his sons

and their wives resident in his house at once; and it had been the only wedded home of the eldest, Captain Reginald Sempill, a man now a year or two on the other side of forty; who having been forced to leave the army, in consequence of almost mortal wounds sustained in the Peninsular campaign, had subsequently married, but had lost his wife and infant child within a year after. Since that time, Captain Sempill had remained at home, and had never cared to contract a second union. With the position of George, the second brother, we are already acquainted. The youngest, Walter, who had married early in life, many years before him, was the father of a large family; but being a partner in a wealthy provincial banking-house in the south, and his wife being English, he was more estranged from his family than any of its other members.

The bachelor and maiden branches of the house of Sempill, had always been in the habit of "wearing out life's evening grey" beneath the shade of the old Tower. It was not many years since a very aged uncle and aunt of the Laird's had successively been laid in the family vault in Kingsconnell church-yard, after many

years' residence under their nephew's roof. Colonel Sempill and his sister, Miss Elizabeth, or as she was termed in the family, "Aunty Betty," had not long quitted their places ere one of them was occupied by the Major, Mr. Sempill's brother, who had returned from India after thirty-five years' service, and, as a matter of course, repaired to the home of his youth, there to spend what remained of his age. This worthy, a sallow, wizened, and somewhat taciturn old gentleman, who looked much more aged and infirm than his elder brother, shortly after the Laird's arrival drove up to the house with his nephew, attended by a servant and a game-keeper, in a dog-cart loaded with grouse and hares; and, after brief salutation, went in doors to dress. The remainder of the party lingered yet a little while, enjoying the delicious warmth and fragrance of the afternoon, beneath the shade of the trees.

The Laird had only just returned from Kingsconnell, whither he had ridden over on hearing the report of his old neighbour's increased illness. He had arrived a few minutes after all was over, and the spirit which so long had dwelt apart on earth with its own

mournful thoughts, released at last! And he talked of this, as the old learn to talk of death, even of the deaths of those they have known and loved—gravely, solemnly, yet calmly,—in a strain of sad and subdued feeling, scarcely to be comprehended by ardent youth, with its warm affections, and keen sense of sorrow.

Mr. Carmichael had not left Kingsconnell at the time of the Laird's visit, and had seen him, and related to him some particulars of Sir Peter's last moments, speaking with trust and hope of the state of mind in which he had departed. It appeared that Mr. Carmichael was completely in the confidence of the next heir, Mr.—now Sir Thomas—Bertram, and had written to request his immediate presence, besides taking other necessary steps in his name. The Laird added that he looked forward with pleasure to introducing this young clergyman to his family that day. He had been much pleased with him. And this reminding them all of the hour, there was a general move into the house.

Mrs. George Sempill had barely time, before dinner, to produce various beautiful presents which she had brought from London

for her sister and nieces; books, articles of dress, and other things; and Beatrice, in particular, could scarcely tear herself away from the examination of a complete set of Sir Walter Scott's poetry, long the cherished object of her ambition, and now all her own, until reminded of the extreme punctuality of the house at Sempilltower, she found herself compelled to accompany her mother and sister to the drawing-room.

Here were assembled the whole of the party already enumerated, Miss Grace Lockhart, looking as completely unlike as possible to the Miss Grace of the breakfast table at the Grange, in pale blue silk, and a pretty lace cap trimmed with the same colour. Their number was shortly augmented by Mr. Carmichael, immediately after whose arrival dinner was announced, and the Laird offering his arm to Mrs. Henry Lockhart, the company proceeded across the hall to the dining-room, at its opposite extremity.

CHAPTER VII.

" 'A jolly place,' said he, 'in times of old!
But something ails it now; the spot is curst.' "
WORDSWORTH.

THE dining-room at Sempilltower was the ancient hall of the mansion, an apartment of length and breadth strangely disproportioned to its height, whose stone floor was covered with thick-piled carpets, and whose enormous arched fire-place, at no season empty, consumed on an average a cart-load of fuel daily. The walls hung with a long series of family portraits, the deep narrow windows, shaded by rich heavy curtains, and the old-fashioned side-board loaded with massive plate, all combined to impart to it a character of no ordinary comfort. But there was an atmosphere of genuine kindliness diffused around it, independently of any such adjuncts. The digni-

fied courtesy, and minute attention to the comfort of all their guests, which distinguished the Laird and Mrs. Sempill, were reflected, as such attributes generally are, in the demeanour of their servants. And they too partook of the patriarchal character of the rest of the household. The old butler, John Chalmers, was a contemporary of his old master, and himself the son of an ancient family servant in the former generation. Then came his son, James Chalmers, Captain Sempill's own particular attendant, who had followed his young master to the wars, like a faithful squire of old, had dragged his apparently lifeless body from the field of Talavera, and tended him on what, but for such affectionate ministry, might in all likelihood have been his death-bed, in consequence of his wounds. Then there was the Major's man, David Bryce, a son of the old housekeeper; and his nephew, Raigie Matthe-son, Captain Sempill's *name-son,* a lad of fifteen, who acted as the old butler's deputy. The spirit of order, harmony and love, which pervaded the whole establishment, operated on all within its bounds; and those whose interests might under other circumstances have

been disposed to jar, feeling themselves all alike objects of kindness and just treatment, lived in peace and worked together in concert.

The only stranger at table on the present occasion, Mr. Carmichael, was distinguished by his hospitable entertainers with all that polite and unobtrusive attention calculated to make him feel himself at home; and not less so by their son, who, without possessing any very marked features of character, was a thoroughly amiable and good-hearted man, somewhat saddened in aspect, as one who had known suffering, but withal a pleasant and even cheerful companion, whom Mrs. Henry Lockart, in her secret soul, often wished had happened to be the husband of her sister, instead of his handsomer and more imposing younger brother. Reginald Sempill was no egotist; and his quiet endeavours to draw out the stranger guest met with a willing response from one apparently ready to be drawn out.

Mr. Carmichael was a somewhat singular-looking man. Young, perhaps six-and-twenty, but certainly not more; his dark, grave countenance would have been plain, almost common-place, but for the redeeming effects of

a fine forehead, developed into remarkable breadth at the upper part of the temples, and of eyes neither so noticeable in size or shape as in their meditative, dreamy expression, which however was exchanged at times for a glance of no ordinary degree of penetration. Silent rather than otherwise, and reserved more than shy, on first acquaintance, he appeared like a man who had originally been intended to be very awkward, but had been saved from that misfortune by the refining influence of study, in the first place, and in the next, by evident familiarity with good society. Before the end of dinner, every body began to be highly pleased with him, and poor Miss Grace Lockhart felt quite guilty in the involuntary emotion, remembering the strictures to which she had listened in the morning, and anticipating those yet to come, should her sister discover the favourable impression made by the minister so much decried by these "rael judges," Miss Babie Chisholm and Miss Menie Mark, not to mention Thomas Brodie, the Wright and Elder.

In the course of conversation, it appeared that Mr. Carmichael had resided with Mr., now

Sir Thomas, Bertram's family in Germany, as tutor to the two younger of his three sons, the elder of whom had accompanied him home to be entered at Harrow. The eldest of the family, Mr. William Bertram, a youth of twenty, of whom he spoke with the enthusiasm of warm affection, as one of the most accomplished and most promising beings he had ever known, had been nearly two years at Cambridge, and had read with Mr. Carmichael one year previously to entering there. He was at present passing the long vacation with his family, in the neighbourhood of Tours, where they had for some time resided.

"I look back upon the period of my intercourse with Mr. Bertram as the happiest of my life," said Mr. Carmichael. "I used to anticipate his coming abroad in vacation time with such delight."

A bright sweet smile, at these words, illuminated Mrs. Sempill's beautiful old face. "It does one's heart good, Mr. Carmichael," she said, "to hear a master talk in that way of his pupil. And is it not a pleasure," she added, looking round for sympathy in her benevolent satisfaction, "to think of such a delightful young man coming amongst us?"

Everybody assented. Even the taciturn Major was moved to observe that the family would be an acquisition to the neighbourhood.

"And the next son, Mr. Carmichael," asked Miss Muirhead, "what is his age?"

"Arthur is nearly sixteen," said he. "A fine boy, a very fine boy. They are a charming family of young people, so far as one can judge of the promise of their youth. I was much attached to Arthur, much interested in him; and I do look forward with deep interest to the renewal of our intercourse, which may now be anticipated. Miss Bertram is three years younger than her brother; and Hugh, the youngest, between ten and eleven."

"I am glad to hear there are so many sons," said the Laird, in a grave and earnest tone. "And all strong, healthy youths, I suppose—all likely to live and thrive?"

"Under God's blessing, I should say so," replied Mr. Carmichael, in the same tone. Mrs. George Sempill looked with some surprise at him and at her father-in-law, on one side of whom she was seated.

"Is there any reason why they should not, dear sir?" she asked.

"It is an old, foolish story, dear child," replied the Laird. "Mr. Carmichael, I see, knows what I mean. But it is all nonsense; and we should not be doing as we would be done by, in reviving almost forgotten *freits* at this time, respecting a family just about to come amongst us as strangers. For I conclude, Mr. Carmichael, that they will come to Kingsconnell."

It was evident that the Laird wished to change the subject, of course only augmenting ten-fold the curiosity he would not gratify. Mr. Carmichael, however, followed his lead, and answered that he had no doubt of it.

"Well, Mr. Carmichael," said Mrs. Sempill, in a low and solemn tone, "there is nothing reads one such a lesson on the vanity of existence as such an event as this, when we connect it with the recollections of a long life. Well do I remember when Sir Peter Bertram brought home his beautiful bride to Kingsconnell! I was a girl then, it was some years before my own marriage, so you may fancy it is not yesterday. And well do I recollect their young family growing up around them! A gayer house was not in this county;

and people were gayer then, sir, than they are now. There was more of openhandedness; and also, I think, when I was young, that we were not ashamed of being merry (as young people are now, my dears)," the old lady added parenthetically, with a smiling glance at the company in general. "Be that as it may, Kingsconnell was a gayer house than is often to be seen now-a-days. And to think of the end of all? But perhaps you know the story?"

To the infinite relief of Beatrice, whose eyes were intently fixed on Mrs. Sempill's face, Mr. Carmichael replied, "that he did not."

"He was as attached a husband as ever woman had, Mr. Carmichael, and she had four beautiful children, and all that money could procure her. And yet she left him, and left her young infants! But the less said of that the better," added Mrs. Sempill, then first recollecting the presence of the little girls. "He followed them abroad, whither they had gone. And then there was a mystery over the rest. No one ever knew, or no one who did know ever told, what had occurred, but it was surmised that there had been a duel, of which Sir Peter was the only survivor. The grave is

over the story! He came here at last to his solitary home, and he found his little son, his only son, dying of a fever, none but servants with him. The child called incessantly for his mother; he died calling for her! And they all said who saw him, that if ever living man bore the stamp of a broken heart upon him, Sir Peter did the day he laid his bonny boy's head in the grave. But grief does not kill; for that was forty years ago, and he is but dead this day."

"Awful indeed it is," said Mr. Carmichael, "to think what the human heart can bear, and live! And the daughters, madam? I think you mentioned more children?"

"I did. There were three girls," replied Mrs. Sempill. "And God help them, poor things!—much need has one to say God help them—of all such deserted girls—for man will help them little! He never cared to see them; his heart was buried with his heir. He said the hand of Providence was against his house, and so he let all things take their course. They went to live with their grandmother; and met with scanty affection from any one. They could not inherit the estate, and that was enough. The eldest girl died very young; I

have often thought the creature, a tender-hearted child, might have pined away for want of a mother's love, Mr. Carmichael: but perhaps you cannot understand that so well as a woman does. The next one was to have been married; an old story it is now, but I think the gentleman's family objected on account of her mother, which was the first time she had ever learned the truth respecting her; and that, and the disappointment together, broke her heart. She died of a consumption within the year. The youngest lived, grew up, and was well married; but poor lost thing! it had been better for her had it pleased God to take her when He took her sisters."

"Aye!" said the Major, "I remember hearing of that sad business in India."

"And now that house, which has been like a tomb for forty years and upwards," added Mrs. Sempill, "will once more be thrown open to the world, and filled with youth and life. God grant a different close to this chapter of its history!"

"Amen!" solemnly replied Mr. Carmichael. The Major, holding up his glass of claret to the light, slowly shook his head.

"Mr. Carmichael," said Mrs. George Sempill, about two hours after this time, "my sister and I, and this young lady, glancing at Beatrice, who stood by her, all her soul in her eloquent eyes, "have come to the resolution of throwing ourselves upon your mercy? We have the greatest possible favour to ask you!"

"Anything, Mrs. Sempill, that I can do," answered the young clergyman, with a grave smile, "I am sure I shall be most happy."

"Well then," said Helen, "come into the turret here, and tell us the *freit* about Kingsconnell, which my father refused to tell me after dinner, and of which we have heard so many tantalizing hints, that we can really bear it no longer. I am convinced that you know all about it. And there is a ghost story too, which my niece has the greatest desire to hear properly told; and she thinks you can tell it. Pray do! I need not assure you, we shall not repeat what you say to us in confidence."

"I require no such assurance, Mrs. Sempill," returned Mr. Carmichael; "and I shall gladly tell you all I know, were it for no other reason than that you would imagine it to be much more strange and wonderful than it

really is, if you were not permitted to hear it. I am quite afraid you will be disappointed when you know the whole of the story."

"I shall take my chance of that," said Helen, smiling, and leading the way into the turret, a small room, circular in form as the name implied, which opened from the drawing-room, by a door in one angle of the wall. This little apartment was fitted up with oddly-shaped cabinets, whose upper shelves contained numerous volumes of elegant literature and light reading, strange antique cupboards, shaped to the walls, and filled with beautiful old china, and all the nondescript curiosities which abound in ancient family-residences; and it contained a small writing table, and several low chairs with triangular seats, and little fin-like arms, luxuriously cushioned, and singularly comfortable. In one of these Mrs. George Sempill seated herself, and her two companions followed her example, whilst Beatrice and Helen, who had crept in after the others, placed themselves on two footstools with their backs to the wall, close by their mother and aunt.

"It must be confessed," said Mrs. Henry

Lockhart, "that this is the very light, and the locality altogether for hearing a ghost-story."

"Had it been colder," replied her sister, "I should have proposed an adjournment to the dining-room, to sit round that huge fire-place, but the night is too warm for that, and the distant peep of the fire that we have here is quite sufficient."

This view of the fire the open door of the turret afforded. It was now about eight o'clock in the evening, and the shades of twilight were beginning to be dispelled by the rising moon, which was visible at the narrow window of the turret, through the intervening branches of an enormous evergreen oak, which grew close to the house on that side. In the drawing-room candles were already lighted, and tea was over. The regular whist party was assembled round the usual table, consisting of Mrs. Sempill, Miss Muirhead, the Laird, and the Major, and Captain Sempill, who, good-natured as he was, had the delight natural to his sex, in the juvenility and the sentiment withal, of Miss Grace Lockhart, sat with her upon a sofa, coquetting with infinite gallantry over a portfolio of views in Spain, which lay upon a little table in front

of them. There was nothing to interrupt the more congenial pastime of the party around Mr. Carmichael, who now pressed him to begin his tale.

"I must premise," he said, "that the first part of my narrative, that which gave rise to the *freit* mentioned by Mr. Sempill, was related to me by my friend and pupil, Mr. William Bertram. It so happens that one bond of union between us consists in the addiction we both have to all manner of wild and wonderful stories, legends, and superstitions; everything, in short, connected with the unseen world, or that seems to bring our mortal life into contact with the spiritual. He learned this legend connected with his own family from an old lady, an aunt of his father's, still alive, and who had in her younger days lived much at Kingsconnell, before the breach with her branch of the family took place; I suppose in the early part of Sir Peter's married life. The latter part of the story Mr. Bertram did not know so distinctly; and it was a subject upon which he was well aware that his father would endure no questions. But since I came here, to my great surprise, it has been related to me by old Dr. Grindlay."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Henry Lockhart, "I thought the poor old gentleman had nearly lost his memory?"

"In matters belonging to the present day, he has, in a measure," said Mr. Carmichael; "but, as I think is often the case with old people, it seems to be singularly tenacious respecting long-past events. And this story attaching to the Kingsconnell family, in particular, as well as everything else relating to their former history, has a stronghold upon his mind. It seems to have been the *one* page of romance opened to him in the course of a long and little varied life. He told it most distinctly to me."

"As we hope you will do to us, Mr. Carmichael," said Mrs. George Sempill. "We are all attention." And Mr. Carmichael began his tale as follows:

CHAPTER VIII.

"This deeply affecting story has an air of fatalism that always reminds me of the Greek stage. Perhaps in all powerful tragedies this air is to be traced. It is a cold dramatic achievement to show us only the ordinary and necessary connection between the passions and the misfortunes of our species. The poetic invention that affects us to the deepest degree, is that which teaches us by what surprising coincidences the passions of the bad may work more misery than even they themselves intend; and how the shafts of cruelty may strike the innocent with more than their natural force, coming like arrows impelled by the wind."—CAMPBELL'S "LIFE OF MRS. SIDDONS."

MR. CARMICHAEL'S TALE.

The Widow's Curse.

"THE present mansion of Kingsconnell stands, as you, ladies, are probably aware, very near the site of one much older, which had been for many generations the residence of the family.

At the period when this one was built, very early in the last century, the owner of the property, Randolph Bertram, Viscount Kingsconnell, (for the family then enjoyed that title, now extinct with the elder branch), was a man who had distinguished himself in public life, after the Revolution. His political principles had attached him to the party of William of Orange, a circumstance of itself sufficient to stand in the way of his popularity with his own countrymen; for assuredly our two memorials of that reign, Glencoe and Darien, must ever remain indelible blots upon it in every patriotic Scottish mind. But Lord Kingsconnell was farther detested, as having been a member of the last Scottish Privy Council before the Union; and as being more than suspected of having largely shared in the bribes which, to their lasting infamy, it is too well known influenced many Scotchmen of that day to barter upon most unequal terms the independence of their country. His conduct had been openly denounced by the noble Belhaven, on those very grounds, in one of those stormy debates, previous to the passing of the Act of Union, when drawn swords came in to clench the arguments

on both sides. But the Act was passed; and Lord Kingsconnell had his reward. Already, from his marriage with an heiress, who brought a large addition to the property, a wealthy man for his age and country, he now appeared still more so; and undertook the building of the present mansion-house, which was finished on the same scale of magnificence on which it had been begun. It was he who executed the deed of entail on heirs male which has governed the succession to the estate. He had two brothers, and numerous cousins, whose names were enumerated in it according to their different degrees of propinquity; and having gone through all of his own race, down to a remote kinsman, he finished off the list by inserting the name of a cousin-german of his wife's, and *his* heirs-male, without, it may be believed, the most distant idea that any of them should ever approach the succession.

"Some time after the completion of Kingsconnell House, the owner resolved to lay out the Pleasance, which still surrounds it, kept up in the exact style in which it was at first devised. It is, I believe, very extensive, for I know no more of it than what I have seen

from the windows, on the two several occasions on which I have been there. Now it so happened that there was a very ancient burial-place, long disused, within the grounds; the burial-place formerly belonging to a small parish, Kirk Ringan's by name, which had been annexed to that of Kingsconnell. In Popish times, there had been a little chapel there, dedicated to St. Ninian—hence the name; and the burial-ground was of course consecrated; a practice which, as I am not in society where such a confession is liable to be misconstrued, I may venture to own is one amongst many that appear to me to have been most mistakenly abolished by our Reformers. Be that as it may, this old burial-ground interfered with the plan of the projected Pleasance, and Lord Kingsconnell, as it was no longer in use, gave orders for its being ploughed up, and thrown into the broad terraced walk in whose way it stood.

"Sacrilegious as this order must have appeared even to his work-people, no one durst take it upon him to resist it, and the wall surrounding the little enclosure was actually in part demolished, when an aged woman came

to the house, and implored an audience of its master. She was a widow, and had been so for nearly half a century. Her husband and her three children, who had all died very shortly after him, were the last inhabitants of the parish who had been buried in Kirk Ringan's church-yard. Every other family amongst the farmers and peasantry which had been wont to inter its dead there, was extinct; and this poor old creature, dragging out the lees of existence in poverty and loneliness, was nearly forgotten; at least her history was, in the neighbourhood. Scarcely any one knew where 'her people' were buried. But *she* had not forgotten. Withered by age, and chilled by poverty though it was, her heart still retained the memory of the husband of her youth, and of the children whom God had early taken from her, leaving her desolate on the earth. The last—we may well believe the only—wish of that weary heart was to lie in the grave beside them, when her long pilgrimage should be ended; that their bodies might rest together in the dust, even as she hoped their spirits might be re-united in the unseen state beyond death. The news of the intended desecration of the burial-place

had come upon her like a thunderbolt, and dispelled the apathy of age; and she came to implore, with agonizing supplications, that this last hope might not be torn from her, that the bones of her dead might not be disturbed, nor she debarred from a grave beside them. But all her supplications were in vain; the hard, proud man she addressed was inexorable, and she had no living creature to take her part. She left his presence at length like one distracted; and her visit, and its purport, passed altogether from his mind.

"Some few days after this, so runs the story, Lord Kingsconnell was standing by his workmen, superintending their operations in levelling the church-yard of Kirk Ringan's. The trees which surrounded it had been cut down, and all that remained of the dilapidated wall removed. The plough was about to be set to work, to tear up the soil so long undisturbed even by the spade; when suddenly from behind a moss-grown head-stone, sunk to one side in the uneven ground, the figure of the aged widow, in her tattered garments, and with her pale, wrinkled face, stood up before the master and servants. She gazed at them for a minute

in silence, so says the tradition, which has been handed down from father to son, by the witnesses of the scene, then lifting her hands to Heaven, she solemnly pronounced a curse upon the House of Kingsconnell. In the awful language of Scripture, she implored that he who had built it might lay the foundation thereof in his first-born son, and in his youngest son set up the gates of it. She called down the vengeance of the Almighty upon him who had violated the resting-place of the dead, and had hardened his heart to the intreaties of the widow for the graves of her husband and children; and she prayed that neither he, nor any future Lord of Kingsconnell, might be succeeded in his possessions by an heir of his own body,—that their lands might pass to strangers, and the place which knew them know them no more. And with the last words of her fearful petition she departed from the spot, and was never seen in that country-side again. It was concluded that she had been seized with derangement, had wandered away, and perished in some place where she was unknown.

The tale was hushed up. It may well be believed that during Lord Kingsconnell's life-

time, no one ever dared repeat it, save in a whisper. Whatever he might in his heart have thought or felt, he braved it out. The church-yard was levelled—the Pleasance was completed—and—*the Widow's Curse was fulfilled.* Since that day, think of the story as we may, no lord of Kingsconnell has ever been succeeded by a son of his own. *That* lord lived to see the doom denounced against him, in all its parts completed. He survived his own four sons; and the estates and title passed from him in succession to one of his brothers, and then to the son of the second, who had died before the elder. Not one of them left a son of his own, and so it has been ever since. In one way and another, by death, celibacy, or childless wedlock, the curse has worked. Brother succeeded brother; nephew, uncle; latterly cousin, cousin. Until it devolved upon the late Sir Peter, the succession to the estate was singularly rapid. With his predecessor, the last Viscount Kingsconnell, the elder line of the family became extinct. He, and his cousin, now Sir Thomas, were descended from a scion, which branched off from the main stock before it was ennobled; and as all the

families of the more distant kinsmen named in the entail, have either ceased to exist, or terminated in females, it so happens that Sir Thomas Bertram and his three sons are actually the last of the race. This is a very singular, and a very swift extinction of a family so extensive and so strong in male branches, one hundred years ago—a series of events calculated to make some impression, even upon the most sceptical. On me, I confess it made a very strong one one when first related to me; and this has not been lessened by all which has subsequently come to my knowledge, or by the solemn scene which I have this day witnessed in that house."

"It is an awful story!" exclaimed Mrs. Henry Lockhart, in a low voice. "I confess I should have been disposed to conceal it from young Mr. Bertram's knowledge, had I been his old relation. Does it appear to have made much impression upon his mind, Mr. Carmichael?"

"In the way of inducing despondency, I should say decidedly not," answered Mr. Car-

michael. "William Bertram's is a singular mind; and such subjects have a strange fascination for him, which overpowers all considerations of a personal nature. From all I have heard of the very superior old lady who told it to him, I imagine her to be very much of the same disposition, and that she judged him by herself in doing so. In her place, knowing him as I do, I am not at all sure that I should not have done the same; whilst from a person of a light and scoffing turn of mind, I should have been inclined if possible to conceal the fact of such a legend being connected with his family. It appears to me that if subjects of the kind be viewed in a spirit of faith and earnestness, they benefit the heart; but quite otherwise under opposite circumstances."

"I quite agree with you there," said Mrs. Henry Lockhart. "And is the story at all known or believed beyond Mr. Bertram in the family? Sir Thomas, how does he think of it?"

"Why," returned Mr. Carmichael, "you are aware, Mrs. Lockhart, that it is a species of story strongly opposed to the spirit of the age we live in, and that our avowal of faith in

it is liable to be assailed with contemptuous mocking, rather than any other argument. There is no plea, no chain of improbable coincidences, under which a man of the world would not sooner shelter himself, than admit the credibility of such a legend as this, though certainly borne out by incontrovertible facts. It is a subject on which I never have conversed with any member of the Bertram family, save William; but from all I know of Sir Thomas, I am convinced, that he would at once treat it with utter contempt, and at the same time feel most seriously displeased with any one who brought it forward as a subject of discussion."

"One can understand *that*, however, Mr. Carmichael," said Mrs. George Sempill. "It could not be agreeable to any father to have such a story canvassed, and such a doom connected with his family."

"Most decidedly not," replied Mr. Carmichael, "though you know, Mrs. Sempill, there are different modes of manifesting the same feeling. But I so thoroughly feel the injury and injustice of making a thing of the kind public, that I should not have dreamt of doing so in any society but one in which I

knew my words to be perfectly safe. And from what I can gather, during my short experience of this neighbourhood, though the legend is not forgotten, yet during Sir Peter's long life-time of seclusion the memory of it has greatly died away. It will of course experience a partial revival now that a new family is about to occupy Kingsconnell, but is scarcely likely to reach their ears, if it do."

"Now, Mr. Carmichael, for Dr. Grindlay's ghost story," said Mrs. George Sempill. "We do not mean to be baulked of it, you know."

"That," he replied, "is a story growing out of the former, and involving one of those instances of domestic tyranny and injustice which are so unhappily rife in the family-history of our forefathers. The particulars of *that* part of the story are matter of notoriety to all who know anything of the former generations of this family; the rest I shall relate as it was told to me, and leave my hearers to form their own conclusions on it. Dr. Grindlay, who I take it was about the same age as the late Sir Peter Bertram, heard it when a very young man, at the period of the last Lord Kingsconnell's death, told to his father, who

was minister of this parish before him, by the gentleman to whom the circumstance actually occurred.

"The last Lord Kingsconnell died childless; but he had been the father of a most promising son, whose melancholy death preceded his. In this youth all the ambitious hopes and projects of both his parents were centered; and it would seem that his mother in particular, had been a woman of a most ambitious nature. He was a boy of fifteen or so before his father succeeded to the title and estates, and even from that early period their whole thought appears to have been to secure for him an early and distinguished alliance in marriage, with a view at once to extend the consequence of his family, and avert the doom said to impend over it.

"By one of those strange over-sights of which one sometimes sees ambitious parents guilty, probably because their thoughts are too much occupied with things afar off to attend to those under their own eyes, whilst Lady Kingsconnell was weaving her manifold schemes for her son's future lot, the young Master of Kingsconnell had been permitted a most imprudent degree of familiarity with a beautiful

girl, of rank inferior to his own, though the daughter of a respectable gentleman. This young lady, whose name has escaped me—(but that is of no consequence to the story)—had lived much in the house as a companion to his sister; and at the time when the fact of their mutual attachment first accidentally transpired, they were, and had for some time been, privately engaged to each other. It is of no use to dwell on what may very easily be imagined, the disappointment and indignation of the parents. They attempted at once to break off the engagement; but their son was of a determined temper,—it was found to be no easy matter,—and they at last had recourse to temporising measures. The Master of Kingsconnell consented to leave home, and travel abroad for the space of a twelvemonth, with permission to correspond during that time with his affianced bride. If at the end of that time both parties continued in the same mind, the parents promised to withdraw all farther opposition to the match.

"So far all was just and reasonable, but then began one of those tissues of fraud and falsehood, which one would fain believe to be

impossible from a father and mother to a son, were the facts not unhappily too well established. By a series of machinations, which it was believed originated with Lady Kingsconnell, though they had the concurrence of her lord, the young man's mind was systematically poisoned, and warped into suspicion. It was afterwards ascertained that from the first, the letters passing between the young couple had been intercepted, through the instrumentality of the valet who attended the Master on his travels, he having been bribed enormously to do his lady this service. It would be tedious to enter into a long detail of all the arts employed, which indeed I am not competent to do, but they so completely succeeded, that the Master returned to Scotland before the expiry of the allotted time, convinced, as he thought, beyond the possibility of doubt, not only of the fickleness, but of the actual guilt, of the unfortunate girl to whom he had been betrothed. Her home was at a distance; and even had she known of what she was accused, she would not have been permitted an opportunity of clearing herself; the victim was too securely watched. In short, it ended in his

being persuaded, broken-hearted and desperate as he was, into a marriage with a young lady of very high rank, who had long been secretly attached to him.

"The parents' triumph was now at its height. The wedding was celebrated at the seat of the bride's father (in ——shire, I think), with the utmost splendour and rejoicing; and the young couple departed to spend the honey-moon at another of the family seats, in the north of England. On the third day of their journey, they entered the town of ———, where they stopped to change horses. Some delay having occurred, the unhappy bridegroom, in the restlessness of a dissatisfied mind, left the carriage, and strolled up the street in which the inn stood, where suddenly, turning a corner, he came full upon an advancing female figure, in whom he recognized her whom he believed to have so cruelly deceived him, but whom he could not cease to love!

"One may fancy the shock of the encounter! The young lady, who had been sent to reside with a relation in that town, in hopes of reviving her failing health, would have passed in silence the man whom she on her side believed

to have acted so base a part by her; but in a transport of grief, love, and indignation, he seized her by the hand, and demanded a few words with her. A very few sufficed to unfold to both, now when it was for ever too late, the secret of their mutual wrongs, and the diabolical treachery practised upon them.

"The unhappy girl, who only survived this scene a few months, never could tell how she had parted with her former lover, or remember how she reached the house where she was staying, that dreadful day. The still more wretched youth returned to the inn where his bride and his servants had long been waiting for him; and the latter often afterwards told how much they had been struck by the wild fixed look of their master, and his ghastly paleness, as he sprang into the carriage after his lady. They had not gone above a mile out of the town, when the valet missed one of his loaded pistols, which were at that time indispensable travelling companions, and calling to the post-boys to stop, requested permission to send back one of the outriders to inquire about it at the inn they had left. But his master, in a stern and gloomy tone, forbade him to detain them

on any such pretext, and commanded that the carriage should go on.

"It did so; but in half an hour after, a terrific explosion, and a burst of such shrieks as never before were heard from a human voice, brought it to a sudden and awful stop. The door was torn open, and there lay the young Master of Kingsconnell across the lap of his fainting bride, his head literally blown to atoms, and the missing pistol still clenched in his stiffening hand!

"This hideous tragedy," pursued Mr. Carmichael, when the exclamations of horror from his auditory had subsided, "is, as I said, well-known to all who know the former family-history of the Bertrams; and a more appalling lesson was never read to human pride and ambition. But, as Mrs. Sempill said at dinner, grief does not kill; nor does remorse; at least they do so but seldom. Five years after this termination to all their earthly schemes and hopes, the wretched parents were still alive. They returned about that time to Kingsconnell, after a long period of foreign wandering and residence in various places abroad, and established themselves there once

more. Their daughter had in this interval been married to an English nobleman whom they met on the Continent, and soon after their return Lady Kingsconnell departed to pay her a visit, leaving her lord alone.

"It so happened that the gentleman from whom Dr. Grindlay had the narrative I am now about to tell, Colonel Ainslie by name, was an early companion and schoolfellow of Lord Kingsconnell; and after having lost sight of him since boyhood, in consequence of the vicissitudes of a military life, had met and renewed his acquaintance with him in Italy. They had been much together there, and found pleasure in talking over their juvenile days; and in consequence of a pressing invitation to visit him at his own house on his return, Colonel Ainslie arrived there with the intention of remaining some time with his friend, very shortly after Lady Kingsconnell's departure.

"On his first arrival, he was conducted to the room assigned him by a servant; but after passing a cheerful evening in talking over their reminiscences of the past, when it was time to retire for the night, Lord Kingsconnell himself accompanied his guest, preceded by the butler

carrying candles, to the door of his apartment. *Only* to the door; for, although it had apparently been his intention to enter along with him, Colonel Ainslie remarked that as they approached it, he started, turned away almost with a shudder, and hastily bidding him 'good-night,' retreated immediately. This circumstance made but a momentary impression upon the visitor at the time, though afterwards it was vividly recalled to his mind.

"The apartment was a large and handsome one, but contained nothing to render it in any way striking. A good fire was blazing in the grate, and Colonel Ainslie, not feeling inclined to sleep, drew one of the easy chairs, with a writing-table to the hearth, and having put on his dressing-gown, sat down to write a letter. That done, he resolved on retiring to bed, but the fire looked so inviting, that he could not make up his mind to leave it yet awhile. Turning the chair towards it, therefore, and stretching himself out in a comfortable attitude, he sat musing, and gazing into the glowing embers, till, as might have been expected, he gradually fell sound asleep in that position.

"How long he slept he could not tell; but

he started awake at last, in all the discomfort which attends the rousing from sleep taken in an unusual place and manner, and determined to go instantly to bed. The fire had burned low, and the candles were sinking in the sockets. Just as Colonel Ainslie, having effectually shaken off his drowsiness, was about to rise from his chair, to his astonishment he beheld the door of the chamber slowly open. It was at the end of the room, and a good way from the fire-place. He sat gazing intently at it, feeling as if it were impossible for him to leave his seat, whilst a figure, at first indistinctly seen in the obscurity, entered, and advancing with a stately, measured step towards the light, stood still within two paces of his chair. It was that of a young and remarkably handsome man, dressed in a rich laced suit; his whole appearance denoting a gallant of the first rank; but his countenance, Colonel Ainslie declared, such as would never leave his memory till his dying day. It was ghastly pale,—fixed in an expression of such concentrated woe,—such hopeless despair—the dark mournful eyes bent upon him with such a look of untold anguish, as

froze the very blood in his veins. He instinctively felt, as people in such awful circumstances are said to do, that it was not an inhabitant of this world he looked upon. His limbs seemed to stiffen,—his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and he sat as if spellbound, unable to withdraw his eyes for an instant from that dread, unchanging gaze. Thus passed some space of time,—a long one it could not have been, but to his imagination it seemed to comprise hours of horror. Then the apparition, slowly and silently raising its hand, with an authoritative gesture pointed to the door. That motion broke the spell which benumbed Colonel Ainslie's senses. He rose from his seat, feeling that he must escape or be driven mad by the terror of this visitation; yet at the same time remembering, with a sensation of mortal dread, that in order to escape, he must *pass it closely*. How he did so, or how he gained the door, he never could distinctly recall; but he did gain it, and found himself in a long passage, fortunately lighted by the moonbeams, which made their way through a window not entirely darkened; and along this, he,—who had risked his life in various battles,

had mounted a breach, and led a forlorn hope, yet never had known what bodily fear was,—confessed, and declared he was not ashamed to confess, that he fled in such a condition of panic and of horror, as none but those who have experienced the overpowering influence of supernatural fears can rightly picture to themselves.

"Where to go was now the question; the house is a very large one; many stairs and passages occur in it, and he of course knew nothing of it. By accident, however, he managed to make his way to the library, where his host and he had sat the previous evening, and where the fire was not quite extinguished; and raking it together as well as he could, he passed a night of little rest and less comfort on one of the sofas.

"At last the Autumnal morning began to break, and Colonel Ainslie reflected that, unless he wished to expose himself to the observation of the servants, he must return to his room. Indeed, under the reviving influence of light, he began to question the reality of the apparition which he had seen, and to resolve the whole adventure into a frightful

ream, induced by the unnatural posture in which he had fallen asleep. Credulity in such matters was not the characteristic of the last century, any more than it is of the present; and he was one of those votaries of the real and the practical, whose scepticism it is not easy to shake. Nevertheless, he did not attempt to deny that it was not with the most assured step possible that he sought out the passage leading to his apartment, and opened the door of it. Nothing within appeared to denote that any one but himself had been there; and he proceeded to give his bed some appearance of having been slept in, and to dress himself; struggling all the while, but not with much success, against the singularly vivid and indelible impression left upon his mind's eye by that awful countenance and unmoved gaze of the last night's spectre; which remained before him in a manner very unlike the recollection of a dream.

"It was still early when Colonel Ainslie went down stairs; and on his making his way to the breakfast-room, he found no one there but the old grey-haired butler, employed in arranging the table. To while away the time

till his host should appear, he entered into conversation with this old man, who began talking of the Kingsconnell family, and shewing him several portraits which hung upon the walls of the room, amongst which were some of the present generation. One picture, covered with a black curtain, attracted Colonel Ainslie's attention, and he asked to be permitted to see it. The old man replied that he would willingly show it him, only he hoped the Colonel would excuse his begging that no allusion might be made to it in his Lord's presence. It was the portrait of his only son, whose melancholy death had plunged the family into such affliction five years before. He withdrew the curtain as he spoke, and Colonel Ainslie beheld the likeness of his last night's visitor! There was no mistake,—it was himself; the form, the face, the dress—all were the very same. The bright and animated expression of the countenance alone presented a strange contrast to that of the apparition; which contrast, however, only served to render the resemblance more strikingly correct.

"Awe-struck and speechless, Colonel Ainslie stood gazing at the picture, whilst the old ser-

vant talked on, lamenting the untimely fate of one so full of promise. 'It was that which had kept his Lord and Lady so long away from Kingsconnell. They had not had the heart to return. Many people had thought they never would.' Gratified by the silent attention of his hearer, he then proceeded to describe the ceremonial of the funeral,—the return to the house, as a mangled corpse, of him who had quitted it a week before a gay bridegroom; and the heartfelt grief and awe of those, amongst whom he himself was one, upon whom it had devolved to place the coffin of their young master in the room which he had always occupied in life, where they *waked* it day and night until the interment. 'The room had been shut up ever since, until very lately, that the housekeeper had taken it upon her to have it opened, and thoroughly aired. She wished to have it restored to use, and determined that it should be assigned to the first stranger who came, who could have no painful ideas connected with it. Colonel Ainslie might perhaps have remarked, the night before, that his Lordship would not go in with him, when he saw what room he was

to sleep in? The fact was, they had said nothing of it to his Lordship, but had privately resolved to lodge him, being a stranger, in the Master's room; and he (the butler) and the housekeeper had just been congratulating themselves on the plan having succeeded so comfortably.'

"It may be believed that Colonel Ainslie did not undeceive him. And I need scarcely add that the arrival of some letters for him that day furnished him with a pretext for pleading urgent and unexpected business as necessitating his immediate departure. Worlds, he afterwards said, should not have bribed him to pass another night at Kingsconnell. But from delicacy to the family, and a dislike to approach the subject at all, he seems never to have mentioned it to any one, until coming to attend Lord Kingsconnell's funeral, he became the guest of old Mr. Grindlay, and related it to him as I have told it. And afterwards it appears to have come out in various incorrect shapes, amongst country people and servants, as these sort of stories do always come out, one cannot tell how. But this, Dr. Grindlay assured me, is the correct version."

Mr. Carmichael ceased to speak, and his silent audience

> "——All at once their breath drew in
> As they had been drinking all."

"What would I not give," at length exclaimed Mrs. George Sempill, "to be able to give full and implicit faith to a story like that! I do so delight in a genuine ghost story! and yet there is a lurking scepticism, like Colonel Ainslie's, at the bottom of my heart, which always comes in the way of my enjoyment. I cannot believe these tales as I wish to do."

"What then do you think of me, Mrs. Sempill," asked Mr. Carmichael, "when I confess to you that I implicitly believe in this story?"

"Oh! I am *so* glad of that!" almost involuntariiy exclaimed the young Beatrice, "for I do!"

"I say that I envy you, Mr. Carmichael," replied Helen, "and I should of all things enjoy a discussion on the subject of ghosts with you. I *want* to believe, if I could."

"I shall be most happy to discuss the subject at some future time with you, Mrs.

Sempill," returned he, "but at present I fear it would involve us in too lengthy an argument. It is a subject in which I have a particular pleasure, and on which I have read and thought much; though such an admission, in many people's opinion, might cause me to be set down as a crack-brained enthusiast."

"What are you all about here in the dark?" enquired Captain Sempill, who had apparently become weary of Miss Grace and the views in Spain. "Any room for me, Helen?" and he drew in one of the low chairs, and seated himself by his sister-in-law. "Now I think I can guess what you are all doing. You are discussing that humbug my father was looking so mysterious about at dinner to-day—that absurd old story about Kingsconnell, which all the old wives hereabouts will be bringing to light again, now that poor Sir Peter is dead, and a new heir coming. You don't seriously mean to say that you believe it, Helen?"

"I never enter into arguments with unbelievers," said Helen, "and you are one, I know, Reginald, on all such points. But after all, facts are facts."

"Facts! aye, but what sort of facts? What say you, Mr. Carmichael?"

"I am disposed to say ditto to Mrs. Sempill," replied he with a smile.

"But now, look here," said Captain Sempill, "can there be anything more one-sided than to press a series of accidents, mere chance-work, into the service of a piece of obsolete superstition, and set them down as incontrovertible facts in its support? Upon my word I should not think the subject worth talking of at all, had I not been provoked to see my father's and mother's solemn looks about it at dinner, and the impression they seemed to make on you ladies; and I really think it is one's duty, for the sake of these new people's comfort, to hinder such a story getting abroad again, after having been so long forgotten."

"There I perfectly agree with you, Captain Sempill," returned Mr. Carmichael, "and honour the feeling which prompts you; at the same time that I take leave to reserve my own judgment of the facts you allude to, and the weight to be attached to them."

"You astonish me, Mr. Carmichael, I must

confess," observed Captain Sempill. "Why, what had the old woman's curse, if there ever *was* such an old woman, to do with the death of young Bertram, that dreadful story which I dare say you know, of his blowing out his own brains?"

"Certainly, we have just been talking of it," said Mr. Carmichael.

"Well, is it not as clear as day-light that it was the parents' fault entirely, and no one's else? Had they not acted in the treacherous manner they did by him, he might have married and lived to a good old age, leaving a large family behind him. And in Sir Peter's case, to be sure he lost his heir; but had he married again,—and I have often wondered why he did not,—and had other sons, what would have become of the story then? Then here is Sir Thomas, with a family of sons. Are they all to die off, to appease the ghost of this unconscionable old woman?"

"Far be such a calamity from them!" exclaimed Mr. Carmichael gravely. "I agree with you, Captain Sempill, it is a deep and puzzling subject, and one too closely connected with the most awful and bewildering of topics,

the origin of evil, to be easily dealt with. And if the conclusions to which it leads me are different from your's, I neither presume to advance them as incontrovertible, nor to condemn those who differ from me. And yet I cannot bring myself to look upon such a story, opposed though it be to the spirit of every-day life, in the light of a mere obsolete superstition. To me it conveys a deeper and more mysterious meaning. But I fully concur in your kind and neighbourly desire to hinder its being again spread abroad, and becoming a source of annoyance to Sir Thomas' family. I am sure we are all agreed on that head."

The discussion was here interrupted by the entrance into the drawing-room of the supper-tray, an old-fashioned appendage which appeared at Sempilltower as regularly every night as the clock struck ten; and Captain Sempill, rising, offered his arm to Mrs. Henry Lockhart, to conduct her to its nearer vicinity. For nearly an hour after, all was cheerful sociality and harmless mirth, around this pleasant meal of our ancestors, which modern civilization has so completely banished. Then the announcement of the Grange carriage broke up the little party.

"I am charmed with this new minister, Beatrice!" exclaimed Helen Sempill, as she accompanied her sister and the children to her room, previous to their departure. "I have never met with anything in the Church of Scotland at all to compare to him. I wish he belonged to the Church *in* Scotland!"

"So do I, I am sure," said Beatrice. "I think even Miss Violet could in that case hardly discover many defects in him. But as it is, he will be a blessing to us, when we are here, Helen, for you know we can so seldom get to St. Michael's to attend our own Church, from the distance."

The visitors descended to the drawing-room to make their adieu to old Mrs. Sempill and Miss Muirhead, and then departed, with a promise from Helen to walk over to the Grange next morning, and many injunctions from her mother-in-law to return there speedily. These were forcibly seconded by the Laird, who with the chivalrous courtesy of the old school, descended the stairs with Mrs. Henry Lockhart and handed her into the carriage, his venerable silver hair uncovered as he did so. A ceremony this, which on the stormiest night of winter, the Laird was never known to omit towards any

lady visitor. The old-fashioned close carriage, drawn by the farm-horses, and driven by Lowry Mac Fyke, in a livery great-coat, trotted soberly down the long avenue, through the beautiful moonlight; and as, in going round to the lodge of the Grange, it passed a spot where through a long vista, the house of Kingsconnell was visible from the high road, the sudden gleam of lights from one part of the mansion, told of the silent room where the watchers of the dead were waking the corpse of Sir Peter Bertram.

CHAPTER IX.

" But hark! the tent has changed its voice,
There's peace and rest nae langer;
For a' the *rael judges* rise,
They canna' sit for anger." BURNS.

" Quant à l'humeur contredisante—
* * * * * *
Quiconque avec elle naïtra
Sans faute avec elle mourra,
Et jusqu'au bout contredira,
Et, s'il peut, encore par-delà."
LA FONTAINE.

THE churchyard of Kingsconnell, which was nearly equidistant from the Grange and Sempilltower, and not above a mile and a half from the lodge of either mansion, presented an unusually crowded aspect on the Sunday following the death of Sir Peter Bertram, which had occurred on the previous Wednesday. Not only was the new assistant and successor expected to preach for the first time that day, but

it was confidently rumoured that late on the previous evening a post-chaise and four had arrived from the direction of Edinburgh, and had driven in at the grand entrance to Kingsconnell House, containing two gentlemen, whom report at first magnified into Sir Thomas Bertram and his eldest son. This was the edition of the story propagated amongst the first set of loiterers round the tombstones, and at the churchyard gate. The day being warm and beautiful, these were numerous, and unusually early in their attendance; and not only was the fact of Sir Thomas's arrival established amongst them beyond question, but a full, true, and particular account of his conduct on arriving,—what he had said, and how he had looked, was in rapid circulation, when the tide of gossip was arrested in midflow by some later additions to the party, who, living in the immediate neighbourhood, were better acquainted with the actual state of things, and it was now discovered that Sir Thomas and his son could by no human possibility have arrived at Kingsconnell, seeing they were in France. It was also ascertained that the occupants of the post-chaise in question were two legal

gentlemen from Edinburgh, one of whom had acted as man-of-business for the late Sir Peter, whilst the other discharged that office for the present Baronet. Whether or not they might be expected in church now became the question, but that was soon disposed of.

"It wald be an unco' like thing," a grey-haired senior sternly said, "to be seen at the kirk, and them leevin' in the hoos where the maister o't was lyin' a streekit corp."

Then ensued a discussion respecting the funeral, which was to take place on the Tuesday following; its ceremonial, the number of persons invited,—all the gloomy detail, in short, in which the peasantry of Scotland, from their grave and reflecting cast of mind, take so intense an interest. The aged man already mentioned, a small tenant on the Kingsconnell property, was referred to for a description of that of the last Lord Kingsconnell, which he well remembered having attended. He told of the prodigious concourse of people, the train of carriages and of men on horseback who followed it; the marshalling of the procession at that very gate where they now stood, to walk to the burial place, an ancient vault, near the

eastern extremity of the churchyard, covered with emblematical devices, and nearly illegible inscriptions; he spoke of the solemn effect of the crape-covered coronet, borne by the old steward, and which there was no successor to receive from his hands; and of the handsome person and stately bearing of Sir Peter, the chief mourner,—him whom they were so soon to see borne to the grave from an equally desolate home with that unhappy old man, leaving no child to mourn him. And here a sudden difficulty occurred to all. Who was to act as chief mourner at this funeral, since the only living relatives of the deceased were abroad?

This was a deep question. Many and various were the solutions offered, but none at all met the dilemma. A new-comer, who had joined the group, at once resolved it. This was no other than David Bryce, Major Sempill's man, armed with his master's Bible and Psalm-book, and preceding the rest of the Sempill-tower party, as it was his wont to do, for the express purpose of enjoying "a crack in the kirk-yard." This worthy informed his auditors that he had himself heard Mr. Carmichael tell

the Laird, that the office devolved upon the next heir of entail, failing Sir Thomas's family; that the "burial-letters" had been issued in the name of Sir Thomas, as a matter of course, but this gentleman, a Mr. Hamilton, from a distant county, would supply his place at the funeral, and was expected at a friend's house on the following day.

"Hech, sirs! and him no a drap's blude to the family!"—"Aye, aye!"—"Weel, the like o' that!"—"Na, dinna ye mind the auld freit that fock spak' o' lang syne; the Curse on Kingsconnell? Od! it's unco' like a readin' o't."—"Gae wa! gudeman, heard ye ever the like o' that? and Sir Thammas wi' three buirdly sons, they say!"—"Weel, aweel, neebor! it 'll no be read in your day or mine, may be, but aiblins they're leevin' that 'll see't, for a' that." —"Gudesake, sirs, whisht! It's rael uncanny to fore-speak things that gate."

Such were a few of the manifold comments on David's tale, as, proud of superior information, he stood, the oracle of the circle. Thus the name of Mr. Carmichael having suggested another train of ideas, he was pressed for an opinion on that gentleman's qualifications

for the pulpit. This, however, David pronounced more cautiously.

"Me and the Major," he said, "thinks rael weel o' the young minister; but we're just dootfu' whatna' kind o' discoorses we'll get frae him; we're dootfu'. He's been lang in foreign pairts, ye see; but far be it frae me to condemn ony man unheard. Jeems Cha'mers an' the Captain, again, they're just meikle ta'en up wi' him; they look for great things at his hand; but says I the day, Major, says I, you and me's ower auld for new fangled gates. The Major's no a man o' many words; but says he, 'David, ye're surely forgettin' yoursell!' Na troth, Major, says I, 'I wish I *could* forget mysell. I would like weel to forget that I was auld. Od! he leuch rael hearty at that, though."

And now the aristocratic members of the congregation began to appear, approaching from various quarters. Kingsconnell church, a good-sized, and, for a Scottish country church, rather handsome edifice, was beautifully situated at the head of a gently rising slope, down whose face the churchyard extended a considerable way, shaded by very

fine old ash trees, and bounded on one side by a clear and rapid burn. A rustic bridge across this stream, and a wicket gate in the wall, afforded access to the winding path which led to the Manse, a snug white-washed domicile, embosomed in trees, and not five minutes' walk from the church. The Clachan, or village, of Kingsconnell, lay within a quarter of a mile, and consisted of one main street and a number of detached houses, irregularly and somewhat picturesquely scattered along the foot of the eminence. Amongst these were some abodes with considerable pretension to neatness. There was the roomy two-story house, occupied by Dr. Chisholm and his maiden sister, Miss Babie,—its flower-plat and iron railings in front dividing it from the road; and its walled garden and little paddock behind, with stable and gig-house, bearing witness to the doctor's extensive practice in the county. Then there was the neat and somewhat formal cottage, tenanted by Miss Menie Mark, the daughter of the deceased parish-minister of St. Michael's, who had been for many years settled at the Clachan of Kingsconnell; and had established for herself the unenviable notoriety of being

the most thoroughly cross-grained and contradictory woman in the parish; in short, as Captain Sempill denominated her, "the very personification of an east-wind," but an excellent person withal, as, according to what we have before had occasion to remark of her friend, Miss Willie Lockhart, all such unloveable individuals are certain to be called. Besides these houses, there was a particularly nice and almost elegant cottage, of a larger size, inhabited by the widow of a former parish-schoolmaster, an Englishwoman, with all the scrupulously cleanly and tasteful habits of her country, who added to her scanty means by letting lodgings, which in the summer were very frequently occupied by people from the town, and who had at present been fortunate enough to find a more permanent tenant in Mr. Carmichael. There was likewise a little inn belonging to the Clachan, whose stables had been built with a view to accommodating the horses of the various gentlemen's families attending the church, and were in consequence considerably larger than the house itself.

First of the equipages this day arrived the

carriage from Sempilltower, an elegant and capacious barouche, whose inside occupants were the lady herself and her sister, the old Laird, and the Major. The outsides consisted of John Chalmers and Marjory Matheson, the oldest and least active amongst the servants, in the rumble, and James Chalmers on the box beside the fat old coachman, Adam Mac George. Helen had preferred walking on so beautiful a day, and escorted by her brother-in-law, had met Beatrice and her children, who were likewise on foot. They were visible, ascending the sloping road together, very shortly after the arrival of the seniors. Soon after them appeared the elder party from the Grange, driven by Lowry Mac Fyke; the antiquated equipage, and not particularly well-groomed horses, contrasting rather disadvantageously with the perfect order of those which owned Adam Mac George as their charioteer. The carriage contained the old lady, Miss Willie, looking with the air of one on direful thoughts intent, revolving anticipations of errors in doctrine not a few, to be looked for in the young minister; and Miss Grace, attired in a bonnet

of blue, and gown of the same colour, indulging in thoughts of a more mundane nature, as she exchanged cordial greetings with those of her acquaintance whom she met on descending from the carriage, including Dr. Chisholm, a good-humoured, gossipping, country practitioner, who had always some amusing anecdote to tell; and to do him justice, but few ill-natured ones. Miss Babie, his sister, a broad, middle-aged lady, with a look of determined good sense and self-complacency, attached herself more particularly to Mrs. Lockhart and Miss Willie, as the group ascended the path to the church-door together.

Various equipages of humbler note,—carts, gigs, and vehicles partaking of the characteristics of both, shaped like carts, and containing seats slung across them, followed in the wake of these more distinguished church-goers; but these generally stopped in the Clachan, where their occupants alighted, shook themselves to rights, and walked up to the church. The pedestrians were almost all in advance of the others, and already loitering about the churchyard.

"We are very early," observed Captain

Sempill, as the party which he escorted drew near the Clachan. "The first bell has not rung yet."

"It will immediately," said Mrs. Henry Lockhart, "I see Miss Menie Mark's parlour window opening to catch the sound. You know she always comes out just as the bell begins to ring."

"I intend to way-lay Miss Menie, after church," exclaimed Captain Sempill. "I would not lose the treat of hearing her opinion of Mr. Carmichael's preaching for a great deal."

"It is not difficult to guess that beforehand," said Mrs. George Sempill; "at least in so far as that it will be precisely the reverse of your own, as expressed to her."

"I wonder, now," pursued her brother-in-law, "whether Miss Menie was *born* as utterly cross-grained as she is now? It is difficult to imagine so of any human being. Was she born cross,—did she achieve crossness, or was crossness thrust upon her by circumstances? There must have been a decided twist awry to begin with, any how."

As Captain Sempill uttered these words, they arrived in front of the tidy cottage in-

habited by the subject of his remarks; who precisely at that juncture appeared, issuing forth from its door. Miss Menie Mark had long been pronounced by Captain Sempill the most perfect specimen of the genus everlasting that he had ever known. He declared that he recollected her, when he himself was a boy, looking precisely the same as she did now, neither younger nor older; and this was in so far correct, that being one of those persons whom one cannot even imagine ever to have looked young, her personal appearance remained for a longer period stationary than most people's. She was very tall, thin, and angular in figure, with a singularly long face, sharp nose, dogmatical mouth, and little grey eyes, very much sunk in her head; which organs, when engaged in any argument of a peculiarly obstinate nature, she was wont to close in a most emphatic and not to-be-convinced fashion. This not very attractive outward form was clothed on the Sunday in question, as on all summer Sundays throughout the year, in a tight grey silk gown, and a dark shawl, whose hard wooden-looking folds bore an aspect as positive and provoking as that of

her countenance; her head covered by a close-fitting cap, equally positive in appearance with the folds of the shawl, and testifying to the independent spirit of the wearer in the stern defiance of all fashions, past or present, displayed in its construction. A small black silk bonnet, equally original in form, surmounted the cap, and lent its crowning grace to the whole.

Such was the personage who now stopped outside her garden-gate, to shake hands with the party who had just been discussing her.

"This is a very warm day, Miss Menie," remarked Mrs. Henry Lockhart, opening the conversation with what she deemed an undeniable proposition.

"It's a *sunny* day, Mistress Hairry," responded Miss Menie; "but in *my* opinion the wind's gone round to the east. Miss Beetress, my dear, I'm surprised to see you with your bonnet strings loose. Ye're in for a sore throat, my dear, take my word for it."

The bright intelligent eyes of Beatrice, as she parried this attack, met those of her aunt Helen, but were instantly withdrawn in her dread of being betrayed into a smile.

"Ready-primed with criticism on the new assistant, eh, Miss Menie?" slyly enquired Captain Sempill, as they ascended the churchward road together.

"*Me,* Captain?" was the reply, in a tone of infinite astonishment. "I'm sure nobody can say that ever they heard *me* pronounce an opinion on such subjects! Whatever I may think, and whatever my private feelins may be, I know better than to give them utterance in these days o' pawtronage and coort-favour, Captain Sempill."

"Ah! Miss Menie! 'tis a fine thing to have friends at court. But you great critics must be merciful, and consider what a nervous thing it is for a young man to encounter your keen remarks. Now I look upon Mr. Carmichael to be a very modest young man, and it is a tremendous ordeal he has to undergo to-day."

"It may be so, Captain," responded Miss Menie; "but no to contradict you, it's not my impression that Mr. Carmichael's modesty 'ill stand much in his way, from all *I* can gather."

"I hope it will not, I am sure, Miss

Menie," answered her antagonist smiling. At all events, I think we shall find him a most agreeable contrast to that lad who has been preaching lately for the old doctor. That was a sad rambling sermon he gave us this day fortnight, the last time I was in church. Do you recollect it?"

"Yes, Captain," solemnly responded Miss Menie. "And I must say you surprise me. I was very well pleased with it. In my opinion it was an excellent discoorse."

"Far be it from me, Miss Menie, to oppose my opinions to those of a judge like you. He undoubtedly was a clever young man in some respects."

"He might be a very *good* young man, Captain," quoth Miss Menie, closing her eyes; "but as to cleverness, in my opinion it takes a great deal to make a clever man. I'm sure *I* know very few clever men."

And with this conclusion the party reached the church-yard-gate, where their paths separated; Beatrice and her children entering the church by a different door from that which gave access to the Sempills' seat, and Miss Menie, with long obstinate strides, pursuing her way

towards a third, which opened upon the body of the church.

Kingsconnell church, built upon the old-fashioned plan, contained three "Laird's lofts" or gallery seats, belonging to the heritors of the parish, whilst those of the farmers and peasantry occupied the body of the edifice. The front loft, pertainingto the principal heritor, the proprietor of Kingsconnell, was of course untenanted on this day, and not as yet decorated with the black cloth hangings and the hatchment, destined to commemorate the dead, as soon as the funeral should be over. The Sempilltower loft was on the right, and that of the Grange, on the left of the pulpit. With the solitary exception of the Kingsconnell seats, (for that of the servants was likewise empty)—every pew in the church was amply filled; and many a shrewd observant eye, and grave weather-beaten face of cogitation, was directed towards the pulpit; and many an outspread hand, upon the ledge of the pew, kept measure in its solemn rising and falling to the cadences of the preacher's voice. Old Dr. Grindlay himself, a white-haired man, with a mild benevolent countenance, kept from his

pew on one side of the pulpit, an anxious watch upon his young assistant, occasionally directing a glance around the congregation, to note how they seemed affected by the services of the day; his eye ever returning to rest upon the fixed attentive face of his niece and housekeeper, Miss Susie, a gentle motherly creature, devoutly inclined, and little disposed to captious criticism.

To those amongst the congregation qualified to judge, there was indeed little room for any captious feeling. An irresistible impression of perfect sincerity, perfect earnestness, was brought home to the mind by Mr. Carmichael's preaching, and still more by his prayers. This barren and defective portion of the Presbyterian ritual assumed with him a character of its own, which, although nothing to his Episcopalian hearers could compensate for the want of their own sublime, all-but-inspired liturgy, or for the painful absence of all outward marks of reverence for the house and presence of the Almighty, still carried their souls aloft beyond the cares and littlenesses of life, on the wings of strong faith and devout adoration. His style of preaching was singular; a union of

the primitive tone of former times, and their searching straightforward appeals to the heart and conscience, with a highly-imaginative, almost mystical, cast of thought; at once attractive in the highest degree to those capable of appreciating and following it, and unlikely, by reason that these were not many, ever to become popular. Thus felt Mrs. Henry Lockhart, as in a pause of the sermon she involuntarily glanced from Beatrice, whose dark expressive eyes were rivetted on the countenance of the preacher, her speaking face, with its varying glow of colour, serving as an index on which might be read reflected every new emotion his words called forth, to Miss Grace's air of weary inattention, and her face reflecting nothing save the hue of her blue bonnet; and from her to the dark, bitter, almost malignant expression with which Miss Willie was registering every word uttered by the unconscious object of her orthodox displeasure.

In the eyes of the "rael judges," indeed, Mr. Carmichael's doom had been sealed ere he had begun to utter one word of his sermon. From the instant it was perceived that he intended to read it, and not deliver it from

memory, all was over with his chance of a favourable hearing. Miss Menie Mark had more than once been known to declare that she could have derived no edification from the Apostle Paul's preaching, had she detected him in the fact of this unpardonable offence against rigid Presbyterianism, and although her's were extreme sentiments, they might yet be taken as not altogether false exponents of the state of feeling elicited in the majority of the congregation, by the discovery of such a woful short coming.

It was the custom at Kingsconnell that during the summer and autumn an interval of half an hour took place in the services of the Sunday; in place of the more common arrangement in country parishes, of going through the whole, including two sermons, at one sitting. Nothing could be more picturesque on a fine day like the present, than this dispersion of the congregation; such of whom as came from the more remote quarters of the parish, and had no familiar houses of call in the Clachan, or did not feel disposed to avail themselves of any, might be seen in groups or pairs, seated upon the *through-stanes* in the church-yard, or

more frequently, beneath the trees which overhung the burn at its lower extremity, discussing their oat-cakes and cheese, along with the sermon and the news of the day in those parts. Mrs. Henry Lockhart and her sister, with the two girls, rambled away together on meeting outside the church, leaving the elder members of their respective parties behind, and eschewing most carefully the portentous combination of frowns, compressed lips, and shaking heads, which was wending its slow way down the hill in the direction of Miss Menie Mark's cottage, whither she and her assessors were proceeding to sit in solemn conclave on the demerits of the *discoorse* to which they had just been listening.

Beatrice and her sister met and entered into conversation with several of the country people, and enquired into their opinions on this same subject, or received them unasked from various originals, whose views Mrs. George Sempill took particular pleasure in eliciting. Considering what human nature is, and the satisfaction afforded it by a legitimate opportunity for the taught to pick holes in the coat of the teacher, it need scarcely be added that

these were not in general of the most favourable description. One worthy impeached the soundness of the minister's doctrine, another pronounced him with greater truth to be "ower deep" for him; one inveighed against the shortness of his prayers, another considered him to have laid too much stress upon "works" in his sermon; and one and all united in denouncing the, to the uninitiated, incomprehensible crime of "reading," and being "a slave till his notes,"—as though it had contained in itself an epitome of the seven deadly sins. They "couldna thole a reader;—Dr. Grindlay, honest man! read nane,—binna' just at the last, when he begoud till turn a wee thing doited, and could na' lippen till his mem'ry. But this lad read close; an' wha ever heard tell o' a read discoorse profitin' ony ane?"

Such were a few of the comments circulating in the churchyard. One poor old widow alone, who was seated beneath a tree with her Bible in her hand, in answer to Helen's questions on this all-engrossing topic, humbly replied that "it was no' for a simple puir body like her to find fau'ts wi' the minister. He

was a shepherd that would tak' gude tent o' the sheep committed till his charge, and that was the main thing. It ill set the like o' fallen sinners to gang to the hoos o' God to sit in judgment on them that were appointed to expound the Word to them. If they didna' understand a' they heard, it was mair like to be the blame o' their ain ignorance, no his lack o' gifts."

"Mamma," observed young Beatrice in a low voice, as the sound of the church bell warned them all to retrace their steps,—"mamma, did not what old Jean said bring these words to your mind—'Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than they all?'"

The second service came to an end; and there was a muster of friends and acquaintances at the church-yard-gate, to say farewell ere departing on their several roads home. Captain Sempill again prepared to escort the sisters in their walk, but not before his mother, ever studious of the happiness of all around her, had proposed an arrangement too agreeable to both not to meet with a joyful concurrence. It was, that after dinner the phæton should be

in readiness to convey Helen to St. Michael's, where there was evening service in the Episcopal church; that she should call at the Grange for Beatrice and the two girls, and drop them there on her return. This plan would enable the sisters to pay their respects, after the service, to Miss Violet Alexander, whom an influx of daily visitors at Sempilltower had prevented Helen going to visit since her arrival. The moon was at the full, so that the late drive home would be of no consequence.

"Thank you a thousand times, dearest mother," exclaimed Helen, "it is a charming plan! Only look how the children's eyes are sparkling at the idea! We dine at four, Beatrice love, and so do you, I know, and I shall be with you before half-past five. Evening church is not till half-past six, and it is only four miles to St. Michael's."

The walking party set off; but good, gentle Mrs. Sempill still lingered in the gate, after bidding good-bye to the occupants of the Grange carriage.

"Penny, my dear," she whispered to her sister, "I think it is rather long since we have had Miss Menie Mark to dinner. Had'nt I

better ask her for to-morrow, when the Lockhart's are all coming ?"

Miss Muirhead signified assent, perhaps acquiring fortitude to support the anticipation from the reflection that Miss Willie Lockhart might be expected to occupy a large share of Miss Menie's conversation, as they were particular friends. Both sisters now looked out for Miss Menie, who presently became visible advancing along the churchyard path, escorted by the Laird himself, he having stayed behind his party to shake hands with Mr. Carmichael, and with an air of almost fatherly kindness to congratulate him on the highly favourable impression he must have made upon his hearers, "if every body felt as he (the Laird) did on the occasion."

"Mrs. Sempill, my dear," he said, as his lady tendered her cordial hand to Miss Menie's hard, scarce-closing *touch*, for clasp it could not be called;—"my dear, only conceive! here is Miss Menie declares she is not pleased with that last sermon, which struck us both, I am sure, as beautiful; more so than the first one, I own, though I liked it much too. Miss Menie, you are really very difficult!"

Mrs. Sempill wondered in her private mind, whether the Laird were bringing this observation forward as a new discovery; and managed adroitly to give the subject the go-by, being well aware that it would prove interminable.

"Miss Menie," she asked, after a few preliminary observations, "will you do us the favour to dine with us to-morrow?"

"Oh aye! Very well ma'am, I can come, thank you," was the ungracious reply; pronounced in the tone of one conferring an extraordinary boon, in place of dooming the recipients of her concession to a purgatorial exercise, sufficient to expiate all their sins for a week to come. "To be sure," she added, as if afraid of having made this concession too easily, "I *did* intend to have gone and seen Mistress Pyper to-morrow; but as it's the day most convenient to you——"

"Indeed, Miss Menie," replied Mrs. Sempill, half hoping from this hint, to find herself for once *quitte pour la peur*,—"it is quite the same to us—Tuesday, or Wednesday, or——"

"No, no, Ma'am, I wouldn't be the means

of putting you out of your way. I'll come to-morrow."

"We shall be extremely happy to see you, Miss Menie; I shall send down the phaeton for you at the usual hour."

"By no means, Ma'am. Don't trouble your man and horse for me. I'll walk."

"It is no trouble, Miss Menie," said the Laird; "and we could not permit you to walk. The phaeton is much at your service."

"It's very unnecessary, Sir;" replied Miss Menie, magnanimously disdaining the hypocrisy of gratitude. "I would much rather walk than put people's servants out of their way. Good-day, Sir. Good-day, ladies!" And she strode solemnly down the hill, nor stayed farther parley.

CHAPTER X.

"And trust the calm, the joy benign,
That o'er the obedient breathes in life's still hour,
When Sunday-lights with summer airs combine,
And shadows blend from cloud and bower."

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

IT was a lovely evening, warm, bright, and still; and never was transition more grateful than that from the close parlour at the Grange, which the opening of one window for a short time had by no means freed from the lingering smell of dinner, to the perfumed air and sweet sunshine out of doors, as Beatrice and her children joined Helen in the phaeton, from which she had not alighted; and drove off with her on the road to St. Michael's. Little Helen was elevated to the front seat beside the driver, Watty Mac George, old Adam's son and helper, and Beatrice found room beside her

mother and aunt in the body of the vehicle, one of those old-fashioned hooded phaetons, which contain a larger number of passengers than might be expected from their appearance.

The high-way leading to the small county metropolis, passed through a picturesque and beautiful country, gradually ascending as it approached the town, which was visible at a considerable distance, lying, as it did, on the face of a gently-sloping hill. On a green level holm at the base of this hill, watered by the same river, now considerably increased in size, which ran by Sempilltower and Kingsconnell, stood the ruins of what had once been a stately Cathedral, dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, which had given its name to the town. This venerable pile had fallen a victim to the rage for destruction at the Reformation, but its remains still formed a beautiful object, and lent the grace of antiquity to the surrounding scene. The Episcopal Church, a modest but elegant building, was situated a little higher up, and more within the town. It had been erected upwards of twenty years before by private subscription, to which Miss Alexander and her brother had been amongst

the largest contributors; the latter, although his home was in a different county, being actuated by all the zeal for the cause of Episcopacy which had distinguished his father. Several of the county families belonged to that persuasion, as did some respectable inhabitants of the town and its immediate neighbourhood. Besides these, the clergyman, Mr. Malcolm, was in the regular habit of doing duty every Sunday afternoon, in a small chapel about six miles off, which was likewise under his pastoral care, returning to St. Michael's for evening service.

Our party had not driven fast, and it was a little past six when they were set down at the gate of the small cemetery which surrounded the church. They paused, and looked round for a few minutes, before entering, on the rich and beautiful landscape visible from the open space on which it stood.

"How well we know this view, Beatrice!" exclaimed Helen, in a low voice. "How often have we stood here on a summer's evening like this, long ere we dreamt that the day could ever arrive that should see us separated!"

"Aye! many and many a time, Helen,"

said Beatrice. "There is not an object visible from this spot, that does not call up some recollection of old days. Sad enough some of them are! and yet I shall never have the same home-like feeling towards any place of worship that I have towards this dear little chapel. What thoughts of our youth hang about it! What peace and calm always seemed to surround us here, however little there might be elsewhere!"

"And yet," added Helen, glancing round, and perceiving that the two girls had walked to the other end of the cemetery, and were busied in examining the few tombs it contained, "my conscience reminds me, Beatrice, that I did not always find, nor deserve to find, peace and calm here. I *have* come here with feelings little akin to devotion; and I have often thought that there was little wonder no blessing rested upon an affection which led me in heart to profane the House of God! It is strange—now, when all that has been so long buried with the past, how often these recollections haunt me still! I could at this moment imagine fifteen years annihilated, and that I should see William Seaton, as I have so often

seen him, approaching from this very spot, to meet me at the chapel door. And yet, I went in at that door, Beatrice, to be married to George Sempill!"

"My own Helen," whispered Beatrice, "these are vain regrets. The past is past. God deals more wisely with us, Helen, than we should with ourselves."

"The past will soon be past indeed to you and me, Beatrice," said Helen. "God grant us faith and patience! I meant to have banished that subject to-night, as I have striven to do since we met. I did not want the thoughts of what *must be* to intrude upon our peaceful Sunday evening; but here, where we have so often prayed together——" She could trust her voice no further.

"*Here*, my Helen," faltered Beatrice, "we are permitted to pray together again, and seek strength for the dark days coming." Her voice, too, failed her; but it was only for a minute. Regaining her composure, she went on—

"We must not look farther, dearest; we must leave the future in wiser hands than ours. Next Sunday is the first of the month,

Helen, and we must be here together. We must kneel once more before the Altar where we have so often knelt, and where we shall receive the gift of faith to commit each other to the protection of the Almighty, if we seek it in a right spirit. We shall part more calmly after having partaken of that blessed privilege."

"God grant it!" said Helen. "Shall we ever, Beatrice, ever again approach that Altar together?"

"Leave that to *Him* who alone can tell, my Helen," solemnly replied her sister. "If it be His will, we shall. If not—may it be our blessed lot to meet again amongst those who rest "beneath the Altar!"

Both sisters remained for a short space silent. Neither of them dared venture on farther words at that moment. Their hearts were very full; and none but those who have anticipated similar partings to theirs, could tell the gush—the almost overwhelming flow of old thoughts, feelings, memories, that came crowding upon them in the few brief minutes which they spent gazing in silence on that familiar landscape. Their reverie was interrupted by the approach of some of the congregation; and,

summoning the girls, they proceeded towards the door of the church, entered Miss Alexander's pew, a large square one near the Eastern window, and sank on their knees; the total silence, the reverent stillness of the hallowed edifice, falling on both their hearts like balm.

A few minutes before the commencement of the service, the pew was entered by Miss Violet herself, a tall, stern, and stately old lady, dressed in a somewhat antiquated fashion; and attended by her companion, Miss Carruthers, the ex-governess of the two sisters, who recognised her former pupils with a meek smile, as she arose from her kneeling posture. A grave, though complacent, acknowledgment of their presence was made in equal silence by her patroness, just as the first notes of the voluntary resounded from the organ, which had been the gift of a wealthy member of the congregation, and was played by the clergyman's daughter, an accomplished musician.

The unutterably soothing and elevating influence of their Church's divine Liturgy never had seemed to come more home to the hearts of the two sisters than it did this evening. It was read in a tone of solemn earnestness

and heart-felt devotion, calculated to impress the most careless, by the officiating minister, Mr. Malcolm, an old grey-haired man, of most benevolent and apostolic aspect, whose short sermon at the conclusion of the service, fulfilled the promise of his manner and countenance. There was nothing striking in it; none of the searching penetration, or the high imaginative power of the preacher to whom they had listened in the morning; but a spirit of love, of Christian gentleness, of deep concern for the immortal souls committed to the pastor's charge, pervaded every word he uttered, and sent it home with irresistible effect. And in truth, Mr. Malcolm was one of those who have learned mercy and love in the school of persecution. Descended from a family which for several generations had given one or more of its members to the Church; he himself was old enough to recollect distinctly some of the darkest days of her history. One of his immediate progenitors had been amongst the deprived clergy at the Revolution of 1688, when the former tyranny and oppression of the Scottish Privy Council to themselves, were visited by the triumphant party upon the heads

of the unoffending ministers; whose cruel sufferings, unlike to those of the martyred Covenanters, have found no place in history or romance.

His own father had been the minister of a large Episcopal congregation in a town somewhat farther north, at the fatal period when the frustrated attempt of Charles Edward let loose the vengeance of the Hanoverian party upon all prelatists, whether Jacobites or not. His chapel, like every other in Scotland, had been broken into by the brutal soldiery and the infuriated mob;—its sacred ornaments despoiled, and the very prayer-books it contained consumed in the fire by which it was finally burnt to the ground. His wife and children had been oppressed, plundered, and insulted in every possible way, and he himself compelled to fly from the spot for his life. And during the long period when the devoted clergy were compelled by the tyranny of Government to administer in the utmost secrecy to the spiritual necessities of the flocks whom they would not desert, he had been one of those who most frequently found an asylum in the house of Mr. Alexander, at Glasgow, and did

duty to the small congregation which was wont to assemble there, in fear and trembling equal to any that ever were endured by the victims of persecution on the opposite side, at their moorland conventicles. Mrs. Henry Lockhart and her sister had listened, many a time and oft, to Miss Violet's reminiscences of those days; when, as a little child, she recollected being present amongst the band of worshippers in a loft above one of her father's warehouses. which was only accessible by a ladder, and the approach to which was narrowly watched by some one or other of the party during the whole time of divine service. She remembered one alarm, when, as it appeared, information of an intended meeting of the kind had been treacherously conveyed to the city magistrates; the terror and consternation occasioned by the approach of their officers, as announced by the scout at watch, and the almost incredible dexterity with which the whole number of worshippers, more fortunate than many of their brethren, managed to conceal themselves, and evade detection. On this occasion the father of Mr. Malcolm had lain for several weeks concealed in an unused cellar on Mr. Alex-

ander's premises, as his only chance of escaping imprisonment, which had been the fate of so many of the clergy. All these, and many similar circumstances, formed a strong tie between the surviving members of the Alexander family and his son, who after a youth of bitter hardship, and a manhood of many privations, and much varied experience of life in his own as well as in foreign lands, had the consolation of finding himself in the peaceful evening of his days the pastor of a congregation in his own country; and member of a church no longer proscribed and trampled on, though still sufficiently poor and lowly to gratify its enemies. He was in himself a bright instance of the true Episcopalian spirit, its quiet loyalty, its meekness, and its reverence for authority, as well as of its Christian love and charity; and often in the course of their long intimacy had the sisters been struck by the contrast which in these latter respects their minister presented to his friend Miss Violet. This venerable servant of his Master seemed almost like a father in their eyes; and the privilege of listening to his voice together ere they were separated, and of being permitted

once more to receive together from his hands the sacred pledges of salvation, was one for which they both felt deeply thankful.

Long ere the evening service was over the red glow of sunset had faded from the wall of the church, and by its conclusion all was in dimness, save for the tapers which burned on each side of the pulpit. And as the congregation issued from the door, and stepped out into the calm twilight, whilst the last notes of the organ were still solemnly vibrating on their ears, the impression conveyed by the whole scene was one of the profoundest peace—the holiest tranquillity. The town above was hushed in the perfect silence and quiet of a Scottish Sabbath evening; the landscape before them, shadowy and undefined, was just beginning to be silvered by the beams of the moon, which was visible, rising behind a low wooded hill beyond the river; while overhead, the sky was still of the deep dark blue of evening, one or two stars faintly discernible in its transparent obscurity. It was an hour and a scene to be long recollected; one of those which indelibly stamp themselves on the memory, and rise up before us, years after all is past and gone that

was connected with them; sometimes agonizing the heart by a sudden gush of feelings unendurable from their intensity, and their association with the past, the lost,—the buried;—sometimes bringing with them the impress of a peace too profound to belong to earth, and which entwines the memories of what earth has lost, with the anticipation of what Heaven shall restore.

The sisters, accompanied by the young Beatrice and Helen, walked home along with Miss Violet and Miss Carruthers, the apologies of Mrs. George Sempill for not having waited upon her before, having been graciously received by the former. Miss Violet's house was situated higher up the town than the church, but not exactly *within* it; a large detached dwelling of dark red stone, surrounded by a shrubbery, with tall iron gates opening from it and having a somewhat extensive garden behind. They were admitted by an old-fashioned and respectable man-servant, and presently found themselves in the well-known drawing-room, little, if at all, altered in appearance since their earliest remembrance. A stiff and antiquated apartment it was, yet not un-

comfortable, for its arrangements were pervaded by a certain tone of good though formal taste, and lady-like habits. It was a room which possessed great attractions for the two young girls,—more particularly the romantic and imaginative Beatrice, from the store of relics of the past which it contained, especially of the past days of her mother's family; various articles which had been purchased by order of the late Mr. Alexander, at the sale of his unhappy nephew's effects, having been bequeathed by him to his daughter, and by her treasured as sacred. Beatrice had familiarized herself with all these things, in the course of her many visits to the house with her mother, and had gathered from the meek Miss Carruthers as much of their history as she could tell; for to apply to Miss Violet for any information farther than what, in a particularly gracious mood, she might choose to volunteer, was not to be thought of, and her mother had too early been transplanted from her own home to recall many things belonging to it with distinctness.

Now, while Miss Carruthers was engaged in making tea, and arranging the tea table, and their mother and aunt were being interrogated

by Miss Violet, rather than conversing with her, the two girls betook themselves to their favourite resort in this room, a deep recess at its upper end, lighted by a table lamp, containing amongst other things, two quaint cabinets of carved oak, of which their mother had told them she had a dream-like recollection, as having stood in one of the public rooms at Blair-Alexander. The open doors of these cabinets, whose summits were crowned with rare old china, displayed many relics of former days,—gauntlets, hawking gloves, a curious collection of *quaighs* mounted in silver, and other memorials of departed consequence and by-gone hospitality. Some of their drawers were filled with autograph letters addressed to former chiefs of the house by sundry well-known public characters; amongst which were documents relating to the wars of Montrose, to Dundee's last gallant attempt in favour of his king, which terminated in his death at Killiecrankie; and to the epochs of 1715, and —45; for in all of these the Alexanders had been implicated, and that deeply. But the most interesting of all the relics there was a very beautiful miniature of

the unfortunate Charles Edward, presented by him to Miss Violet's grandfather, the old chief who fell at Culloden,—over which Beatrice Lockhart had often hung for an hour at a time, unable to tear herself from the contemplation of it, and which long before her day, had been pressed to many fair and loyal lips now mouldered into dust. Another very precious thing was a prayer-book, in which was written the name of that gallant old chief, which had been his pocket-companion throughout the whole campaign of —45-6; and which, on the morning of that fatal day, he had, as if impressed by a presentiment of approaching death, solemnly given to his son as his last token of affection. The faded leaves were stained in more than one place with the blood which that unhappy survivor had shed at Culloden. To *his* more unhappy son he had bequeathed it on his death-bed, and Charles Louis Alexander had brought it back with him to Scotland. It may be believed that not even the portrait of Prince Charles himself had such a secret value in the eyes of Miss Violet Alexander, as this old worn volume, which more than once, during their private meetings for the rites of their

Church, had been held between her hand and that of her cousin, while yet an inmate in her father's house. One thing besides this recess contained,—how precious to its owner no one knew,—his picture. It was a small half-length which soon after his arrival in Glasgow her father had had taken by a skilful English artist, who happened to pay a passing visit to the city; and at the time when it was painted, it had been a striking likeness. A beautiful young face it was, and in its features, and still more in its bright animated expression, the eye of one accustomed to study countenance would have detected a resemblance which developed youth would probably render more perfect, to Beatrice Lockhart. The likeness to her was much stronger than to Mrs. George Sempill, though Beatrice had by no means the beauty of her aunt, and though the latter was considered to resemble her father very closely. It might perhaps be owing to a perception of this likeness, that Miss Violet Alexander had always manifested a certain degree of partiality for the young Beatrice, and beyond doubt regarded her with a feeling more nearly akin to affection than she had ever before felt for any human

being save one. Little indeed could it have been imagined by those who know her best, how keenly that proud and stern old woman had *once* felt! Little did any living being surmise what tears of bitterness, what sobs of despair, that unconscious picture had witnessed long ago! little could it be guessed what a holocaust of youth, and hope, and love, and all that redeems life from barrenness,—that shrine had once had offered up before it! Well is it for the masks which partly the world, and partly our own pride, compel some of us to wear, that the inanimate objects in whose presence our daily existence passes, have no power to betray our secrets!

The voice of Miss Carruthers, announcing that tea was ready, summoned Beatrice from the dream of Culloden, which her fancy had arrayed before her, as she stood with the blood-stained prayer-book in her hand. Carefully restoring it to its usual drawer, she drew Helen from her rapt contemplation of a curiously-chased silver posset-dish, which had great charms for her, depicting as it purported to do, the story of Tobias and the Angel; and both repaired to the tea-table.

"You are not cold, child, surely?" enquired Miss Violet in a somewhat dignified tone of Mrs. George Sempill, who could not suppress a slight shiver, as she drew her chair to the table. Miss Violet herself was one of those old ladies who consider it little short of a crime to be cold before their orthodox period for having fires lighted.

"No, not exactly *cold*," answered Helen, with a smile. "Only after a hot day like this, one is apt to feel chilly in the evening, I think."

"And I suppose they still keep up those roasting fires at Sempilltower, summer and winter, as usual?" said Miss Violet. "It is a dreadful custom, and if you had any regard for your complexion, Helen, you would avoid them, I can assure you."

"Mrs. George has a lovely complexion, Miss Alexander, I'm sure," gently interposed Miss Carruthers. "I declare, my dear, I see no difference in you," she added, addressing Helen. "You look as young as ever you did."

"More good luck than good guiding, I fear, so far as sitting over hot fires is con-

cerned;" observed Miss Violet, casting a triumphant glance at the inviolate brightness of her steel grate, filled with green paper, cut to imitate moss; the fire-irons removed; the fender relentlessly turned up on end; no hope of a fire for six weeks to come at least. "And how long," she added, "have you to stay at Sempilltower, Helen—when does Mr. Sempill mean to come for you?"

"I can't tell, I am sure," replied Helen nervously. "I don't intend to think about it, dear Miss Violet, till he does come. I have made a resolution to avoid all painful subjects, and enjoy this holiday while it lasts."

"Painful subjects!" retorted Miss Violet. "Your husband is much obliged to you for the compliment, Mrs. George Sempill. And do *you*, Beatrice, consider your husband's return in the same light? Will it hurt your feelings if I ask when you expect him?"

"By no means, dear Madam," answered Beatrice, with a smile. "I am happy to say that I think he will be at Portsmouth in less than a month, though it may be rather longer before he gets down here."

"Ah! to be sure, *you* have not had too much of each other's company during your married life," said Miss Violet, drily. "Miss Carruthers, this green tea is very strong; a little water, if you please. And so you have managed to find your way to church at last, ladies? I rather expected you in the morning."

"My mother-in-law," answered Helen, "would have been hurt if I had not gone to the parish church with her; and you know Beatrice and the girls have no means of coming so far, unless I had brought them."

"In my day," returned Miss Violet, "we should have said that going to the Kirk in the morning, and to Church in the evening, was setting one hand to undo what the other did."

"If one could help it, Miss Violet." said Beatrice in a deprecating tone, "of course it would be very improper; but, really, in our case——"

"My dear," replied Miss Violet, "*I* should soon find a remedy for such confusion. Rather than enter a Presbyterian kirk, I should never go to any place of worship at all! But do not

suppose that I mean to dictate to you. Miss Carruthers, have the children had some Norwich bun? Help yourselves, my dears."

"Next Sunday, dear Miss Violet," began Helen—

"Next Sunday, my dear," interrupted Miss Violet, "I really must entreat that you are seen in your proper places, in your own church."

"That is precisely what I was going to propose;" replied Helen, somewhat resenting the tone of dictation to which she had been so long unaccustomed.

"And, therefore," pursued Miss Violet, "I beg you will both come here. Come on Saturday, to dinner, and I shall see to get Mr. Malcolm and his daughter to meet you." She caught a glance from the bright eyes of the younger Beatrice, a glance of eager yet doubtful expectation, and added, "bring the girls with you, Beatrice; don't leave them to a Sunday at the Grange; and remain a day or two if you can. It will be long before you are together in my house again."

"It is strange, what power over the feelings is exercised by the slightest touch of any thing

like sentiment or human tenderness, in a person habitually harsh and undemonstrative! Helen, whose keen sensibility had been strangely excited during the evening, felt a gush of tears come to her eyes, and a sob rising to her throat, at these few words, and the shade of sympathy which they seemed to denote, so unusual from Miss Violet. She could not have answered the invitation, and preserved her composure; but Beatrice, though her soft voice was not quite so steady as usual, did so for both, with many thanks; and the gentle Miss Carruthers, whose peculiar favourite Helen had always been, stole her hand under the table, and gave it a kindly squeeze.

Very shortly after tea, the phaeton was announced, as Helen did not wish to remain out late on Sunday evening; and the party took leave of their hostess and her friend. The night was beautiful, and the air so mild, that the cloaks which they had all brought were scarcely necessary. Nothing could be more delicious than the drive home throug the moonlight.

"Well, this has at least been a peaceful Sunday evening," said the elder Beatrice,

as the carriage entered the avenue at the Grange. It is something to look back upon, Helen. Such a close to such a beautiful Sunday! Good-night, dearest! We shall meet to-morrow."

CHAPTER XI.

> "There are a sort of men, whose visages
> Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
> And do a wilful stillness entertain,
> With purpose to be dressed in an opinion
> Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit;
> As who should say, I am Sir Oracle,
> And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark.
>
> MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE sisters did meet on the morrow, and on many successive morrows. No day passed without bringing some meeting; and the time passed swiftly, too swiftly away. Meanwhile the tide of events flowed on around them. Sir Peter Bertram's funeral took place on the appointed day, and the solitary recluse of Kingsconnell was followed to his grave by a concourse of people of all ranks, many (most of whom indeed) could scarcely have recognised him had they met him living, so complete

had been his estrangement from the society of his kind.

Mr. Hamilton, the heir of entail, a young man under thirty, arrived in time to officiate as chief mourner; and then took his departure from the place, as much a stranger as when he came. He had accompanied, from a distant quarter of the county, a personal friend, a nobleman, whose family had, some generations back, intermarried with the Bertrams'; and he returned with him again when the ceremony was over. He had not, *as yet*, any interest in Kingsconnell. So said some of the old country people as, with solemn faces and shaking heads, they lingered about the church-yard, after the vault had opened and closed again, and the long funeral train had departed.

"Wha'll tak' a bode wi' me?" asked Haverel Patie, a half-witted creature belonging to the parish, whose sayings were regarded with a measure of that superstitious veneration attached in former days to *Naturals*—as persons in his unhappy circumstances used to be called—and of which some traces are still, in remote districts, to be found; "wha'll tak' a bode wi' me, that twae score years 'll no be ower our

heads, wha' leeves to see 't, afore Maister Hamilton be here on the same yerrand again as we 've seen him the day!"

All shrunk back in horror from the ill-omened words, and no voice answered them; but they were not forgotten.

On the second Sunday after the funeral, an unexpected apparition presented itself in Kingsconnell Church. A tall, fine-looking man, in the prime of life, clad in the deepest mourning, walked quietly into the front loft towards the middle of the first prayers, and took his place by the seat of honour at the head of it. His arrival having taken place late the preceding night, there were not two dozen people in church who knew any thing concerning it; and scarce one of these, until they actually saw him there, felt certain that this was the real Simon Pure, the *bonâ fide* Sir Thomas Bertram. Now, however, there could be no doubt of the fact; and on this Sunday, at least, Mr. Carmichael had no ground of complaint against his hearers for over strained criticism of his sermons, which did little more than divide their attention with the new Lord of Kingsconnell. Many an eye, too, busied

itself in scanning his aspect and bearing, as the congregation dispersed in the interval of public worship; when the Laird of Sempilltower, advancing to his new and unknown neighbour, introduced himself with that high-bred courtesy of the old school which marked all his actions, and which Sir Thomas was too good a judge of manners and society not to meet half-way. Accordingly, after he had been presented by the Laird to his own family, and to the ladies from the Grange, the two gentlemen were seen, to the great edification of the assembled multitude, slowly pacing up and down together beneath the trees which shaded the church-yard wall, apparently absorbed in conversation, which lasted until they were obliged to return to church. It was also remarked, that when service was finally over, Sir Thomas, who had walked from Kingsconnell, waited for Mr. Carmichael, between whom and himself a most friendly greeting was observed to pass, and who accompanied him home. A great fact this, which tended to raise the young clergyman considerably in Dr. Chisholm's and Miss Babie's estimation; but which, as it seemed to confirm all their suspi-

cions of "patronage and court-favour," rather augmented than diminished the animosity of Miss Willie Lockhart and Miss Menie Mark.

Sir Thomas did not remain long at Kingsconnell, where it was understood that he and his family did not mean to take up their residence until the following summer. He delegated to Mr. Carmichael, in his absence, the task of supervision of some improvements which he had ordered to be set a-going, and of paying occasional visits at the house; then took his departure once more for France.

Some little time had now elapsed, and in another week George Sempill was expected at his father's house, after which it was surmised that a period of about ten days would terminate his own as well as his lady's residence there; and the kind and considerate Mrs. Sempill, deeply feeling for the approaching separation between the sisters, had invited Beatrice and her children to stay a few days in the house, while she could still have Helen to herself untrammelled by the presence of her husband; an invitation, it need scarcely be added, which was gladly as well as gratefully accepted. The visit to Miss Violet Alexander had taken

place, as was arranged; and with all the drawbacks to perfect enjoyment, inseparable from the temper of their hostess, it had formed an epoch on which the sisters felt they should long look back with fond and sad remembrance. It was the prelude to a separation more entire than that, which, the previous time they had stayed together there, lay immediately before them; and this separation belonged to a different period in existence,—a period when the delusions of youth were dispersed for ever, and when, alas! these had not been replaced by realities more valuable. Helen, when last she had hung on the neck of Beatrice in that old room of their's, clasped in the passionate fervour of a parting embrace, had all the world before her,—a new and untried path. *Now* it was no longer so. The path had been explored so far, and found to be all barrenness; and dark, cold, lowering mists hid the future from her sight, ungilded by the rays of hope, which had once lent them such deceitful brightness. Much need had she for prayer, faith, and patience; and the sister, who had been in a measure her guardian-angel as well as companion and friend, felt this

for her as keenly as it was possible for her to do for herself.

The few days during which Beatrice and her little girls were inmates of Sempilltower, passed only too rapidly away, in the midst of that atmosphere of kindliness and social enjoyment. They were a rest in life, a pause, in the present case, before a hurricane. On the day before George Sempill was expected they returned to the Grange; and from that day time seemed to gallop on at the fearful rate at which he does proceed, when we would fain, if we could, hang a heavy drag upon his chariot wheels. It were needless to dwell upon the detail of all these final days; on George Sempill's chilling suavity of manner towards his sister-in-law, his absolute unconsciousness that Helen's approaching departure involved any trial to her, his impregnable, impenetrable indifference, in short, to all that did not immediately touch himself. All this may be conceived; as also the cold annoyance with which he found himself compelled to accompany his wife to pay certain farewell visits to acquaintances, some of whom he judged quite unworthy of the exertion. It was one which Helen, by herself, however

much she might have wished him to make it, would never have dreamt of urging; but to which he was forced in deference to the "old-fashioned prejudices" of his parents. Mr. and Mrs. Sempill were immovable on points involving attention to the feelings of others, above all of those not precisely in their own position, whether as to station or wealth. They deemed no personal effort too great to avoid the guilt of wounding any one, and their son could find no loop-hole of escape from what they did not view in the light of an effort at all. Willingly or unwillingly the fastidious George behoved to pay his respects to old Mrs. Lockhart, at the Grange, to Dr. Grindlay and Miss Susie,—Dr. Chisholm and Miss Babie,—nay, to Miss Menie Mark herself; besides sundry others whose names are unknown to fame. As much as in him lay, he spared no pains to make the recipients of his condescension feel it *as* such; bestowing but brief time and briefer speech on any of them, and looking, during the period of each visit, as Mrs. Lockhart straight-forwardly pronounced—"like the far end o' a fiddle;" but still the ceremonial was observed; and if in a different spirit to

that intended by the good old Laird and lady, that was no fault of their's. His farewell visit to Miss Violet Alexander, Mr. Sempill performed with somewhat better grace. She was the one of Helen's connections, besides her sister, to whom he could find no objection; her sternness and total absence of tenderness were nothing to him, cased as he was in an armour of proof which bade defiance alike to love, indifference, and dislike; and it so happened, perhaps for this very reason, that he had always been rather a favourite of hers; for a temper like Miss Violet's is generally found to suit best with one which defies its power. Besides this, his fortune and the antiquity and high position of his family flattered her self-consequence, which was too often wounded by what she felt to be the inferiority of the connexion formed by her eldest cousin. It was not that the Lockhart family was not entitled to take a respected place in the county; it had, in fact, always done so, up to the time of the late proprietor's death; and the estimation in which he had been held was still shown in the attentions paid to his widow and daughters by many who found little attraction in their

society. The loss or diminution of worldly wealth is not in Scotland even now, and was still less at that time, considered to debar the family of a well-born gentleman from the place which their birth and habits entitle them to fill; and it was not in Mrs. Lockhart's case the smallness of her income, nor the quiet style of life inevitable from contracted means, which caused the sinking perceptible to Miss Violet's sensitive pride in her position with regard to the rest of the county; but her own innate vulgarity and coarseness of mind, which now that they were no longer counteracted by the superior refinement of her husband, prompted her to withdraw needlessly from her own sphere, and to slide into habits of life which rendered the company of people in an inferior situation to her own more agreeable than that of her equals, as causing her less trouble. The dictatorial, uncompromising spirit of one daughter, and the culpable indolence of the other, of course accelerated this downward tendency of affairs at the Grange, as Miss Willie preferred the society of those to whom she could lay down the law,—and Miss Grace of those for whom she did not feel compelled to take any

extra pains with her dress. All this grated harshly upon the pride and the lady-like feeling of Miss Violet, and while it rendered her unjust to the amiable character and gentlemanly deportment of Captain Lockhart, infused an extra portion of graciousness into her demeanour to Mr. Sempill, on the few occasions of their meeting.

On the present occasion they conversed most amicably for some time, while Helen, pale as death, sat silently by, nearly choked by the struggle to keep down emotions unsuited to the company in which she found herself, but almost irrepressible, as she gazed, for the last time perhaps, on the home of her childhood and her youth. This was to be her final interview with Miss Violet, who had excused herself from accepting Mrs. Sempill's pressing invitation to Sempilltower, on the plea of a rheumatic tendency. It was speedily over. Mr. Sempill never paid long visits anywhere. He arose, took a graceful leave of Miss Violet, and opened the door for his wife. Helen advanced to her old relation, and silently clasping the offered hand in both her's, convulsively pressed it to her quivering lips.

"God bless you, my dear!" said Miss Violet. "Don't give way; that is foolish. I shall be glad to hear from you when you have time. Miss Carruthers will regret to have missed you. If she or I had expected you to-day, she would not have been out. Farewell, my dear."

She drew Helen towards her, and kissed her cheek. It was a kiss which seemed to drive back the tears to her heart, but the hysterical catching in her throat precluded speech, and she quitted the room without attempting it, and with a bitter feeling of sorrow at the absence of her poor old governess, and the idea that she should not see her again.

Miss Carruthers, however, had come into the house, and knowing Miss Violet's dislike to scenes, which almost equalled that of Mr. Sempill himself, was watching for Helen at the door of her bed-room, into which she drew her to exchange a weeping farewell; they had not many minutes for it, but such things are quickly transacted, though not so speedily forgotten. Hastening down stairs after her husband, Helen uttered a few broken words of kindness to the old servant who had carried her

in his arms as a little girl, then gave her hand to Mr. Sempill, who stood by the carriage, tall, erect, and unruffled as usual, yet with a certain indescribable air of annoyance with which his wife was well acquainted; and ascending the steps, was speedily borne away from her old home. It seemed like severing the first link of a chain, whose every link, down to the last and strongest, must speedily be divided.

CHAPTER XII.

"Oh, Heart of fire!.....
What woe was thine, when thou and Jonathan,
Last greeted face to face!"

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

TIME,—inexorable Time, sped on, and the *last* day had now arrived. Most part of the morning Beatrice had spent at Sempilltower, in her sister's room, but before the hour of luncheon, she quietly stole away, begging Helen to offer her apologies to Mrs. Sempill; who, as she assured her daughter-in-law, required none. Beatrice felt that she could not command herself as she would wish to do, in presence of the whole family; and she thought it right that Helen should give the afternoon to her mother-in-law and aunt, without the intervention of her presence. Mrs. Lockhart and her two daughters happened on that day to be going to

dine at Dr. Chisholm's, who sometimes gave very comfortable little parties. Beatrice had of course declined attending this one, and Helen had promised to walk down from Sempilltower as soon as dinner was over there, and pass the evening with her and the children. This arrangement she did not think it necessary to communicate to her husband, dreading that he should interpose some mandate to the contrary; but in the course of the day she learned an alteration which he had made in his plans, as usual without consulting her, which decided her, at all hazards, to carry her own into effect. This was, that instead of setting off on the morrow after the usual breakfast hour, he had resolved that their departure should take place at six in the morning; and thus Beatrice and she could not meet next day to say farewell, but must do so that night or not at all.

The day dragged on; for so the last hours previous to a painful parting seem to do, at whatever rate they may have fled before. As the end approaches, all becomes pain, from whose insupportable pressure the heart almost desires relief by longing that the final agony were fairly over, and the loved one gone.

George Sempill alone continued imperturbed in demeanour, though even he felt sorry to go, and would rather not, if he could have helped it, have had to bid farewell to his father and mother. Mrs. Sempill and Miss Muirhead made no attempt to conceal their sorrow. The good old Laird strove hard to bear up manfully, but the struggle of his mind was manifest in his nervous and agitated demeanour, so different from his usual dignified yet frank and cordial bearing. The Major, in a state of unspeakable, yet silent, flurry, as he revolved the approaching departure of Helen, for whom the old gentleman had one of those intense, almost adoring, sentiments of affection, which youth, beauty, and attractive manners sometimes excite in the old where we should least expect it, lost all self-command, roamed about the house in what David Bryce termed, "a kind o' a raptur'," giving that worthy fifty contradictory orders in as many minutes,—and finally, impatient of inaction, declared that it was a shame to waste so fine a day in-doors, and commanded that his gun should be brought him for an hour or two's partridge-shooting in the fields close by.

The gun was brought, and the Major, equipped for sport, descended to a sort of hall in the lower story of the tower, opening on the men-servants apartments, and decorated with various battered trophies of the chase, no longer fit for the higher regions, and with some old smoke-stained prints, amongst which figured a set of the Twelve Cæsars in mezzotinto. Here stood David, having finished loading the gun, ready to hand it to his master. Displeased at some omission, and in that state of mind when a man will quarrel with the wind for blowing on him, the Major jerked it from him with a testy and unsteady movement, when instantly a terrific explosion, and a shout, or rather shriek of horror, resounded far and wide, and brought every member of the family within hearing, to the hall.

Pushing, jostling, and talking all together, men and women crowded in at the narrow door. A cloud of sulphurous smoke at first impeded the sight of anything, and a dozen various accents of terror and anxiety, demanded what was the matter—who was hurt—who fired the gun?

"Cry a' at ance!" the voice of David was

heard to exclaim in reply. "Cry a' at ance! thare's no half din eneuch."

"Hallo! David!" now exclaimed Captain Sempill, attracted by the tumult, which had reached him as he was entering the house by one of the lower passages. "Why, what is the matter? Major, is it you?" as the smoke now clearing away a little, disclosed the perplexed countenance of his uncle, still holding the gun in his hand. "What on earth have you been about? Is any one hurt, David?"

"Troth is there, Captain," drily answered David, going close to the wall in the direction to which the gun had pointed, as if carefully investigating something there. "It wad hae been a serious matter ance in a day, Major," he added, "but it 'll be gottin ower easier noo. Ye've shot Julius Cæsar through the head!"

"Ha, ha, ha! faith! so you have, Major!" exclaimed Captain Sempill, following David to the spot, and finding that the whole charge had lodged in the brow of "Imperial Cæsar," and made woful havoc amongst the laurels of his wreath. "Come, I think you can hardly stoop to any meaner game to-day, after a shot like that to begin with."

The Major was apparently of the same opinion, for he relinquished his gun to David, and prosecuted his intention of sport no farther. This ludicrious incident was felt to stand the party round the dinner-table in some stead that day, and the Major took all the witticisms levelled against him by his brother and his nephew, in good part; glad, perhaps, like them, to have some diversion from painful thoughts.

"No sooner had the ladies left the dining-room, than Helen prepared to set off for the Grange.

"You will send for me at half-past nine o'clock, dear mother?" said she. "I shall be quite ready."

"Yes, my love, I will," replied Mrs. Sempill. "We should like you to be with us at supper, Helen, if not very painful to yourself."

"No, no, dear mother, don't talk of that. Of course I shall be with you then. I could not bear to do otherwise." She was gone as she uttered the last words.

"God help them, poor things!" exclaimed Miss Muirhead, as from the window she watched Helen's figure disappearing through

the trees. "They have sore hearts to bear between this and supper-time!"

Beatrice and her two girls met Helen half-way in the woods of Kingsconnell. It was a beautiful sunny evening, and they walked slowly back to the house, and up through the garden path, the girls keeping in advance, or lingering behind; for the young Beatrice, with the intuitive perception of others' feelings characteristic of a mind of peculiar sensibility, knew that her mother and aunt must wish to be alone together on this last night of their meeting. They reached the parlour, which on that night seemed transformed in its aspect, by a few touches of her tasteful hand. Several beautifully-disposed bouquets of flowers, a neat and orderly arrangement of the books and other articles, usually lying about as chance directed, open windows admitting the sweet air and sunshine, and the sofa wheeled round from the wall against which it was wont to stand as if nailed to it, and placed beside a comfortable tea-table, made the dingy room scarce recognizable. They sat down to tea, and in spite of all, this last meal they were to partake of together, was a pleasant one. Long they lingered

over it; and it was nearly dark when at last the table was cleared.

Before the candles were brought, the young Beatrice had quietly drawn Helen away; and they repaired to their own room up stairs, there to put the finishing stroke to two little pieces of work which they were preparing as parting presents for their aunt. Within a few minutes of their usual bed-time, half-past eight o'clock, they came down stairs again.

"Aunt Helen," said Beatrice, advancing to her aunt, "I've been netting this little purse for you; will you keep it for my sake?"

"And this needle-book for mine, aunt Helen?" added her sister, as they threw their arms round her.

"My own darlings, that I will!" was all poor Helen could articulate, clasping the girls to her heart.

"It is our bed-time, dear mamma," at last said Beatrice in a low voice. "But this is not good-bye yet, darling Aunt Helen! We are coming over for a few minutes to-morrow morning after breakfast, to see you before you go."

"Stop one moment," said Helen. "I *must*

say it," she exclaimed with a desperate effort. I could not do it sooner, Beatrice! It *is* good-bye! George has altered his plans. We are to start at six to-morrow morning."

Her sister became deadly pale. "It *is* good-bye, my darling girls!" repeated Helen. "I shall not see you again. Come to my arms, Beatrice, Helen! My own little ones! My darlings! You will not forget me? You will not forget Aunt Helen?"

"Forget you!——" It was all Beatrice could say. She tried hard to keep down her tears, but it would not do; and in an agony of weeping, she clung to her aunt, on whose neck little Helen was sobbing bitterly.

Their mother gently interposed at last, imploring them, for her sake and their aunt's, to dry their tears, and endeavour to look forward to a future meeting, perhaps in a few years, perhaps sooner. The voice of hope and promise is never slow to reach the ears of the young, and both raised their heads, and strove to check their sobs. They embraced their mother, and with another and yet another, long, fervent kiss from their aunt, they quitted the room. The door closed after them, and the sisters were once more alone.

"*One* parting is over," said Helen, "but there is a worse to come. Beatrice, Beatrice! my own sister! the hour is at hand!"

They flung themselves into each other's arms, as they sat side by side on the sofa. All assumed restraint was at an end; and in that long, long, passionate embrace, those floods of tears, the love and the anguish of a life-time seemed concentrated. Few words were uttered between them, but who could take in the measure of their thoughts, while thus, for the last time, heart beat to heart, and cheek was pressed to cheek? At length Helen raised herself.

"I hear it!" she exclaimed. "I hear the carriage."

It was so. One of the maid servants gently opened the door to announce it; then withdrew with that delicate consideration which often occurs so pleasingly in that class, with regard to the feelings of their superiors.

"Let me look at you, Beatrice!" said Helen. "Let me look at your dear face once more! Shall I ever, ever do so again, Beatrice? Shall I ever hear your voice again?"

"My Helen—*yes*. Please God, you shall.

Be calm, my Helen! My own, my best, my precious Helen. God bless you! God keep and strengthen you!"

One more embrace,—one long straining clasp, and all was over. Helen caught up her bonnet and shawl, turned as she reached the door, and after one look at Beatrice, where she sat with her face buried in the cushions of the sofa, her whole frame heaving with her sobs, she passed into the hall, ascended the carriage, and was gone.

The bright September sun was rising over the woods, as Mr. Sempill's travelling carriage, ready packed, stood at the house door. At Helen's earnest entreaty, the elder members of the family had consented, though with reluctance, to take leave of her over-night; only Reginald appeared at the early breakfast-table that morning; but as, with a soft step, she was gliding past the Laird's dressing-room door, on her way down stairs, for the last time, it opened, and the good old gentleman, in his morning-gown, appeared at it, drew her gently into the room, and bestowed a father's embrace and blessing on her head.

The fortitude which she had been trying to muster, not much strengthened by this circum-

stance, Helen entered the dining-hall, where they had breakfasted, and where her brother-in-law now stood alone.

"Helen, dear," he said, as she approached, passing his arm around her, and kissing her forehead, "it will soon be over now. This is trying work, Helen! most of all for you; but though I have not said much, do not think that I have not felt for you."

"Never could I think *that*, Reginald," she earnestly replied. "You have been the kindest, the most considerate of brothers to me, always."

"Indeed, Helen," returned he, "I love you as a sister, and I am not blind to some of your trials. I merely wanted to say to you before you go,—confide in me as a brother; look upon me as your warm friend, and rely upon me, if ever I can do you any good. Now, dear,—now,—compose yourself. Cheer up! We shall all meet again—sooner than we think, who knows?"

George Sempill now appeared cool and collected as ever, and Reginald gave his arm to his sister-in-law, to lead her to the carriage. Another trial awaited Helen, in the array of all the upper servants who were waiting in the

outer hall to see them off, with an interest as warm and sincere in its way, as that of their masters. She felt that she must not attempt to speak to any of them, but as she passed along, she exchanged a cordial grasp of the hand with each in turn. And now the hospitable threshold was passed; she had descended the stairs, and stood at the carriage-door.

"I am not too late!" exclaimed a young clear voice. "Oh! how very glad I am! Aunt Helen,—dearest Aunt Helen! I just came to see you once more before you go."

It was Beatrice Lockhart,—her dress wet with the dew,—her long rich brown curls, relaxed by the morning air, hanging in heavy tresses below her straw bonnet, and partly veiling her pale cheeks and tearful eyes. She ran in at the gateway at the very moment when Helen appeared at the turret door, flinging her arms around her as she uttered these words.

"My child! my poor dear child!" said Helen, tenderly kissing her,—"is it possible? Did you actually come alone at this hour, all the way through the woods?"

"I did, I did, Aunt Helen. I could not sleep. I rose at four in the morning, and got up and dressed without awaking any one. I

could not rest without seeing you again. My heart was so full last night! I could not speak. And I wanted to tell you to be comforted about mamma,—for Helen and I will do all we can to make her happy. Not that we can be like you to her; but we shall try all we can. And I wanted to—to—to thank you for all your love and kindness—darling Aunt Helen!—you are going—and it seems as if I had never loved you half enough—but you don't know how I loved you!—I—I—." She could get no farther. The passion of tears, so long pent up, now forced its way, and scarcely conscious of the presence of another witness near her, Beatrice clung to her aunt, and hid her face in her breast. Captain Sempill turned away his head; Helen's maid wept aloud, and even the men could not look unmoved at the young girl's agony of sorrow. George Sempill had endured up to this pitch the thing on earth he dreaded most—a scene; but now he could bear it no longer.

"Helen," he said, "there must be an end of this; we have far to go, it is more than time we were on our way."

"One moment," answered Helen, commanding herself by a strong effort. "Look

up, my darling child! Farewell, Beatrice. Never forget that next to your own dear mamma, no one loves you better than poor Aunt Helen. Blessings on you, my child! Reginald," she added, turning to her brother-in-law, "comfort her, Reginald!"

Captain Sempill gently and kindly drew the sobbing girl from her aunt's embrace, and as the carriage rolled out at the gate, and Helen, burying her face in her handkerchief, sank back in its corner, he half led, half carried Beatrice up stairs, and into the dining-hall, desiring James Chalmers, whose eyes were full of tears, to bring her a cup of coffee. Then, while she wept on his shoulder as she might have done on that of her father, he strove, in a few kindly and quiet words, to soothe her agitation, and ere very long, succeeded in doing so, in a great measure. Beatrice with some difficulty, and at his earnest request, swallowed the coffee he had ordered; and then, having subdued her distress, arose to depart, saying that her mother would be uneasy about her, should her absence be discovered. Glad, perhaps, of a pretext for motion, and getting out of the house, Captain Sempill proposed to escort her; and accompanied her as

far as the foot of the garden at the Grange, where he bade her farewell.

"I have given you a great deal of trouble, Captain Sempill," said Beatrice, with a deep blush, as they parted. "You have been very kind to me."

"Don't say so, my dear," he replied. "I am glad to see you a little calmer now. We shall have Aunt Helen back again ere long, never fear. Good morning to you! What a heart that girl has!" he exclaimed to himself, as Beatrice's figure disappeared along the winding walk. "This life will be no child's play for her, poor dear! or I am much mistaken, unless she be very kindly dealt with."

CHAPTER XIII.

"There is a secret something in antipathies; and love is more than fancy;
Yea, and a palpable notice warneth of an instant danger;
For the soul hath its feelers, cobwebs floating on the wind,
That catch events in their approach with sure and apt presentiment,
So that some halo of attraction heraldeth a coming friend;
Investing in his likeness the stranger that passed on before;
* * * * * * * * *
The spirit, sharpest and strongest when disease hath rent the body,
Hath welcomed kindred spirits in nightly visitations,
Or learnt from restless ghosts dark secrets of the living,
And helped slow justice to her prey by the dreadful teaching of a dream."

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed since Helen's departure, in that species of dreary stillness which succeeds violent excitement, whilst the waves of the passing hour had effaced the outward traces of sorrow, as sooner or later they must in all circumstances do. The Sempills had

not yet sailed for Madeira, but the time of their departure drew very near. Meanwhile Helen's letters dwelt upon the anticipation of meeting with her brother-in-law; Captain Lockhart having arrived at Portsmouth, and being shortly expected in London, on his way to Scotland. The joyful prospect of her husband's return, not less than the necessity laid upon every mother, of mental and bodily exertion for her childrens sake, did much to rouse Beatrice from the state of dejection into which, if left to herself after the parting with her sister, she would probably have sunk. But with all the unselfishness of her nature she strove against the benumbing influence of the grief she could not but feel, and endeavoured in her letters to inculcate similar exertion on Helen, who had not the powerful motive to make it, supplied to Beatrice by her children.

The expected arrival of Captain Lockhart was, if possible, rendered more delightful to his wife and children, by the anticipations which it involved of a return, before very long, to their own quiet and elegant home. Beatrice was well aware that although her husband had all the kindly affection of one who had not lived much with them, towards his mother and

sisters, yet that it was the species of affection, uncemented by similarity of taste or feelings, which thrives best at a distance; and that he never remained any length of time at the Grange, without becoming very heartily tired of it; and never scrupled to own as much to her. More especially was this likely to be the case at the present season, when the shortening autumn days brought the family more in-doors and more together, and rendered more apparent the barrenness, the matter-of-fact dullness and the manifold discrepancies of the domestic circle. Its younger members felt this as keenly as their mother.

"The days, mamma," said Beatrice more than once, "those sweet Autumn days in the woods, are delightful. But it is dreadful at this season to be forced to come in to dine at four o'clock; and then one can't get out after dinner for more than a short run in the garden; and oh! mamma, don't be angry! but I cannot help feeling so tired of the long evenings! all sitting round that table,—no music, no reading aloud, and very little conversation! How I do look forward to our own dear home-evenings again, mamma! And with dear papa with us, we shall have such a happy winter!"

And her mother stifled the sigh that always seemed to struggle upward from her heart when Beatrice dwelt upon the delights of her own home, and joined in the anticipation.

One great resource to the young girls was in their visits to Sempilltower with their mother, which frequently took place, as the hospitable owners never seemed to think they could see Helen's sister and nieces often enough; and it was pleasant, though sad, to revisit the scene where they last had met and parted. Another seemed gradually opening in the society of Mr. Carmichael, whom they not only met at Sempilltower, but who began to make his occasional appearance at the Grange. The old lady was too bustling and worldly, and, be it added, too sensible, to enter into Miss Willie's Calvinistic niceties, or take part in the deep discussions, verging in some cases on deadly feuds, which began to agitate the parish on the subject of *reading* and non-reading in the pulpit, as referring to the assistant; but she had a high idea of the duties of hospitality, especially where those could be exercised without involving too much fuss, or departure from her own ways; and had, therefore, judged it proper to invite the young

minister to her house. Mr. Carmichael had partaken, so to speak, of his inauguration feast, when a dinner-party in honour of Mrs. George Sempill took place at the Grange. This was a ceremony which could not often be repeated, so extensive were the preparations connected with anything of the kind,—so prodigious the unearthing of china and crystal from the recesses of the store-room, unpapering of picture-frames, uncovering of carpets, sofas, and chairs, and releasing of window-curtains from holland-bags. Then, when the symposium had taken place, all that had been arrayed in its service behoved to be again stowed away; papered, covered, and tied up once more, ere the household could return to those habits of life which interfered so grievously with the power of seeing their friends in comfort. But although a grand field-day like this was of unfrequent occurrence, Mrs. Lockhart enjoyed inviting her friends in a sociable way to drink tea with her; and Mr. Carmichael, amongst others, had once or twice appeared on such occasions since the period of his first formal invitation to the house.

It so happened that on one of these evenings the conversation turned upon the fruitful topic

of the day in that part of the world—Kingsconnell and the Bertram family. The young Beatrice Lockhart, whose singularly-developed talent and sensibility seemed peculiarly to interest Mr. Carmichael, put many questions to him on the subject of the mansion, which she had never seen near at hand, so much so as at length to induce him to offer to escort her thither, along with her mother, and any of the rest of the party who might wish to see the old place, ere it assumed the more modern aspect destined to it in the course of a few months.

Mrs. Henry Lockhart gladly accepted this offer for herself and her little girls, as did Miss Grace. To the great satisfaction of her sister-in-law and nieces, Miss Willie was, or professed to be, otherwise engaged for the following day, on which it was agreed that the expedition should take place.

Soon after breakfast, accordingly, Mr. Carmichael appeared at the Grange. Beatrice and the two girls were quite ready for their walk; but a slight delay occurred, in consequence of Miss Grace having mislaid her gloves, which were at length discovered by little Helen between two pages of her present study, "The

Children of the Abbey." This preliminary adjusted, the party set out.

The route they pursued was the well-known one through the garden and the wood beyond, to the bridge over the river. It was a beautiful October day, of subdued and quiet light; a sky mostly covered with thin, grey-fleckered clouds, with patches here and there of pale hazy-blue, and not a breath of wind to stir the fading leaves, which, nevertheless, would now and then steal quietly to the ground;—a day for calm, yet mournful thought and silent memories, from which the light of joy had faded, like the summer-sunshine, from the woods. Some idea like this crossed the mind of young Beatrice, as hand-in-hand with Helen she trod the withered leaves in advance of the others, and contrasted the voiceless stillness of the air around them with the murmur and buzz, and chirp and song, which, as it seemed, had filled it but the other day.

A short and pleasant walk brought our party to the spot, at which hitherto they had been wont to turn off in the direction of Sempilltower. Striking into a path running the opposite way, they crossed an open grassy glade of the park, and speedily found them-

selves about half-way up the grand entrance to Kingsconnell, a magnificent straight avenue, ascending by a gentle slope to a gateway at its upper extremity, beyond which appeared the mansion. Two other avenues of trees, one on either side, ran nearly parallel at first to this, over the green turf of the park, unbroken by any road, and as they approached their termination, gently converged towards a common centre with it.

The gateway which afforded entrance to the house was a lofty iron one, in a railing of the same material, almost entirely hidden by climbing plants, and tall arbutus and Portugal laurel trees, for they could scarcely be called shrubs, to such a height had they grown. This enclosed a square court, ornamented with statues, and having a formal parterre of shrubs on each side of the entrance. On the right side the railing was carried up close to the wall of the mansion, having a smaller gate in it, by which access was given on foot to the stables, which were at no great distance, but completely screened from view by the fence of evergreens. On the left ran a broad paved terrace, which seemed to be carried round to the opposite front of the house, having a parapet of

stone, nearly covered by the honeysuckles and other climbers which grew up from beneath it, and decorated at alternate intervals with statues and stone vases. From this terrace a flight of stone steps at the extremity next the entrance, and another at its opposite termination, led down to the Pleasance already mentioned, whose extent and variety of surface corresponded with the size and splendour of the place. Flight after flight of steps conducted from one terrace to another, some gravelled, some of velvet turf, edged with flowers and rare plants, or rather plants which had been rare in the days when they were set there first; for, although the order of the place had been kept up, nothing new, nothing savouring of the modern world, had found entrance there for years. Arbours, fountains, stone seats, grottoes, and statues in abundance, diversified the Pleasance, which finally terminated in a broad green walk by the river-side, at a great depth below the house. The gardens lay beyond it, and were entered on one side from it. The noble deer-park belonging to the demesne extended on the other side of the river, its surface in some places almost hilly, in

others gently undulating, and ornamented with fine wood.

Leaving the pleasant task of exploring the out-door beauties of Kingsconnell to be performed afterwards, our party proceeded towards the house, a massive pile of building, square in form, and covering a considerable area of ground. A few broad low steps ascended to the portico, above which was placed the scutcheon of Sir Peter Bertram, and beneath which was the principal entrance, though in various nooks and corners of the house there were several other doors, besides a sashed one opening on the terrace. The pealing of the bell, which Mr. Carmichael rung, was answered by the appearance of one of the female servants left in charge of the mansion under Sir Peter's old housekeeper, who admitted them into a large and lofty hall, on which many doors opened, and from the centre of which a broad staircase ascended, by a very short flight, to the upper lobby, which afforded access to the public rooms. These were all *en suite*, making a complete circuit of the mansion; all very large, and, at present, dark, sombre, and antiquated in aspect, bearing a character of gloomy,

desolate, faded grandeur. Such was likewise the appearance of the innumerable bed-rooms. The house seemed almost illimitable in extent; and the number and complication of passages, galleries, and back-staircases was such, that Beatrice, calling to mind the legend connected with it, could only wonder how Colonel Ainslie, a stranger in it, ever managed to find his way at night without assistance.

Attended by the woman who admitted them, they made the tour of the public rooms; then, after having gone over most of the house under her auspices, Mrs. Henry Lockhart and Beatrice returned with Mr. Carmichael to inspect more closely the pictures and other ornaments of the principal apartments, leaving Miss Grace and little Helen to explore some more distant regions with their guide.

One portrait in particular arrested their attention; that which some of the old servants had pointed out to Mr. Carmichael as the likeness of the unfortunate Master of Kingsconnell, whose history he had detailed at Sempilltower. It hung in a small ante-chamber, entering upon the principal drawing-room; rather with the air of having been purposely placed where it was not liable to much observation. As a work

of art, it was well worthy of a more conspicuous situation, being painted by no meaner a master than Sir Joshua Reynolds, and in his happiest style. It was, in fact, by far the finest portrait in the collection; and the face and form it depicted, amply deserving of the skill bestowed upon them. Long did the young Beatrice stand gazing upon it, after her mother and Mr. Carmichael had turned to examine other pictures in the adjoining rooms;—her rapt and earnest eyes gathering in the smallest detail of the dress and aspect, and endeavouring to conjure up in the countenance, bright and animated in expression, though, like all Sir Joshua's pictures, somewhat faded in colouring, the ghastly look of woe, desolation, and despair, which its counterpart was said to have worn on that mysterious night, whose tale so haunted her imagination.

"Still here, Beatrice?" said her mother, as Mr. Carmichael and she returned to the small room, and seated themselves, somewhat fatigued by their perambulation, on a settee, nearly opposite where the picture hung. "Still here, my child! I believe you could remain looking at that picture all day!"

"Indeed, mamma, I could," answered Bea-

trice. "Besides the strange, wonderful story, it is a beautiful picture,—beautiful! The longer I look at it, the more beautiful does it seem. I think I never saw a face more so, Mr. Carmichael. Did you?"

"I have seen a face which promises to be more beautiful," replied Mr. Carmichael; "and strange to say, very like that. The resemblance struck me when first I saw this portrait; and it is one that grows upon me every time I look at it."

"Whose is it?" enquired Beatrice and her mother at once.

"It is," he replied, "the face of Sir Thomas Bertram's second son, Arthur. The likeness is certainly striking, to a singular degree, considering the distant relationship between him and the original of the picture."

"How beautiful he must be!" enthusiastically exclaimed Beatrice, her eyes fixed on the picture.

"He is beautiful! a most beautiful boy!" said Mr. Carmichael. "God grant him a happier fate."

"Amen!" responded Mrs. Henry Lockhart, her earnest gaze fixing itself upon the young beaming face turned up to the picture. Mr. Carmichael's followed it.

"Miss Lockhart," he said with a smile, "you really must not look at that picture any longer."

"Why not?" exclaimed Beatrice, turning round with surprise.

"Because," he replied, "you incur a risk by doing so. According to some theories on these mysterious subjects, if that unhappy spirit is not yet at rest, your mind being intently fixed upon its history, exposes you to the possibility of its entering into *Rapport* with you."

"Into what, Mr. Carmichael?" eagerly exclaimed Beatrice. "Oh do—do tell me what you mean? Pray do!" She quitted the picture as she spoke, and seated herself on a chair opposite to him, her large dilated eyes bent upon his face with a look of eager expectation.

"Since you have begun upon such a subject, Mr. Carmichael," said Mrs. Henry Lockhart smiling, "you will find yourself compelled to go on, and to satisfy my curiosity as well as Beatrice's; for I know as little as she does of the meaning of that term you used, and feel nearly as anxious to understand it."

"You are not acquainted with German, are you, Mrs. Lockhart?" asked Mr. Carmichael.

"Not in the least," she replied.

"The word I made use of," said he, "is a German term, belonging to the science,—the mystery—call it what we will—of Animal Magnetism; but in the sense in which I intended it, it is used by Stilling, a writer on the subject of the spiritual world, to signify the state of sympathy between an embodied and a disembodied spirit, through which it is possible for the latter to render itself visible to the former."

"He supposes then," asked Mrs. Henry Lockhart, "that unless such a sympathy exists, a disembodied spirit cannot make its presence known?"

"Exactly so," he replied. "And he relates many strange narratives in proof of the supposition, stories in which spirits which have not found their rest, manifest themselves to some particular people, in preference to others to whom it would seem that, although ardently desirous of doing so, they had not the power of appearing. And that for no assignable reason; simply that they were not *in* RAPPORT with them. He makes it appear too, that the cir-

cumstance of the mind dwelling inordinately on these subjects generally, or on the destinies of any one particular spirit, may in some cases suffice to establish this Rapport, and render the unseen world in some of its forms visible to the bodily eye."

"Strange!" exclaimed Mrs. Henry Lockhart. "What a singular idea!"

"You believe it, don't you, Mr. Carmichael," asked Beatrice.

"I don't know," he answered half smiling, "that to one of your lively imagination, Miss Lockhart, I should be justified in making known the extent of my belief or disbelief on such points. But most unquestionably, the farther I penetrate into the mysteries that surround us, the wider do the limits of my faith extend. I suspect it is only half-knowledge, half-truths, that lead to unbelief in all cases."

"And I," said Beatrice, with a slight shudder,—"have incurred a risk of being haunted by that beautiful picture? I will not, if I can help it, look at it again. But now, why should he have appeared to Colonel Ainslie, Mr. Carmichael? What Rapport could there be between him, a total stranger, and this unhappy spirit?"

"That I cannot tell, Miss Lockhart," replied Mr. Carmichael. "In fact, these are not stories to be reasoned on, or reduced to any of our known rules. But do you understand what I mean, when I say, that the very discrepancies, the incoherences, as it were, of well-authenticated ghost-stories, go farther to establish their truth in my mind than the most exquisite adaptation of one part to another would do?"

"I think I understand," said Beatrice. "You mean that any one who had *invented* them, would have taken care to make them more reasonable, to make one see the reason why the ghosts had appeared."

"Precisely so," he answered. "It is their very incompleteness and incomprehensibility, which constitutes their strongest guarantee in my eyes."

"In the case we are discussing, however, Mr. Carmichael," said Mrs. Henry Lockhart, "one cannot be sure how far Colonel Ainslie's impression that he saw a real apparition, may not have been a mistaken one. It is at least possible that the whole scene might merely have been a very vivid dream; the terror arising from which he could not dismiss from

his mind, on waking in the middle of the night. And I cannot forbear echoing Beatrice's question, *why* should the troubled spirit have appeared to him, and not to any one else in the house, which we are led to conclude it never did?"

"As to that," replied Mr. Carmichael, "you must recollect, Mrs. Lockhart, that Colonel Ainslie was the only person exposed to the risk of seeing the apparition, by becoming an inmate of the room which it haunted. We are led to conclude, in all stories of the kind, that spirits returning in that way have not the power of appearing in all places, but are confined to some one particular spot. With regard to your idea of the story having been a dream of course it is impossible to tell. We have nothing to set against the supposition save Colonel Ainslie's own repeated assertions to the contrary, and profound conviction that what he saw, he saw with his waking eyes. But supposing it to *have* been a dream, I confess that I do not see anything much less wonderful in it. That he should have beheld, in a dream, a figure the exact counterpart of a picture which he had never seen, and connected in so remarkable a way with the unknown

history of the room assigned him, was, to say the least of it, a circumstance scarcely to be accounted for in a natural way."

"Very true indeed," said she. "Whichever way we take the story, it is strange enough. Does any one know the room in which it occurred, Mr. Carmichael? for we have heard nothing of it in the course of our walk through the house to-day."

"I rather think not," he replied. "I have made sundry efforts to discover it, in vain. It is not, you see, like a house descending in a direct way, from father to son. The violent and total changes of dynasty here cause one set of owners to efface all trace of the other. I should like to find out the room where such an incident took place."

"I wonder," said Beatrice, "why he came back to it instead of visiting some place more connected with the poor young lady whom he loved,—some place where he used to meet her, for instance?"

"Probably his own room had more connection with all his private thoughts and feelings and unsatisfied wishes, than any other place," answered Mr. Carmichael. "It is Stilling's theory, that it is the strong bias

towards something earthly, the unfulfilled hope, or the unsubdued desire, at the period of death, which deprives the departed soul of rest, and brings it back, with vain yearning, to the spot most immediately connected with these, or to the object of them. In this case the object of affection being also dead, he returned to the place where he had thought most of her."

"Alas!" exclaimed Mrs. Henry Lockhart. "So a mother's spirit would return to watch over her children,—the spirit of any one who had loved intensely in life would so return to the object beloved. I can believe it."

"Yes, if love had been stronger than faith," said Mr. Carmichael. "If the spirit, in departing, had not had faith to commit the loved objects left behind to the care of God, but had gone from them dissatisfied and repining. But this is a state in which we cannot rightly conceive a *happy* spirit to be. One of the chief ingredients of happiness in the intermediate state before the resurrection, must be perfect faith,—perfect repose on the Providence of God in all things. But I can well believe those tales we have all heard of the strength of love, at the hour of death, availing to render the departing soul visible, sometimes even

helpful, to some beloved one far away. Nay, I can imagine the same strength, after death, being permitted at some hour of need, still to befriend its objects. I have read a beautiful story of some little children who had ventured near a dangerous well in a dark passage of a house where they were strangers, and who averred that they had met their mother, dead some time previously, almost at its brink, and had been desired by her to turn back; a command, by whomsoever given, which saved their lives. I had no difficulty in believing that story."

"Oh! and mamma! Mr. Carmichael!" exclaimed Beatrice,—"you recollect, don't you, that exquisite Danish ballad of which Sir Walter Scott quotes the translation, in the notes to the 'Lady of the Lake?' you remember when the children of the dead mother are so cruelly treated by the father's second wife—

"'Twas lang i' the nicht, and the bairnies grat,
Their mither she under the mools heard that;
That heard the wife under the eard that lay;
'Forsooth maun I to my bairnies gae!'
That wife can stand up at our Lord's knee,
And, 'May I gang and my bairnies see?'
She prigged sae sair, and she prigged sae lang,
That He at the last ga'e her leave to gang."

And then you know she goes to her poor children, and comforts them, and reproves their father for his cruelty. It is the same idea, Mr. Carmichael."

"It is, Miss Lockhart, one of those universal ideas, which must have some foundation in our common nature," answered Mr. Carmichael, looking with an interest such as he had scarcely ever before experienced, from the daughter to the mother, who did not speak, and whose eyes, he observed, were filled with tears. "There is," he said, after a brief pause, desirous to turn the conversation, "another picture in this house which possesses a singular degree of interest in my eyes. Mrs. Lockhart and I were looking at it a few minutes ago, whilst you continued spell-bound here. That one in the dining-room, over the mantel-piece,—the large full-length picture of the unhappy and guilty man who brought the curse upon this house, Randolph, Viscount Kingsconnell."

"I did not remark it," said Beatrice. "I must go and look at it. Who is the artist, Mr. Carmichael?"

"I do not at this moment recollect," he replied. "I do not pretend to any connoisseurship in art, but it appears to me nothing parti-

cular in that respect. It represents a man of fine presence, and with much of that personal beauty which seems, by the family-pictures, to have distinguished the race; but to me the countenance has something lowering and repulsive, though that may partly arise from the impression on my own mind, respecting the man. There is something stately and imposing withal, in the attitude, even in the stiff elaborate costume and flowing periwig of the age. And there he stands, looking down upon his descendants, as if compelled to remain there, and watch the gradual extinction of the race."

"Perhaps he does so in reality. Who can tell?" said Beatrice, in a low voice.

"There is a German play, Miss Lockhart," began Mr. Carmichael. "But,"—he added, suddenly checking himself, and turning to her mother, "Miss Lockhart's remarks are so much beyond her age, that I forget to how very young a lady I am talking. I am afraid of terrifying her, Mrs. Lockhart; or at least of over-exciting her nerves."

"Oh! dear, Mr. Carmichael," exclaimed Beatrice, "I have no nerves. Please, mamma, don't forbid Mr. Carmichael to tell me about the German play. I *must* learn German."

"I fear you must proceed, Mr. Carmichael," said her mother with a smile. "It is very true, Beatrice as she says, *has* no nerves in that way. She enjoys the wild and wonderful without being terrified by it. And it is not that she is in advance of her age,—only she has not lived much with young companions,—perhaps too little. Her little sister is not quite one for her as yet; and she and I have been so constantly together, that I sometimes fear it has made her older than she ought to be."

"Well, then, Miss Lockhart," pursued Mr. Carmichael, answering the appeal in Beatrice's beseeching eyes, "not to keep you in suspense about the German play; it is one called 'Die Ahnfrau,'—'The Ancestress,'—with which, if you ever learn that fine language, I shall be happy to make you better acquainted. But what I was going to observe just now is, that the interest hangs upon a similar idea to that which you expressed, the spirit of a guilty ancestress, whose crimes have brought a curse upon her house, being doomed to haunt it in a human shape, in which she becomes visible before any calamity occurs to her descendants. She is supposed to find rest unattainable, until

their unhappy fate is consummated. It is an awful idea, is it not?"

"Awful indeed!" exclaimed Beatrice. "How I should like to read that play!"

"It belongs," said Mr. Carmichael, turning to Mrs. Henry Lockhart, "to a species of romance which has infinitely more attractions for me than that upon a larger and grander scale. It is *household romance* that I delight to investigate; the strange, deep, unsuspected under-currents, which flow beneath the smooth waves of ordinary life; the secret history of families,—often presenting so total a contrast to the ostensible. These subjects are what I have always sought after; and my inclination that way has been greatly increased by my accidental connection with the Bertram family, and by the many conversations which I have held on such points with my friend and pupil, William Bertram."

"How I envy Mr. Bertram?" exclaimed Beatrice, "coming for the first time to a place so full of romance,—and all his own? But I shall go, dear mamma, and look at the picture. Shall we call it 'the Ancestor,'—Mr. Carmichael? as a companion to your Ancestress? How I do envy Mr. Bertram!" She left the room as she spoke.

"*Envy* him!" ejaculated Mr. Carmichael, in a low voice. "I am afraid you are very tired, Mrs. Lockhart?" he added.

"Not in the least," she replied. "I have been most deeply interested by all I have seen to-day. I perceive, Mr. Carmichael, that the doom supposed to hang over the Kingsconnell family weighs more upon your mind than you altogether like to acknowledge."

"More at least," returned he, "than I should care to acknowledge to every one. But I do not fear misconstruction, or ridicule—which is even more difficult to bear,—from you, Mrs. Lockhart, and to you I do not scruple to own that this mysterious subject is seldom absent from my thoughts, in connection with the splendid inheritance which has devolved on this family. Humanly speaking, few events would seem less probable than the fulfilment of the curse in their case, but we cannot tell. All we know is that such things 'causeless shall not come.'"

There was a brief pause in the conversation, broken by Mrs. Henry Lockhart. The solemn earnestness of Mr. Carmichael's manner, and the character of profound conviction of truth pervading all he said on this subject, thrilled to her heart, already, as we have seen, haunted by

a presentiment of sorrow which to most people would have seemed chimerical, but which she felt that he would understand; and in a few minutes she found herself, as if irresistibly impelled to do so, confiding to him her anticipations of early death, and the intense anxiety on her children's account with which they filled her mind.

Mr. Carmichael listened with an air of deep, almost reverential sympathy; and spoke in reply as became his office, of faith, of trust in the guiding hand of an all-merciful Father, of leaving the beloved of our souls in His care, sure that He will keep the trust committed to Him. His sympathy, even more than the words of consolation which he uttered, greatly touched Mrs. Henry Lockhart.

"Perhaps, Mr. Carmichael," she said, "you may one day recall this conversation, after my presentiment has been fulfilled. If so, remember that from my heart I thanked you for the strength and comfort which you had given me."

Mr. Carmichael's was one of those calm reflective dispositions, partly formed by nature, partly induced by the ascetic habits of deep study, which are not easily moved to any

strong emotion; and to which, notwithstanding the habitual earnestness of their feelings and conversation, the expression of strong emotion is foreign, so far as words go. But he had seldom, if ever, been so deeply touched as by this simple and unexpected confidence from one in whom he already felt so admiring and respectful an interest. The very excess of this feeling kept him silent for a few seconds after she ceased to speak; and its farther manifestation was denied him, for just then the voice of Miss Grace was heard, as she entered the adjoining room, accompanied by both her nieces.

"Well, Beatrice," she exclaimed, approaching her sister-in-law, "Helen and I have been up to the very top of the house, and, I do believe, in every room in it."

"And we saw the room where Sir Peter died, mamma," whispered Helen, in an awe-struck voice, "and that dear old housekeeper shewed us the picture of his little son, who died so long ago."

"I should like to have seen that!" exclaimed Beatrice.

"Come with me then, Beatrice," said little Helen, "I think I can find the way. Ah! here is the housekeeper herself, I declare!"

And, in fact, the door just then opened, and the good old woman appeared, followed by her attendant maid, bringing in a large tray with wine and biscuits. "She was sure the ladies and Mr. Carmichael must be very tired. They had had a long walk, and nothing was so fatiguing as going through a large empty house." And while they gratified her by partaking of her hospitality, she remained talking, and entering into many particulars relative to the apartments they were in, the pictures, and other such matters. She informed them likewise that the kindness of her departed master having left her independent, she meant to quit Kingsconnell as soon as Sir Thomas should provide a successor to fill up her place, for she was too old, she said, and too long accustomed to a quiet life, to undertake the charge of a large bustling household again.

"I am glad she is going away to a place of her own," exclaimed Beatrice, as the door closed after the old woman.

"Why, Beatrice?" asked her mother.

"Why, I think, mamma," said Beatrice, musingly, "I meant more than I can quite express. It is more in keeping with the character of an old faithful servant, Mr.

Carmichael, don't you think? not to—— to——"

"To transfer her allegiance to a new master, Miss Lockhart? Was not that what you meant? Yes, I quite agree with you."

The party now arose to proceed, passing once more through the silent, desolate, melancholy rooms. Beatrice could not resist one more long lingering gaze upon the Master's picture ere she left the antechamber, and followed the others through the great drawing-room, where their very steps seemed to return in mournful echoes on their ears; and where fancy could have conjured up a thousand ghosts of the long-departed flitting through the dim uncertain light admitted by the darkened windows. The last room of the suite was the dining-room, an apartment of great extent, opening upon the lobby and the staircase; and seeming filled, as Beatrice observed to her mother in a whisper, with the presence of *the Ancestor*, whose picture, as described by Mr. Carmichael, hung over the mantelpiece. Descending the staircase to the rooms below, they quitted the house by the sashed door already mentioned, which opened upon the terrace from a pleasant octagon room, entering

on two others. These apartments, which had the air of having been unused for years, were understood in the household, their attendant told them, to have been amongst the number of those assigned to the children of Sir Peter Bertram in their infancy. The octagon had evidently been a favourite sitting-room. The furniture was covered with what had once been a gay-patterned chintz, representing large birds and flowers, and the walls hung with a paper to correspond, now peeling off in many places; for the traces of neglect, of decay, were more visible in these rooms than anywhere in the house; as if they had scarcely ever been entered. A large picture hung upon the wall opposite the fire-place, indifferently painted, as if the work of some provincial artist, representing a group of three little girls, in the long-waisted white frocks and broad flowing sashes of the last century, mounting a baby-brother upon a large Newfoundland dog. These were Sir Peter's children, his lost son and his neglected daughters, depicted as they appeared in the days before the spoiler had entered their dwelling. The portrait of his son, to which Helen had alluded, was one by a more skilful hand, taken subsequently, and had always hung

in the father's desolated bedchamber, but this picture, as awakening insupportable recollections, had been left where it was, in the deserted room, once resounding with the voices of infant joy. A still more touching memorial being opposite to it, above the fire-place, in the shape of an elaborately worked sampler, in a black frame; at the foot of which, in faded letters, might be read the words—"Mary Bertram, her work, 1776, aged 7."

Stepping out from the glass door upon the silent terrace, on which so many a time the joyous bound and the shrill shout of childhood had awakened the echoes, now long unused to noise, the visitors descended to the Pleasance, and wandered for a while, with a quiet sense of enjoyment, amongst its alleys and bowers. But now the autumn day was far advanced, and it was necessary to think of returning home.

"Next time we see Kingsconnell, Beatrice," said Miss Grace to her niece, as they paused at the iron gateway, and turned round to look once more at the house, "it will be wonderfully altered, no doubt."

"No doubt," echoed Beatrice. "I am glad we have seen it as Sir Peter left it, Aunt Grace. I wonder whether it will be half as

interesting when it is full of life and bustle and gaiety, as it is now in all its silence and loneliness? I wonder how it will look when I see it again?"

"Well, we have had a happy, happy day, at any rate!" exclaimed little Helen, jumping outside the gate.

Notwithstanding Beatrice's disclaimer of the possession of nerves, her susceptible imagination had been strongly excited by the events of this day; and after the four o'clock dinner at the Grange was over, she remained for a time at the window, looking out into the advancing twilight, and musing over all that she had seen and heard; then at last stealing quietly from the room, she prepared for a favourite enjoyment of her's, which was not quite lawful, but only as it were connived at, namely, to wander into the garden without shawl or bonnet, and remain dreaming there, or sauntering up and down until the darkness drove her in-doors to the long evening she so much disliked. On the present occasion the daylight was fading fast, and the calmness and stillness of the day had given place to a melancholy wind, which now began to moan amongst the trees, bringing the leaves in showers to the

ground. Beatrice paced the terrace walk at the head of the garden slowly up and down for a few turns, her thoughts too busily absorbed to heed the chilliness of the wind. At last she came to a pause beside an old stone seat, against the house-wall, which had been a favourite resort of her's in the summer twilight, and directed her eyes towards the western quarter of the sky, where above the trees a streak of red, indicative of sunset, was gradually fading away amongst the grey hues of the stormy clouds. Beneath this red streak the line of sight was bounded by the woods, whose multitudinous branches, now somewhat stripped and sharpened in outline, were tossing drearily to the rising blast. There was something inexpressibly mournful in the scene, something that brought with it an impression of desolation scarcely to be described.

The eyes of the young girl, filled with a mysterious sadness, rested upon the dying gleam of sunset, and the troubled sea of boughs below, and as she gazed, an internal voice seemed to whisper to her soul, "Behold an emblem of your future life!" Whence derived she knew not—in the midst of happiness and peace—the warning fell; and it was one which

remained as indelibly imprinted on her mind, as the picture did, of the scene which seemed to call it forth. Subsequent events deepened the first impression; but that, unfounded in the circumstances around her though it was stamped itself from the very first, and for ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

" Levommi il mio pensier' in parte ov' era,
Quella ch' io cerco, e non ritrovo in terra.
Ivi fra' lor che 'l terzo cerchio serra,
La rividi più bella, e meno altera.
Per man' mi prese e disse, in questa spera
Sarai ancor meco, se 'l desio non erra.
I' son colei che * * * * * *
* * * compié mià giornata innanzi sera.
Mio ben' non cape in intelletto umano,—
Te solo aspetto, e quel' che tanto amasti,
E' laggiuso e rimaso il mio bel velo."

PETRARCA.

EIGHT months had passed since the time at which the last chapter closed, and brought with them the usual amount of changes. About the middle of October, Captain Lockhart had returned home, an event followed by one grand dinner-party at the Grange, and several tea-drinkings; and by not a few dinners at Sempilltower, and other houses in the neighbourhood. But, as Beatrice had foreseen, it was not long before her husband became very tired

of his mother's house, and began to discover a vast amount of indispensable business in Edinburgh, as an excuse for hastening their return to their own home. The end of November saw them once more comfortably established in the house at Morningside, where we first found Beatrice and her children, and which they still continued to occupy. Here the winter glided away as happily and peacefully as the young Beatrice had anticipated in dwelling upon her father's return. Captain Lockhart was not a man of shining abilities, or in any respect equal to his wife; but he was a devoted husband, and most affectionate father, and one of those people whose instincts are all right, and whose sweetness of temper sheds that charm over domestic life which so far transcends the influence of any other moral quality. Enthusiastically attached to his profession though he was, he thoroughly appreciated his own home; and a happier family circle it would have been difficult to find anywhere; though, as he often remarked to his wife, it never had felt perfectly complete since the loss of poor Helen, whom her brother-in-law had regarded with a warmth of affection only inferior to that which her sister bore her.

They did not enter largely into society; for Captain Lockhart had lived too much at sea to have many friends on shore; and Beatrice, in his absence, had always led a life of seclusion; besides that their moderate income, and living a little way out of the town, alike presented obstacles to much visiting. Still, a little occasional participation in it, enhanced by contrast the peace and quiet of their own home. They, as well as their children, were frequent guests at the house of their elder brother, Mr. Lockhart Clephane, who, it may be remembered, had married an heiress, and resided principally at her estate, or in Edinburgh. His wife and he were good-natured, somewhat worldly-minded people, who lived much in gay society, but still kept up a kindly intercourse with their less wealthy friends. They had a large family, and some amongst the young cousins were nearly of an age with Beatrice and Helen; so much so, as to render them companionable together when they met, but nothing beyond that; for there was no similarity of mind between girls educated by mere governess-routine, and those who had been so constantly the companions of their mother. Although the latter had profited by the neigh-

bourhood of Edinburgh in giving her daughters every advantage derivable from the excellent masters with which it abounds, it was her directing mind, her refined and intellectual taste, cultivated as much for her children's sakes as for her own, which had formed the most valuable part of education to both; but especially to Beatrice, whose rarely-gifted nature daily expanded, in the happy moral atmosphere in which she was placed.

The regular and copious correspondence between Mrs. Henry Lockhart and her far-distant sister still constituted, as it had ever done, one of their chief enjoyments; in Helen's case, indeed, it might be said to be the great enjoyment of life in her new position; for, though her ardent and elastic spirit led her to find pleasure wherever it was possible to do so, and her susceptibility to the beauties of nature and the charms of climate found ample excitement in Madeira,—although, moreover, she met with much to like amongst the new associates in the midst of whom her lot was cast,—still there remained an aching void, a want in her heart which nothing, save the love and sympathy which were denied her, could have availed to fill. A letter from Beatrice, one of

those long, minute letters which only women can write, full of the life-like details of daily life, and breathing the love and confidence of old days in every line, would in a moment transport her back years in time, and hundreds of miles in space, and bring her again into the centre of love and home. It was little wonder that she lived upon these letters, and lived *in* the outpourings of her own soul in reply to them.

A month or two after their arrival in Madeira, Helen had received from Beatrice a piece of intelligence which, for the time, caused her much anxiety. It was to the effect that after so long an interval, her sister had reason to expect again to become a mother. When first these tidings reached her, connecting them, as she could scarcely avoid doing, with Beatrice's strange and long-standing presentiments, a sadness and despondency which she had scarcely ever before experienced, took possession of Helen's mind, tenfold augmented by her distance, and by the impossibility of her rendering to her sister any of those offices of tender help and comfort, which on the two similar occasions that had formerly occurred, she had been at hand to do. But as time

rolled on, and as Beatrice's letters alluded no more to any such mournful anticipations, and spoke of her health as excellent, her sister began to forget her fears, and to regard the approaching event with no more than the usual and natural amount of anxiety. It might be that Beatrice, in love and pity for her, so far away, refrained from dooming her to such suspense and such agony as the betrayal of feelings of this kind on her own part would have done; but mercifully for herself, Helen did not take this view of the case, and lived on in hope and prayer.

It was now the latter end of June, not far from the ninth anniversary of her own wedding, when she retired to rest one night, her heart filled with the thoughts awakened by the packet of home letters, which had arrived that very day. Besides the usual long affectionate journal from Beatrice, written to all appearance in good health and spirits, and to which each of the girls had added a few lines, there was a kind letter from her old governess, Miss Carruthers, and another, equally kind, if not quite so lengthy, from Miss Muirhead, the gentle "Aunt Penny," of Sempilltower. This document carried Helen back at once to the

green woods and old grey walls of that well-loved spot; entering as it did, with minute fidelity, into all the small particulars which make up the home picture, till the Laird and the Lady, the Major and the Captain, David Bryce, James Chalmers, and all the other faithful old domestics,—nay till the very dogs and horses seemed to stand "in life and limb" before the reader. It also mentioned that Sir Thomas Bertram's family were expected to settle at Kingsconnell by the end of July; the innumerable preparations for their arrival, in the shape of papering, painting, furnishing, and renovation in every possible shape, being now nearly completed. The neighbourhood, Miss Muirhead added, was on the very tiptoe of expectation, looking for this long-delayed event; and a thousand ridiculous and improbable anecdotes and descriptions of the different members of the family were, as usual in such cases, already in circulation, most abounding amongst those who knew least about them.

Helen's lively imagination had been much excited on the fortunes of the House of Kingsconnell by Mr. Carmichael's narrative, not less than by the detailed account which she had

received from her sister and her niece of the day they had spent there, and of all the strange and melancholy associations of the spot; and on the night in question, after she had fallen asleep, her dreams, following the direction of her latest waking thoughts, transported her back to its neighbourhood, and presented her with a strangely-mingled tissue of improbable adventures, which had for their scene a place, or a succession of places, neither exactly Sempilltower nor Kingsconnell, but partaking of the characteristics of both. A nameless sadness, a trouble, a confusion, seemed to run through the dream;—a sense as of some great impending calamity, whose nature she could not ascertain, nor escape from whose power. Vague fancies of Harry Lockhart, calling to her from a great distance, while some invisible force withheld her from following his voice; and a wild and horrible vision of standing by the Connell Water, as the little river which ran through the grounds of Kingsconnell was named,—of hearing a loud and despairing cry, and seeing a raging torrent coming rushing down, filling its whole channel, and some human form hurried past on the tossing waves, which she *felt*,—for she could not see,—was

her niece Beatrice!—a desperate effort to follow, to seize her, to drag her out, and herself becoming involved in the rush of waters,—whirling, stifling, blinding, as they swept over her,—and she saw and felt nothing further. Such was the first part of her troubled sleep. This tumultuous agony was succeeded by a calm the most profound; a sense of peace ineffable, which stole over her soul like dew. She imagined herself standing in that *dream-light* which is so much more beautiful and more peaceful than the lustre of earthly sun or moon,—that "light which never was *on* sea or sky,"—in a well-remembered spot, the cemetery of St. Michael's Chapel; the spot on which she and Beatrice had stood, and gazed upon the landscape beneath, the Sunday night when they went over there after her arrival at Sempilltower. And Beatrice stood there by her side as on that night, but not exactly as she had seen her then. She appeared to Helen dressed entirely in white; her hair put back from her pale serene face, and partly covered with some long flowing drapery, like a veil. How or why they both came there did not appear, but, as usual in dreams, it caused Helen no surprise that such should be the case. There

was an impression upon her mind that they had met to part for some indefinite period, but this feeling did not disturb the holy calm which seemed to surround them like an atmosphere. Moreover, it seemed to be Beatrice, and not herself, who was now about to go away. It was Beatrice who, her arm encircling Helen as it had done on the night of their last parting, first broke the silence of the dream.

"I told you, dearest," she seemed to say, "that—please God—you should see my face again, and it has pleased Him to grant us one more meeting before I go."

Then a pang, even in the mysterious world of sleep, seemed to shoot through Helen's heart. "Beatrice," she said, "how can you bear to leave the children? What will become of them when you are gone."

The bright pale face seemed lighted up, at these words, as with a glory.

"I *have* left them, Helen!" the vision replied, "I left them with heavy sorrow; but I met One who dried my tears, and promised to watch over them, and I have trusted them in His hands, and found comfort."

"And which way are you going, Beatrice?' Helen seemed to herself to ask.

"*There!*" answered the vision, pointing towards the Chapel, "by the Eastern window."

"Take me, Beatrice: take me with you!" And Helen fancied that in her supplication she twined her arms closely round her sister.

"Not yet, not yet, my own dearest. Watch and pray. The time is nearly out!" And as the form of Beatrice bent towards her at these words, and pressed a kiss upon her lips, Helen started awake.

It was not all a dream. To her latest hour, Helen Sempill never lost the conviction that it was more than a dream. She awoke with that *human* kiss thrilling on her lips, that human voice in her ear; and by the faint glimmer of the night-lamp in her chamber, for one brief moment the face—the angel face of her sister—was visible to her bodily eyes, bending over her with one last look of yearning human love.

It vanished! Never more on this side the grave was that face to meet her eyes. The knowledge of this, the feeling that it was so, rushed upon Helen's mind in an overmastering tide of agony. Burying her face in the pillow, to stifle the shrieks which nothing but a dread of rousing her husband could have restrained,—

"She is dead! She is dead! She is dead!" Helen passionately reiterated. "Dead! and I shall never—never—never see my Beatrice again.—Never! And her children! My children! And I so far away! Oh! if God would take me too! How can I live without her?"

CHAPTER XV.

"Behind, the guardian sister came,
Her bright brow dim and pale—
O cheer thee, maiden, in His name,
Who stilled Jairus' wail!

. . . . . .

Thy first glad earthly task is o'er,
And dreary seems thy way,
But what if, nearer than before,
She watch thee even to-day?"

LYRA INNOCENTIUM.

THAT same night which brought to Helen in her distant home the mysterious communication of her sister's departure, witnessed a solemn scene in the house of Captain Lockhart. On the previous night it had struck Beatrice, whose devoted affection watched every change in her mother's countenance, that the latter appeared unusually fatigued at an early hour; and she had endeavoured even more studiously than usual to spare her the smallest

trouble or effort. But the evening passed with its usual quiet cheerfulness,—a lovely summer evening. Little Helen coaxed her father, as she often did, to go out and take a walk with her, and Beatrice remained, seated on a low stool by her mother's sofa, her usual post. Something in the setting sunshine and the songs of the birds, seemed to recall to Mrs. Henry Lockhart's mind that well-remembered evening before her sister's marriage. Beatrice too recollected, or fancied she did, romping on the grass-plot with her young Aunt Helen; and the mother and daughter fell into a train of reminiscences principally connected with that beloved and absent one, and reverting to long-past days of their early youth, even of their childhood. Many a memory passed in review before them; many a thought and feeling found utterance during that sweet evening hour. Their last earthly conversation was all sweetness, all repose and peace. "Ah! little thought they *'twas* the last!"

Helen and her father returned from their walk; they had been as far as "the furzy hills of Braid;" and the flower-loving child brought back a huge nosegay of dog-roses and other wild flowers, which she had gathered on

her way. Then the tea-table, the round tea-table of old, was drawn close to the sofa; the young Beatrice, happy in her delegated office, sat down to preside at it; and they lingered over it in pleasant talk, till the pure summer twilight began to give place to the radiance of a glorious full-moon.

In the quiet moonlight, after the tea-things were removed, the young sisters sat at their mother's feet and sang together, as they often did in the evening, many beautiful songs and ballads of the olden time. And at the close of their domestic worship, a little later, those clear young voices blended with those of their parents and the servants, in that noble strain of one of England's noblest spirits, "the Evening Hymn" of Bishop Ken, with which their devotions were always wont to conclude. Together they rose, swelled, and died away. The hymn was over, the blessing pronounced, and never, never more on earth, did these voices blend together again. Their last united offering of praise had ascended to the throne of God; and thenceforth the golden chain of their harmony was to be bereft of its best and brightest link.

Beatrice was roused from her sleep about

an hour after she had gone to bed, by a long and tender kiss from her mother. It was invariably the custom of the latter to visit her childrens' bedside the last thing before retiring to rest, and this was not the first time by many that Beatrice, a light sleeper at all times, had been momentarily awakened in a similar way. But, on the present night, a sudden impulse prompted her, scarce awakened as she was, to start up and clasp her mother round the neck. The embrace was returned, fondly, passionately; another and another kiss imprinted on her fresh young cheek; then she was left in darkness, and speedily wrapped once more in slumber, while the mother retired to her chamber, and upon her knees commended her children to their Almighty Father and compassionate Saviour; and implored strength and faith to meet the awful hour of parting, whose shadow lay upon her soul.

In the morning, at their awakening, the two young girls were met by unexpected news. An infant brother had been born about two hours before! But their exclamations of rapturous delight were checked by a look of sadness from their attendant. The baby had arrived in this world before its time; it was

very small,—very delicate;—the truth at last escaped;—it was not expected to survive,—and the clergyman had been sent for, to baptize it. To describe the revulsion of feeling in those young and loving hearts at these dismal tidings were a vain task; and for some time Jessy Christie, their maid, allowed their tears to flow unrestrained. At last she appealed to Beatrice, whose sobs were heart-rending to the affectionate domestic, her own heart sinking with apprehension to which she dared not give utterance,—fears, from the precarious state of her mistress, of a deeper and darker sorrow on its way to overwhelm them all. She reminded her of the absolute necessity for controlling her feelings, on account of her mother; for whom, she said, the doctor had forbidden the slightest agitation; and warned her that unless they could both promise to be perfectly calm, they could neither be admitted to see her, nor to witness the mournful, yet blessed rite about to be administered; as her mistress, she said, had not been told how unlikely it was that the baby should live; only that on account of its premature birth, it was advisable to have it baptized immediately.

This exhortation had the desired effect.

Beatrice, by a desperate effort over herself, stifled her sobs, and dried her tears. Clasping her little sister in her arms, she restored her to calmness by her whispered words of comfort, and her fond caresses; and soon after this, they were both admitted on tiptoe, into their mother's darkened chamber. One tender kiss of her pale cheek, and one faintly-whispered blessing from her lips, was all that was permitted to each; then their father, silently rising from his chair by the bed, led them into the small adjoining room, where sat the old nurse by the fire with the baby in her lap,—and where stood the clergyman to whose congregation they belonged, ready to admit the unconscious innocent into that visible Church on earth, whence an unseen angel was waiting to bear his enfranchised spirit, "robed, and washed, and sealed, and blessed,"—to join the Church invisible within the veil.

The tears, the irrepressible tears, of the sister who had so anticipated the hour which should give a tender nursling to her loving arms, and saw her prayer thus answered, fell as heavily and as silently as rain, during the brief and solemn rite, but not a sound escaped her lips. It was over, and as they rose from

their knees, the paternal hand of the minister rested for a moment, in voiceless blessing and prayer, on those two young heads. Their father silently kissed them both, then left the room with him; and Beatrice and Helen, kneeling by the low chair of the nurse, softly pressed their lips on the tender cheek of the fragile creature, whose little life, scarce begun, was already ebbing quietly away.

"His eyes are closed, he is asleep, nursey," whispered Helen.

The old woman who had been present at the birth of both the sisters, shook her head, and wiped a tear from her eye.

"He has never opened his eyes, my dear bairn," she said. "He'll open them by-and-bye, in Heaven."

"Oh! nursey, nursey!" sobbed Beatrice, "don't say that. He may live yet,—may he not?"

"Whisht! my lamb!" said the nurse. "Dinna let your dear mamma hear ye. While there's life there's aye hope, Miss Lockhart; but wae's me! it's but a broken reed o' hope this."

"I won't cry," exclaimed Beatrice, struggling with her tears. "Come, Helen, dear, we

must go and get breakfast for papa. I must take dear mamma's place, you know, till she is quite strong again. We must both be careful that everything is as exactly as she liked to have it. We may come again, may we not, nursey, after I have ordered dinner, and been to the store-room, and done all the morning's business?"

"And perhaps the darling, darling baby may be better then," added Helen, her young mind scarcely capable of taking in the idea of death. "I think he *will* get better, Beatrice," she hopefully added, as they stole noiselessly out by another door, without again passing through their mother's room. "Oh! if he do, think how happy we shall be! the delight of having a baby, all our own, to nurse and play with! He *must* get better, Beatrice!"

"Eh, sirs! Mistress Pearson," observed Jessy Christie to the nurse, "eh, sirs! is it no a wonder to see that young crater Miss Lockhart? I'm sure her mamma hersell couldna' do a'thing mair purpose like! She's the mindfu'est, thochtfu'est lassie ever I saw; and no fourteen year ould till Martinmas."

"Troth is she, Jessy lass," replied the matron. "My heart's wae for her, puir lamb!"

"Did ye send a message ower for Mr. and Mistress Lockhart Clephane, Jessy?" she enquired after a pause. It would be a great ease to my mind if we had them here. "Muckle we miss bonny Miss Alexander that was, this day, Jessy."

"Aye do we!" said Jessy. "There's no a Mistress Lockhart Clephane that ever was, fit to dight her shoon. An' a sair heart it'll be to her to hear o' this. Katie gaed ower till Mr. Lockhart Clephane's, but they're no in the toon,—they're aff somewhere,—it's a chance if they be in the nicht."

Half an hour after this colloquy, Jessy was dispatched to summon Beatrice and Helen, that they might once more kiss their infant brother ere he departed. The old nurse saw that the end was very near. Captain Lockhart was in the chamber of his wife, who had sunk asleep; and they dared not go in, or run the risk of disturbing her. To him, as to most men, a young infant was not an object of intense interest. He mourned its inevitable fate more for the sake of the agony it would cause his wife when she came to know it, than from any other feeling. It was on *her* that his solicitude was all centered; it was her startling

weakness, and the evident anxiety of the nurse and doctor respecting her state, which filled him with apprehensions so acute as scarcely to leave room for any other sensation. With the poor young girls it was different; they were unconscious of their mother's danger, and the impending loss of the baby on whom their affectionate hearts were so keenly set, was their first initiation into the mysteries of death and sorrow. As Beatrice, entering the room, glanced upon the little cot, with its delicate white curtains, which it had so delighted her a few days back to see prepared,—that cot which was now to remain empty as before,—it required her utmost efforts to restrain the burst of tears which swelled upwards from her heart. But she *did* restrain it. In awe-struck silence she and Helen knelt once more by the nurse's side, and once more kissed the little cheek, and watched the last faint breathings part the waxen lips. They ceased, and for a few minutes there was a solemn silence.

"My dears," whispered the old nurse at last, "it is all over. Jessy, tak' the young leddies doon the stair."

They silently arose from their knees, and left the room with her. It was not till they

had reached the drawing-room below, and the bright sunshine burst upon them, that both sisters flung themselves in a passion of weeping into the arms of their weeping maid.

"My dear bairns! my darlings! dinna greet for the baby!" sobbed Jessy, as she clasped them to her heart. "He's safe wi' his blessed Redeemer! dinna greet for him."

"But mamma!" exclaimed Beatrice,—"mamma will break her heart! And she cannot even see him! Oh! Jessy, Jessy!—and I had so looked forward to this baby! I should have loved him so dearly! Oh! how hard it is to say—'God's will be done!'"

The hours of that melancholy day dragged slowly on, and now the bright and beautiful summer's evening shed its beams once more upon the dwelling where the previous night they had fallen on such a scene of peace and love. Strange alterations may be wrought in the space of twenty-four hours! They fell now upon the curtained chamber, where Beatrice and Helen had at last been admitted, for a little while, to stand by their mother's bed. She had apparently revived towards evening, and had so earnestly asked for her children, that the nurse felt it would be wrong to refuse

the request. With reiterated assurances to their father, that he might depend upon their prudence, the young girls softly followed him to the room, and silently received and returned the long and tender kisses of their mother; but none of the questions so dreaded by those around were asked them. It might be that the departing spirit was dimly conscious of the release of that young soul whose brief bodily existence had been purchased with his mother's life; or it might be no more than excess of weakness; but scarce a word was audible during that short interview, beyond a low, faint, whispered blessing. She lay for a few minutes with their hands clasped in hers'; then the nurse suggested that the young ladies had best leave their mamma now, lest they should fatigue her; to-morrow, if she had a good night's rest, they should pay her a longer visit.

"Good night, then, darling mamma!" whispered Beatrice.

"Good-night till to-morrow, sweet mamma!" said little Helen.

"God bless my darlings!" was the faint response of the mother. Her arms were clasped round both, as they bent over her pillow, in one long, last, passionate embrace. Then they

gently relaxed their hold, and the children glided from the room.

Night came. Beatrice and Helen had seen their father for a few minutes. He came into the sitting-room to bid them Good-night, and to tell them that their mother seemed to continue better. They retired to their room at the usual hour, their hearts full of that first weight of sadness which lies so heavily on the young, so much more heavily than the old can often imagine. But Helen was speedily asleep, after Jessy had removed their candle. An indefinable, unaccountable sensation interposed between Beatrice and repose. Repeatedly she closed her eyes, heavy and aching with the tears she had shed, but had scarcely began to dose when she suddenly started awake again. At last it appeared to her as if she had slept for some time, and that she was roused by a singular bustle in the house, an opening and shutting of doors, and tread of hasty steps in the passages. In one moment she was wide awake, and sitting erect in bed; her heart throbbing almost to suffocation. It was no mistake. She heard the footsteps again, distinctly, and springing out of her bed, felt for her shoes, and her dressing-gown, determined

to open the door, and ascertain the cause of this disturbance; a thrill of insupportable anguish darting through her heart, like a fiery arrow, as the too probable cause, the increased illness of her mother, suggested itself.

Just as Beatrice, with trembling fingers, had tied the strings of her dressing-gown, the tread of feet became audible near the door of her room, and a voice whispered outside, "See if either of them is awake; but if they are asleep, don't wake them!"

She sprang towards the door, as it was gently and noiselessly opened by Jessy Christie, who started back as if she had seen a spectre when the pale and trembling girl caught her by the arm. Some one stood in the passage with a light, and as Jessy silently led her to the door, Beatrice beheld her aunt, Mrs. Lockhart Clephane, whom it appeared that the report of the message, sent to her house the previous morning, had induced to repair instantly to Morningside, with her husband, upon their late arrival at home that night.

"My dear, dear child!" said that lady, approaching and kissing her, "will you try to be calm?"

"Mamma! mamma!" was all that Bea-

trice's white parched lips could utter. "Is mamma——?" She looked towards Jessy, who could only shake her head and weep.

"Will you, Beatrice, for her sake, be calm?" asked her aunt.

"I will," said Beatrice, endeavouring as she spoke to restrain the nervous trembling which shook her frame from head to foot. "Take me to her." Still clinging to Jessy's arm, she followed her aunt, who preceded them with the light, and gently pushing open the door of the dressing-room, passed her husband, who was standing there near the inner door, and who silently shook his head in answer to the look directed towards him by his wife.

They entered the bed-room, which was pervaded by a strong scent of ether. A low, solemn "*Hush!*" was audible as they approached the side of the bed farthest from the door.

Captain Lockhart stood by the pillow of his dying wife, and the nurse and doctor close by. Their function was at an end. No human aid could avail any further. The last sands of life were escaping from the glass. Pale, still, and unconscious, with closed eyes, and slightly parted lips, she lay before her young daughter,

as the trembling girl was led up to the bed. A strange shadow seemed to have come over that serene countenance,—that "shadow of the grave," whose first sight is an era never to be forgotten, and *one* dread sound alone was audible in the stillness—that sound which none who have once heard can ever mistake again.

Suddenly there was a change. The closed eyes opened,—bright, lustrous, with more than earthly light. The shadow passed from the face; it shone as with a glory. One long, earnest, upward gaze,—one smile of joy and peace ineffable; then the light faded, the eyes fixed,—and the ransomed spirit left its earthly tabernacle, to follow the guide, whom doubtless it had recognised awaiting it at the moment of departure.

"All is over!" said the doctor, breaking the silence with his low solemn voice. Then a shriek of agony,—one piercing shriek, burst upon the hush of the death-bed, and Beatrice fell on her knees, and hid her face in the coverlet.

"Mamma! mamma! my own mamma! Take me with you! do not leave me! She is not dead; she cannot be dead! Mamma! mamma!"

"God help her, poor bairn!" sobbed the old nurse. "God pity her!"

"Amen!" ejaculated the doctor, as he gently raised the almost unconscious girl, and signed to the others to take her from the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

Thy heart is sad to think upon
  Thy mother far away,
Wondering, perchance, now she is gone,
  Who best for thee may pray.
In many a waking dream of love,
Thou see'st her yet upon her knees above:
The vows she breathed beside thee yesternight,
She breathes above thee now, wing'd with intenser might.

Both vespers soft and matins clear
  For thee she duly pays,
Now, as of old, and there as here:
  Nor yet alone she prays.—LYRA INNOCENTIUM

In the afternoon of the following day, Mrs. Lockhart Clephane, who had returned at an early hour in the morning to her house in Edinburgh for the purpose of giving some of the many orders necessary at such a time, came back to Morningside in her carriage, which she directed to wait for her. The front door was opened without knocking by one of the servants, whose eyes were red with weeping;

and in the dining-parlour she found her husband busily engaged in making out lists of the friends to whom it was proper to send intimations of the event which had taken place, and of those who were to be invited to the funeral.

"How is poor Harry?" asked his wife, after having told him of various orders which she had given.

"I think he is a little more composed," was the reply. "I left him at his own request. Several questions I was obliged to ask him, though he gave me *carte blanche* about all the arrangements. He wishes the funeral to take place in the family burying-ground at Kingsconnell churchyard, and that Mr. Malcolm, of St. Michael's, who married them, you remember, Jane?—should be asked to read the Burial Service there. I must apply to old Dr. Grindlay for permission; but that is a mere form."

"Alas! alas!" ejaculated Mrs. Lockhart Clephane, wiping away a tear, "who would have dreamt of this a few days ago? It was but yesterday week that we dined here with them."

"It was," replied her husband, shaking his head. "Nothing goes to my heart like the grief of these poor children. I declare it

is dreadful! You told little Helen yourself, didn't you, Jane?"

"I did," said his lady: "she cried dreadfully, poor little thing."

"But she is, perhaps, scarcely old enough to feel it; at least not for such a length of time. That poor girl Beatrice! Those shrieks and cries of her's last night, after all was over —aye, and for hours after—I can't get them out of my head!"

"Poor girl! Her mother always made her such a companion and friend," said Mrs. Lockhart Clephane, "it is terrible for her, indeed." She had sometimes felt a slight touch of maternal jealousy in contrasting Beatrice with her own daughter of the same age, who was very inferior in personal and mental endowments to her cousin; but, slight at all times, for Mrs. Lockhart Clephane was very good-natured, to the credit of her mother's heart be it said, the feeling was for the present completely in abeyance, and her sympathies all aroused for the young creature so suddenly left motherless.

"I was thinking," she added, after a pause, "of trying if the poor girls would go home with me, Robert? I can't well remain here,

you know, and it is so desolate for them! Would Harry dislike it, do you think?"

"I don't believe he would feel it much one way or other," returned her husband. "I never saw a man so completely sunk, so prostrated by grief. You see this has come upon him like a thunderbolt, for Harry never anticipates evil at any time, and in the present case nobody did——"

"I am not quite sure of *that*," interrupted Mrs. Lockhart Clephane, "I have observed a great alteration in Beatrice's looks within the last two months; I was not sanguine about her, I own."

"Well, at all events, Harry was; and he is overwhelmed, almost stupefied, past caring for anything, I should say. I remained with him, as you know, because I really scarcely thought it safe to leave him alone; but I think he would rather not have had me beside him. He has never asked to see the girls, poor fellow! Once I heard him say to himself,—'Poor motherless children!' but that is the only mention he has made of them. It would be a great kindness to take the poor things home, if they will go."

Mrs. Lockhart Clephane left the room and

stole softly upstairs. In the girls' apartment she found the nurse seated, on a chair by the darkened window, talking in a low and fondling voice to Helen, who sat upon a stool at her feet, her head resting in the old woman's lap. Beatrice occupied a chair by a table, her face hidden in her outstretched arms, which lay upon it, as if in the listless abandonment succeeding violent agitation. She raised her head as her aunt sat silently down beside her, and passed her arm round her waist; then laid it down upon her shoulder. The sight of that young pale face,—the cheeks absolutely blistered with tears, and the eyes scarce able to lift themselves beneath the swelling eyelids and long, wet lashes, nearly upset the composure which Mrs. Lockhart Clephane was so anxious to maintain, if possible. It was a second or two ere she attempted to speak.

"Don't go away, Nurse," at last she said, as Helen crept quietly to her side, and the old woman, who had risen on her entrance, seemed about to leave the room. "Don't go; I want your help. Come here, Nurse. Will you try to persuade Miss Lockhart and Miss Helen to come home with me to Charlotte-square? My

dear loves, your uncle and I both think it will be much better that you should. Your poor dear papa is best left to himself for a little while, and your uncle will be beside him. You shall be as quiet as you like with me; no one shall molest you. Don't you think they had so much better come, Nurse?"

"It would be heartsomer-like for the young leddies, ma'am, nae doot," was the reply.

"You are very kind indeed, Aunt Clephane," faltered Beatrice.

"You *will* come then, love? You are a good girl, thank you."

"You are very kind," again repeated Beatrice, raising her head; "but don't think me ungrateful. I can't! I can't go,—Nursey! don't ask me, please, Aunt Clephane. Papa will want me bye-and-bye."

"My dear child, it will be a relief to him, I know it will, to think that you are both with me for a little while. I only ask for a little while, Beatrice."

"But in a little while, there will be nothing——! I should come back, and find—you know what I mean, Aunt Clephane! I—I can't—I can't leave——Mamma! mamma!

oh! my own mamma!" And yielding to the hysterical agony against which she had struggled for the last few minutes, the poor girl again threw herself forward upon the table, which shook with her heart-rending sobs; while little Helen hid her face in the friendly bosom of the old nurse, who wept in sympathy.

Mrs. Lockhart Clephane could say no more. She did her best to soothe Beatrice, kissed little Helen, and sent to dismiss her carriage, desiring it to return for her in the evening, which it did. Her husband resolved to sleep in the house that night, at all events. He could not feel easy in quitting his brother. "At least," he said, "I shall go to bed if I can persuade him to do the same; but to leave him pacing up and down the room, or sitting for an hour at a time, with his face hidden in his two hands, is what I cannot do." His lady assented, and took her departure, promising to return at an early hour next day. Before she went, she earnestly begged the nurse to persuade the two little girls to go to bed as early as possible; and this it was no difficult task to induce Helen to do, the poor child being completely worn out with crying, and glad to lay her aching head and eyes upon her pillow.

The motherly old woman seated herself by the bed-side, perceiving that little Helen suffered from the nameless but overwhelming nervous terror, which is so apt to seize upon children, and even upon grown people of excitable temperament, in a house of death. Beatrice stole from the room, feeling that relief in total solitude, which even at her age deep grief will induce in a nature of keen sensibility; and descended the stairs to the empty, silent drawing-room.

The blind hung down, and darkened the apartment. Beatrice drew it up, and opened the window; then placed her own stool by the sofa, and seated herself, where she had sat at that very hour two nights before, looking out, as now, into the dewy twilight, and inhaling, as now, the odour of the flowers that grew in the garden without. How long she sat she could not tell,—in that stillness, that tearless stupefaction, which is so much more painful than tears;—thought after thought, memory after memory, chasing each other through her mind, without her being capable of exercising the least controul over them. Her mother's voice was in her ears,—that gentle voice! Some of the very words she had said two

nights before, as they sat together, some trivial sentences, were reiterated again and yet again, as if audibly,—more like *hearing* than thinking. It seemed a dream that she was dead; or rather it was all a dream together. The young mind, so fearfully over-excited, and so exhausted by want of rest, drifted along on a sea of thoughts that were half visions. She was walking in Kingsconnell Pleasance with her mother and Mr. Carmichael;—she was standing before that awfully-beautiful picture; she was kneeling between her mother and her Aunt Helen in St. Michael's Chapel; then, suddenly, by what association it were hard to say, there came across these thoughts the recollections of a whispered colloquy between her Aunt Clephane and Jessy Christie, that afternoon, of which at the time it passed near her she had not taken in one word, though they all returned upon her now as if she heard them still. "I ordered it, Jessy. I gave all proper directions. Crape—you know;—oh! of course very deep,—mourning for a parent." Such was the sentence that seemed to flash across her brain like a barbed dart, and arouse her in an instant from the trance of forgetfulness. She started to her feet, and flung herself upon

the sofa-pillows, heaped as they had been when her mother's head last rested on them; perhaps, in the alarm and confusion of the household, untouched since then. At that moment the door was opened by Jessy, who was anxiously looking for her young lady.

"Miss Lockhart, my dear," she gently whispered, "come to your bed, dear. Ye hae unco' need o' a sleep, I'm sure."

"I will, Jessy, presently," said Beatrice, calmly rising; "but there is one thing you must do for me before I go to bed. I have wished to ask you all day, but I have never been alone with you. Take me, dear Jessy, take me to see—to see mamma!" She clasped Jessy's hands in her's as she spoke, and fixed her eyes upon her with a look of entreaty unutterable in its eagerness.

It was in vain that Jessy implored her to wait till morning light. "I shall see her then too," said Beatrice; "but take me in to-night, dear Jessy—take me, if you love me."

Jessy yielded at last; conducted her to the silent chamber, unlocked the door, and they entered it. The first sight of the dead, even of the best and dearest object of affection, after that dread change has taken place, is to the

young almost unmingled terror; and the affectionate servant trembled at what she had done when she felt the convulsive shuddering that shook the frame of Beatrice, as after one brief glance at what she could scarce at first recognise for her mother's face, she turned and clung to her, as a frightened infant might have done. But this panic was quickly over. Gradually, when she turned and bent over the quiet corpse,—the pale sweet features of that loved countenance grew upon her, as it were, from amidst the ghastly appliances surrounding it. It was her own mother still, and by her side lay slumbering that little waxen form, so unspeakably beautiful in death; for on sinless infancy the last enemy stamps a character of ineffable loveliness and repose. There they lay,—the mother and the child; the former equally unconscious with the latter of all the anguish rending the heart of her first and dearest treasure,—that child of many hopes, and fears, and prayers too soon bereft of the guiding hand, the tender care, which had hitherto been around her path. Wild sobs, streaming tears, broken exclamations of grief, were all of which Beatrice was capable during this first visit to the dead; and

completely worn out as she was by the events of the last two days, she yielded ere long to Jessy's entreaties, and left the room with her, to retire to bed, where she slept, heavily and profoundly, as the young do sleep, under the stunning influence of sorrow.

But on the next day, and the next,—every day, while yet that loved form remained visible to her eyes, Beatrice returned to her mother's room, and passed hours there alone. The old nurse, with a species of superstitious horror, and Mrs. Lockhart Clephane, herself one of those people to whom the very idea of death is fraught with dread, remonstrated with Jessy on having allowed her to go in at all, and on permitting these solitary visits. But the latter, reading her young lady's character more truly than they did, assured them that it would do her good and not harm. "She kenn't weel what she was doing. She wadna' hae ta'en Miss Helen to look at her mamma, and indeed the puir bairn had never sought to see her; but Miss Lockhart was very different. She was a forbye-us kind o' a lassie. Troth it was mair nor she durst tak' upon her to keep Miss Lockhart frae the last sight o' her mamma that she wad ever get on this side o' Jordan.

It would be an ease till her after a' was ower."

Without understanding the grounds of her conviction, Jessy instinctively felt that a highly ideal mind, like that of her young lady, "casteth out fear," in the near approach of those dark realities from which common nature shrinks. It was not a corpse, a cold senseless corpse, appalling to sight and touch, over which Beatrice bent during these solitary hours; on whose marble cheek she pressed her young warm lips; on whose bosom, never insensible of her approach till then, she laid her head and wept. It was her mamma—her own mamma—"sleeping in Jesus;" the mortal frame deserted for a space of its immortal tenant, but destined to rise again in renovated youth and loveliness. She knelt and prayed by her mother's death-bed as she had done by her mother's knee; prayed to that Father in Heaven to whom she knew that her mother's last earthly aspirations had committed her children, in whom she believed that in the unseen world of rest, she was now securely reposing her cares and fears for their future lot. "Perhaps she sees us now," she said. "Perhaps she is permitted to be near her children

still. Oh! if God would let her come to me, I should not be afraid of her. Mamma! my blessed mamma! I thought you would never see your baby, but you see him now. He is with you now;—happy, happy baby! Well might Jessy tell us not to weep for him. But he could not love you as we did. He did not know you like your poor girls. And we have lost you both;—the baby we should have petted and loved; oh! so very dearly!—the mamma who was dearer, sweeter, kinder than words can ever tell. Oh, mamma! mamma! what shall we do without you?" And at these words, the torrent of tears and sobs would again burst forth, and the bereaved young mourner would lean upon the open coffin, clinging to it as if at that moment about to close and hide her mother from her sight for ever.

But Jessy was right. All this, the very recollection of those bursts of passionate weeping, *was* "an ease to her after a' was ower." The hours she passed in that tranquil chamber of death left a balm for many harder, sterner, more cruel sorrows in after years. There was nothing hard or stern there,—there never is in any sorrow inflicted by the hand of God; these elements are of man's infusing alone, in the

cup of his fellow man. Everywhere else in the house, the sense of loss and desolation was brought home to her heart in a thousand shapes and ways; but this holy chamber of the dead was a sanctuary, into which no worldly, no disturbing thought could find entrance. The Dove of peace seemed ever to brood above that bed whence a ransomed spirit had entered the realms of peace. No rebellious feeling could find room in the solemn presence of those white, calm faces,—those eyes for ever closed upon the sights of vanity and sorrow. And still while there before her, "all cold and all serene," her mother did not seem wholly lost. Beatrice, like many a mourner, never felt in its bitter reality the bereavement she had sustained till her watch in the chamber of death was over, and the relentless coffin-lid had shut up those faces, beautiful to the last, in darkness for the grave.

CHAPTER XIII.

"O ye wha are sae guid yoursell,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebour's fauts and folly!
Whose life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supply'd wi' store o' water,
The heapet happer's ebbing still,
And still the clap plays clatter."

ROBERT BURNS.

IT was a beautiful afternoon about the middle of the month of August, which succeeded the death of Mrs. Henry Lockhart, when Mrs. Sempill and Miss Muirhead sat together in the drawing-room at Sempilltower. Their quiet, low-voiced conversation, as the one plied her knitting-needles, and the other worked at a worsted rug, was broken by the sound of wheels driving in at the gateway, and by the gleeful shout of one youthful voice echoed by another.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Sempill,

"what can have brought the boys home already?"

She had scarcely uttered the words, when the door was opened by a fine manly boy of fourteen, followed by another, a couple of years younger, the two eldest children of her son Walter, who, it may be remembered, had married early in life, and was settled in England. His sons were now spending their holidays at their grandfather's, in a state of beatitude only to be conceived by schoolboys let loose in a country demesne, with liberty and indulgence commensurate to the means of enjoyment placed within their reach. They had been permitted that morning, as on several previous, to accompany the Major and Captain to the moors, and had now returned at an unusually early hour.

"My dear Walter," said Mrs. Sempill, as her grandsons entered, "what brings you and Philip home just now?"

"Why, grandmamma," replied the boy, "Uncle Reginald was so very kind as to send us home in the dog-cart, which is to return for him and Uncle Major; for you must know we have made another engagement for the afternoon, if you have no objection?"

"*Another* engagement?" exclaimed Miss Muirhead with a smile.

"You are two gay gentlemen," returned Mrs. Sempill; "but if Uncle Reginald had no objection, I am sure I shall have none."

"Oh, no! he had no objection," said the younger boy in a joyous tone. "We are going to Kingsconnell, if you please, grandmamma?"

"You see, grandmamma," pursued Walter, "as we were driving off this morning, we met one of the grooms from Kingsconnell, with a message from Arthur Bertram. You know he's begun to shoot this year, and it seems yesterday he sprained his ankle in jumping over a moss-hole, so he can't get out to-day, and he sent to ask if we would come home a little earlier, and spend the afternoon with him; and Uncle Reginald said we might. So we must go and dress, Phil., for we are not quite clean, are we, Aunt Penny?"

"Not *quite*, indeed;" replied their aunt. "Did you and Arthur Bertram use to be much together at Harrow, Walter?"

"Why you know he's in a higher form, quite beyond me, Aunt Penny. He is two years and more older than I am. But he's a capital fellow! every body likes Bertram.

Phil., there, and Hugh are near an age; but Hugh has not been to school yet. It would make you laugh to hear how he chatters French! I have forgotten my French since I went to Harrow."

"And *I* can't speak a word of French," added Philip triumphantly.

"And Miss Bertram, she talks French so fast with her governess! And German! The governess is a German lady. And oh! she is *so* pretty, Aunt Penny!" exclaimed Walter with enthusiasm.

"Who?—the German lady?" asked his aunt.

"No, to be sure! Miss Bertram I mean," replied the boy. "Oh! *so* pretty! but they keep her so strict! They'll hardly let her speak to us, which is very tantalizing. But come, Phil., we must get ready."

"Penny, my dear, ring the bell," said Mrs. Sempill, "I must order the phaeton for the boys."

"Dear no! grandmamma," exclaimed Walter, "we'll walk; won't we, Phil.?"

"No, my boy, you have had walking enough all morning, I warrant me," replied his grandmother.

"But Adam and the Horses won't like to be ordered out just now, I daresay," said Walter. "Uncle Reginald calls the carriage, Adam and the Horses, you know, grandmamma; for he says Adam's word is law about it."

"But I am not going to order Adam and the Horses," said Mrs. Sempill smiling, "only Adam's son, and the grey pony."

"Ah, well! you are very kind, grandmamma, nobody is so kind as you, except grandpapa."

"And every body else at Sempilltower," exclaimed Philip. "Every body is kind."

"Well said, my bonny boy!" said Mrs. Sempill. "I hope every body is. Who drove you home from the moors, boys?"

"David Bryce did," replied Walter. "He went this morning; and Carstairs, the keeper, rode the dun cob."

"He's such a funny man, is David Bryce!" exclaimed Philip. "Only I don't know the meaning of half he says. I wish I could understand Scotch."

"I am learning it very fast," said Walter. "Oh! grandmamma," he added, turning round just as he reached the door, "he did make us laugh so to-day, coming home! He told us

such a funny story! Only he says we must not mention it to Uncle Major, for he won't be pleased to hear of it. It was about one day when Uncle Major shot Julius Cæsar, grandmamma; do you remember it? Aunt Penny, do you?"

"Yes, my boy," replied Mrs. Sempill. "We both do very well."

"Only fancy! shooting Julius Cæsar! Come along, Phil. Phil., shall you ever have such a shot as that? How should you like to have a shot at Julius Cæsar, Phil.?" And the laughing boys ran up stairs.

"We remember the day Julius Cæsar was shot, don't we Penny?" said Mrs. Sempill.

"Aye, do we, Lilly!" replied Aunt Penny, shaking her head sadly.

"My poor Helen!" exclaimed Mrs. Sempill, her eyes filling with tears. "I think I see her now; her white gown glancing through the trees, setting off that evening, to bid goodbye to her sister. God help us! we are short-sighted creatures! Little did they think it was to be their last parting!"

"Little indeed!" echoed Miss Muirhead. "It is like a dream to me even now, Lilly. I can hardly bring myself to believe that that sweet creature is gone."

"My poor Helen!" repeated Mrs. Sempill. "Her letters make one's very heart ache,—so sad—so changed from what they used to be!—she said George was very kind to her when the news came. I am thankful for that. But he does not understand Helen as Reginald would have done. It will be a sore heart to her, Penny, when she hears that Harry Lockhart has applied for another ship, and means to break up the home where she and her sister lived so happily together."

"It will indeed, Lilly. And a sorer heart still to think of his having arranged to leave his poor girls at the Grange."

"Yes," said Mrs. Sempill, "it is not the home one would have selected for them. God help motherless girls, Penny! But what else could he do, poor man? It is natural he should wish to go to sea again. He has no occupation on shore, nothing to take his heart off his heavy, heavy sorrow. And no other home seems to have been opened to them. To be sure, there is Miss Alexander, Penny," she added after a brief pause. "Do you think she will not offer to take the poor girls? It seems natural she should; so particular as she is about her own Church too. It would be a

far more eligible home for them than the Grange, I am sure."

"No, Lilly, I am sorry to say she does not mean to do it. Yesterday when I was at St. Michael's, I called there, and found Miss Carruthers alone, and she opened out much more than she ever does when Miss Alexander is at home. A kind-hearted soul she is! and she was crying bitterly about Mrs. Henry Lockhart; and told me that a discussion had taken place with Miss Alexander on this very subject; she had ventured to hint at a hope that she would offer to take charge of the girls, poor lambs! And she declared she had no such intention."

"Dear me! dear me! I am grieved to hear it. You see she never could bear the Lockharts."

"One would have thought that would have been an additional reason for keeping the girls from them. But she is determined to have nothing to do with their up-bringing; for it seems Mr. Malcolm, her own minister, and an excellent man they say he is, had put it to her most anxiously; and received the same answer. Miss Carruthers says he cannot bear to think of the girls living where they cannot

get regularly to their own church, and be under his eye. He is deeply concerned about them. Natural he should! I had all this in my mind to tell you when I came home, and something sent it out of my head."

"I am greatly distressed to hear this,—greatly!" said Mrs. Sempill.

"Grandmamma," interrupted Walter, opening the door, in all the glory of spotless white trowsers and snowy collar, his honest, open countenance glowing like a damask rose through the bronze which was the effect of his moorland excursions, "grandmamma, I see Watty, the son of Adam, is almost ready; and Aunt Penny, there's *such* a dear friend of your's coming in at the gateway."

"Who is that, my boy?" asked his aunt. "Is it Dr. Grindlay, or Miss Grace Lockhart?"

"Guess again, Aunt Penny. Guess again. Do you give it up?"

"'Tis Miss Mark, Aunt Penny," shouted Philip. "I think she's very cross; I wonder you have such dear friends?"

"Miss Menie Mark!" exclaimed Aunt Penny,—not in an accent of intense delight.

"Miss Menie Mark!" echoed Mrs. Sempill in a tone of resignation;—then, catching

Walter's laughing eye, she gently added, "my dear boys, Miss Menie Mark is a very old friend of Aunt Penny's and mine; and we are always glad to see our friends, especially, Walter, when they have no carriages, and are so good as to take the trouble of walking to see us, that makes a great difference. It is so easy to pay visits in a carriage."

At this crisis the door was opened by John Chalmers, at once to announce the phaeton, and to usher in Miss Menie; who entered, looking as dogmatical as usual, and attired, as usual, in the tight grey silk gown and obstinate shawl.

"I see you were going out, ma'am," said she to Mrs. Sempill, as soon as their mutual greetings had been exchanged. "Don't let me deteen you."

"Not I, Miss Menie," replied Mrs. Sempill; "it is only the phaeton going to take the boys—"

"I have no wish to be in the way, ma'am;" interrupted Miss Menie. "It's a peety to delay your drive on my account."

"But I am not going to drive, Miss Menie," repeated Mrs. Sempill. "The boys are going over to Kingsconnell, that is all."

"To Kingsconnell, ma'am? to enquire for the young gentleman, I suppose? It's been an awful accident."

"What young gentleman?" "What accident?" "When did it happen?" was repeated in various accents of wonder and alarm by all the party.

"Have ye not heard of it, ma'am?—the second young gentleman, Mr. Arthur?—the Clachan has been ringing with it. I've not seen Dr. Chisholm, for he went straight from Kingsconnell last night to attend a case ten miles on the other side of St. Michael's; and he's not come back. At least if he could get away from Kingsconnell he was to go, but it was a chance."

"But why? I don't understand," exclaimed Mrs. Sempill. "Can anything have happened that we have not heard, Penny? Tell us about it, pray, Miss Menie."

"There's various accounts, ma'am. Some says he fell, leaping that wild horse they let him ride, and has broken his leg. Miss Babie thinks *that* was the message her brother received; but she was drinking tea at the Manse when the groom came for the doctor, and he was off before she came back; and the servant

lass is dull of hearing, and gave a lame account of the story when Miss Babie questioned her. Other some says again that the young gentlemen were out shooting, and that Mr. Arthur overloaded his gun, and it blew up, and nearly carried off his arm. And in *my* opinion he's too young and rash to be trusted with a gun. But then, again, there's a far worse story than that; and I'm sorry to say I had it from good authority."

"And what in the world is it?" eagerly asked Aunt Penny, while the boys pressed round the narrator, as she made a solemn pause at this part of her tale.

"I hardly like to name it," quoth Miss Menie, "but it's confidently asserted that it was his eldest brother's gun, Mr. William's, that went off and shot Mr. Arthur. And the people in the Clachan are beginning to remember that dreadful old story,—and——"

"Grandmamma," exclaimed Walter, "you know it must be all a pack of lies,—for——"

"My dear Walter," said Mrs. Sempill in a reproving tone.

"I didn't mean anything uncivil, ma'am," and Walter blushing deeply turned with an apologetic air to Miss Menie,—"but only that

somebody has been humbugging the people at the what-d'ye-call-it? — the village — down there; for Arthur Bertram has not broken his leg, nor blown himself up with his gun, nor been shot by Mr. Bertram,—only sprained his ankle;—that is all, I assure yon; and Phil. and I are just going off to spend the afternoon with him."

"Oh! indeed, Mr. Walter," responded Miss Menie, in the tone of one who was not so easily to be put down, "they may have kept it very quiet, but you'll spend no afternoons with Mr. Arthur Bertram to-day, take *my* word for it."

"We'll soon see that," said Walter. "Good bye, Miss Mark; I'll bring you back a particular account of the blowing-up, or the shooting, or whatever it was. Why? what a set of gulls they must be down at the what's-his-name."

"The '*Clakkan*'!" suggested Philip.

"Ah! yes, the *Clakkan*. Blown up with a gun!—Did you ever? Good-bye, Grandmama, and Aunt Penny. Come along, Phil."

"Mr. Walter's a positive young gentleman," observed Miss Menie, as the youths took their departure, "but depend upon it, Mistress

Sempill, there's a little more in this business than he's disposed to allow. Kingsconnell's an unlucky place."

Mrs. Sempill and Aunt Penny, conjointly and severally, endeavoured to bring home to Miss Menie's comprehension the fact that in the present instance, their authority was a little more to be relied on than her's; but finding that her convictions were immovable as inscriptions on a rock, and that the sight of Arthur Bertram at that moment would hardly have sufficed to shake her belief in his desperately wounded condition, they were at last fain to desist from the fruitless attempt. The Kingsconnell family were, in fact, at that moment public property, and shared the usual fate of notoriety of all kinds, in having a degree of publicity attached, not only to all they did,—but, a widely different matter, all they were *said* to do, which would have very much astonished themselves had they known it. Having proved the tale of young Arthur's misfortunes to her own satisfaction, Miss Menie proceeded for some time longer to enlarge on that, and similar topics, in a tone of self-satisfied dogmatism and absolute assurance, sufficient, as Miss Muirhead afterwards declared, "to provoke a saint." But

little relief was afforded to the weary listeners by the change from one subject of discussion to another, since none could be found or invented in which Miss Menie would not have discovered a peg whereon to hang a contradiction.

At last, just as even Mrs. Sempill's patience began to wax thread-bare, and she privately wondered how much longer the infliction was to endure, an unexpected deliverer made his appearance in the shape of Mr. Carmichael, whom Aunt Penny, looking out of the window, announced that she saw coming up the approach.

"In that case, ladies!" quoth Miss Menie, rising from her seat,—"I'll wish ye a very good day."

"But why, Miss Menie?" asked Mrs. Sempill, "Mr. Carmichael does not frighten you away, surely?"

"I thought, Ma'am," replied Miss Menie, "that may be ye had been aware that Mr. Carmichael and me were not on speaking terms."

"No, indeed, not I," exclaimed both ladies in a breath. "How was it, Miss Menie?" added Miss Muirhead?—"We were much concerned, certainly, not to see you in church for some Sundays back, and to hear that you had

been attending the meeting-house at Gatesford; —but"——

"As to my leaving the church, Miss Penelope,"—interrupted Miss Menie, "I had great reason, no doubt, (as too many besides me have, ladies, though *you* may not hear of it, knowing how ye pawtronise Mr. Carmichael,) to be dissatisfied with the doctrine preached there. There's too much said on the subject of works in Kingsconnell pulpit now-a-days! but I was in a manner driven from the church by Mr. Carmichael's uncivil conduct, in making *me* the subject of his remarks from the pulpit."

"*You,* Miss Menie?—Mr. Carmichael?—Oh! dear me, you must be under some strange mistake," exclaimed Mrs. Sempill.

"No mistake in the case, Mistress Sempill," returned Miss Menie, with an air of calm superiority, "there could be no mistake. It was very well known in the parish that I had had a difference of opinion with Mistress Pyper, and that words had run high between us; but I believe nobody ever doubted which side the right was on. However, if people close their ears to reason and common sense, like the deaf adder to the voice of the charmer, one can only treat them with contempt. And that was no

reason why Mr. Carmichael should preach three sabbath-days running on the dissension between Paul and Barnabas,—till I declare the very school-bairns had the impudence to glance at me when he read out his text; I had enough of *him* after that I think, and I've no manner of doubt that he's very sensible of the reason why I've been obliged to drop his acquaintance and leave his church."

And with this magnanimous declaration of her sentiments, Miss Menie took leave; meeting Mr. Carmichael on the turret-stair, and rustling past him in all the dignity of the *cut* direct, and with the full conviction of his consciousness of guilt, and confusion at the sight of her. Mr. Carmichael, who it need scarcely be added, was innocent of any such Quixotic design as attempting to mollify Miss Menie's temper by means of his pulpit oratory, and who barely knew Mrs. Pyper by name, received, with a mixture of amusement and pastor-like regret, the news of his imputed offences from the ladies of Sempilltower, and disclaimed the idea of either belligerent having sat for the portrait of St. Paul or St. Barnabas. He had never heard of the "difference of opinion" which Miss Menie conceived to be so celebrated,

and had been a good deal at a loss to account for her withdrawal of all notice from him; but the subject which just at that time lay nearest Mrs. Sempill's heart, was likewise more interesting to the young clergyman, and he speedily lost all recollection of Miss Menie's injuries in discussing the mournful death of Mrs. Henry Lockhart, and the probable consequences of their bereavement to her daughters. He had never forgotten the interest excited in his mind by her and them, during the previous autumn; and amongst the many who had deeply lamented Beatrice, his sorrow had been greater and more abiding than the short period of their acquaintance would in most cases have given risen to. When at last, after a prolonged visit, he took leave of the gentle old ladies, and pursued his way to call at Kingsconnell, it was with a mind full of recollections of the day when he had escorted the party from the Grange thither; and sadly contrasting the spring-tide of life, youth, and prosperity, which now filled that dwelling, with the blight and the desolation which had fallen upon another.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Yet hath Sir Proteus, for that's his name,
Made use and fair advantage of his days;
His years but young, but his experience old;
His head unmellowed, but his judgment ripe;
And in a word (for far behind his worth
Come all the praises that I now bestow),
He is complete in feature, and in mind,
With all good grace to grace a gentleman."

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

REVOLVING these thoughts as he walked, Mr. Carmichael had approached the gate of Kingsconnell, when he was startled from his reverie by a voice which hailed him, as the tread of a horse's feet came up behind.

"How are you, Carmichael?" said the rider, a tall and elegant young man, suddenly checking his speed, and springing to the ground. "You are on your way to Kingsconnell, are you not?"

"I was, Bertram," replied the clergyman,

cordially returning his warm shake of the hand, "but my visit was more intended for you than any one else, I believe, so that I need not proceed, since you are not at home."

"But I shall be, shortly," answered the other. "I am on my way home, after a very long ride, so pray come along. It is an age since I have seen you."

"Not above four days, to the best of my recollection," returned Mr. Carmichael, smiling.

"True, I have *seen* you within that time," said the young man, passing his horse's bridle over his arm, and walking by the side of his friend up the avenue which they had now entered; "but we have not had a talk together for a much longer period; and now," looking at his watch, "we have two hours to spare before dinner, which is at seven. You will dine with us, of course?"

"Not to-day, Bertram, many thanks. I have several poor families to visit this evening."

"Let them wait one day, Carmichael. Pray dine with us to-day. Don't refuse me. I believe we are to be quite alone."

"I should have been truly happy to do so, Bertram, but you must excuse me to-day. Two of the visits I have to pay to-night it

would be wrong to delay, and you would not wish me to purchase the pleasure of your society with an uneasy conscience. I dined three hours ago, and shall not be at home till late."

"I am very sorry for it," replied William Bertram, "but I cannot, certainly, withstand the plea of your conscience. How hard you labour now, Carmichael!"

"I *ought* to labour hard," returned the clergyman, "the charge of immortal souls is no light one, Bertram!"

"And you are happy, satisfied with your position, are you, Carmichael? Is there nothing in it for which you would reject it now were the choice offered you again?"

"So far as it is, I trust, my Master's service, and the noblest, if one of the most awfully responsible of human tasks; no, I think I can safely say there is not."

"But so far as it is something else than these," persisted the young man," "there is? Is that what you mean me to understand?"

"No, Bertram; you are going beyond my meaning. You know I have no reserves with you; and have said more to you on many subjects than I ever did to any other human

being; but I should over-step the truth if I allowed you to suppose that I went so far. To you I do not attempt to deny that the practical working of the Church of Scotland differs from the beau ideal of my early fancy when I entered it, biassed, no doubt, by early education and habits. I scarcely knew any other Church at that time. Now I cannot conceal that I feel a *want* in it, or rather more wants than one."

"One is, the Genevan platform, is it not, Carmichael?" asked young Bertram, with a smile. "You are no admirer of democracy."

"I must honestly confess, I am not," replied Mr. Carmichael. "I like to *look up*. I prefer being under authority."

"And another is—the barren ritual—the——"

"The stripping away of every external form, till the feeling of devout reverence has in many cases been stripped away likewise? Yes, our reformers went too far. They did away with too much. I cannot deny it. But let that pass, Bertram. The Church of Scotland is the Church of my fathers, and *was*—whether it would have been now or not,—the Church of my deliberate choice; and within

its pale I am bound to discharge my appointed task! I must not look beyond it."

They had now approached the road which turned off to the stables, and here, meeting a groom exercising a horse, William Bertram gave his to him.

"Master Arthur's horse will have a sinecure for some days, I take it," observed he as he did so.

"How is Arthur?" enquired Mr. Carmichael.

"Very well in health," replied William; "but nailed to the sofa by a bad sprain, which he does not bear too patiently; though fortunately it was entirely his own fault."

"You would be a little surprised if I were to tell you what an Eteocles and Polynices affair the good people of the Clachan have made out of the said sprain, as I have just been informed at Sempilltower," said Mr. Carmichael smiling.

"Ah! indeed? What do they say? that *I* caused it?"

"Worse, ten thousand times." And Mr. Carmichael proceeded to relate to his highly-amused auditor the terrible tales which Mrs. Sempill and Aunt Penny had just retailed to him. The young man laughed heartily.

"Why, Carmichael," he exclaimed, "one must be very cautious, I see. I had no conception that we were so closely watched. This Krähwinkel sort of spirit is a new study in human nature to me, as I never was of much consequence in the world before, and never lived in a country-neighbourhood as a home."

"True, and you are the last novelty here just now; and one, too, of rather an uncommon description. To have a family at Kingsconnell to talk about at all, is something quite new to the present generation."

"Yes," said young Bertram gravely, "and there are other reasons besides that. Come, Carmichael, since you will not dine with us, don't let us waste our time in a formal visit to the drawing-room regions. We can get to my room, you know, by the terrace."

They passed through the iron gates, and turned off from the principal entrance to the stone terrace which ran along the side of the house, and which was now in the most exquisite order, as indeed was every thing else about the place; the warm, soft air, loaded with the perfume of the climbing plants which grew upon the balustrade on the outside, and the

exotics which were ranged in tubs and pots along the inside of it.

Pausing ere they reached the sashed door, formerly mentioned as opening on the terrace, the two young men leant over the balustrade, and looked down upon the flowery, bowery Pleasance below, and the fair prospect of wood, lawn, and river beyond.

"It is a beautiful scene," exclaimed William Bertram, after a pause. "And yet *there*, Carmichael,"—and he pointed with his riding-whip in the direction of a clump of old trees, far beneath—"*There* is the site of the desecrated burial-ground,—the scene of the Widow's Curse. And had that curse not been fulfilled, I, at all events, perhaps you, would never have stood here to talk of it. Will it go on working? Shall you ever, I wonder, Carmichael, stand here when that question has been answered, and remember the day that I asked it?"

Mr. Carmichael shuddered. "My dear Bertram," he exclaimed; "that subject, once matter of fanciful discussion, more than anything else, between you and me, assumes a different aspect now; and I would earnestly counsel you not to let it haunt your mind, or mention it to others."

"There is little danger of that," returned William, "save to yourself; nor is there much of the other. 'Time and the hour' are too much with us all, and youth and life carry one too swiftly on, to admit of such thoughts assuming a very defined shape. It is a subject only, as yet, recalled to me now and then by some incident which shows that it dwells likewise in the minds of others. Confess now, Carmichael, that any event of a tragical nature is more easily credited as having occurred here to one of this fated family, than it would be if invented respecting any other house in the country? The absurdity you have just related to me, simply laughable as it is, is a plain proof of that, a plain proof of the deeply-rooted faith in a *Deus Ultor*."

"That there *is* such a faith, and on good ground," said Mr. Carmichael, "who shall deny? But though an avenging, He is not a *re*venging God. A God of Justice, He is also a God of infinite mercy and love; and it seems to me, Bertram, that our Calvinistic creed tends too much to narrow the limits of these blessed attributes, and cause them to be lost sight of in the sterner. This to me is the greatest of those wants to which we lately alluded."

"I," said the young man, with a grave smile, "am no Calvinist, Carmichael. Nor, perhaps—you would say——"

"Not yet, alas!" replied Mr. Carmichael, answering what had been left unspoken. "But I do not, and never shall despair of you, Bertram. The unhappy bias your mind has of late taken is not infidelity, it is only doubt, the gropings of a darkened understanding after the light."

"It is;" said William? "'The desire of the moth for the star.' But the star is far from the moth. And yet, at times, Carmichael, 'almost thou persuadest me.' I desire to find the light. I would give much,—all,—I think,—all I have to give at this moment, in exchange for your earnest, devoted, self-denying faith. But I cannot believe as you do, and as I once did ere I began to reason and to doubt."

"Not yet, I say again, Bertram. But the light will arise upon your darkness. Where there are intense desire of truth, and natural high-mindedness, and purity of life like yours, it were sinful to despair. But it may be, in the mysterious providence of God, that the light, as it has happened to others, may only

be admitted at last through the chinks and ruins of the fair fabric of earthly happiness. And if possible in no other way, it is the part of one who loves your soul to pray that it may be, even in that. How strongly our present conversation reminds me," he added after a pause, "of one upon a subject nearly connected with this, which I held in this house last autumn with one who is now departed in peace and hope, I cannot doubt, to that place where the dark things of this life are all made plain."

The curiosity and interest of young Bertram were excited by this remark, and Mr. Carmichael went on to speak of her who, beyond any other woman he had ever met with, had made the deepest impression upon his mind; of her sweetness, her grace, her mild and seraphic countenance; of the singular talent and imagination of the young Beatrice, and the devoted affection subsisting between her and her mother. He spoke as he felt, with the deepest sympathy and warmest interest of the young girl; and went on to relate some particulars of their visit to Kingsconnell after Sir Peter's death. While he talked they had left their position on the terrace, and entered

by the sashed-door to the octagon apartment, which was now fitted up as the private sitting-room of Mr. Bertram. In the midst of its luxurious furniture, profusion of books, and many tokens of refined and cultivated taste, the gentle nature of the young man had induced him to retain the old and badly-painted picture of Sir Peter's children, in its former place. On being made acquainted with the subject of it, he had refused to suffer its removal, not a little to the surprise and even indignation of his mother, Lady Bertram, who had bestowed much pains on the appointments of her son's apartments, and who justly pronounced this picture out of keeping with everything else in the room. No matter, William had replied, he should never know an hour's peace in the room if he felt that he had displaced the old occupants; and to this fanciful argument Lady Bertram had finally been forced to yield. He now lay back in his reading-chair, gazing at the group depicted there, while Mr. Carmichael spoke of the interest that picture, or rather its mournful history, had excited in Mrs. Henry Lockhart.

"I shall now," said William, "have an additional motive for feeling a regard for what

every one else pronounces a vile daub; but which to me is eloquent in a whole history of domestic tragedy. And I shall institute a search, or cause the housekeeper to do so, for the sampler of which you tell me, with the name of Mary Bertram upon it. I trust no one has been sufficiently heartless to destroy it! Strange, is it not, Carmichael, the small number of people one meets with in the world, who feel the pathos that lies at times in household trifles such as these? And yet what pathos it is!—I shall be curious to see this sweet girl," he added. "You tell me she was so fascinated by that picture, and that you mentioned Arthur's singular resemblance to it?"

"I did," said Mr. Carmichael. "You know it is very striking. Even Sir Thomas remarked it, the first time he saw the picture, when he came here after Sir Peter's death, before he knew whose it was."

"Ah!" exclaimed William. "Really? You never told me that before, Carmichael. That accounts for my father's positively refusing to see the likeness now, when any one remarks it; and also for his having banished the picture to that dark corner in the library."

"One can hardly wonder," said Mr. Carmichael, "at his disliking to have that beautiful boy identified in any way with a thing which has such a history attached to it."

"No, certainly; even although he scouts the very mention of any such traditions. But that is the usual course of feelings of the sort. Arthur is—will be,—certainly,—a model of beauty. I can scarcely fancy any face more perfect, or a figure promising to be more so. He is curiously unlike Hugh and me."

"And yet, though not alike in features, there is a strong family resemblance," said Mr. Carmichael. "I think I should know you anywhere for brothers."

The young man to whom he spoke, if not regularly handsome, was singularly interesting in appearance. He was remarkably, indeed unusually, tall, being considerably upwards of six feet high; but his figure, though very slight, had all the grace and elasticity of well-knit limbs, and conveyed no idea of weakness or over-growth. He looked the very personification of young and vigorous manhood. There was an expression of mingled thought and sweetness in his face, which was of that shape Sir Joshua Reynolds loved to paint;

the breadth across the eyes gradually narrowing down to a small and rounded chin, which, with the peculiar refinement of the mouth, and its beautiful smile, imparted a character of almost feminine—not effeminate,—purity and gentleness to the countenance. His eyes, which were blue, were not remarkable either for size or brilliancy, but full of an expression of habitual thought, and almost dreamy meditation. His forehead was beautiful; white as marble,—high, but broad in proportion to its height, and particularly full in those regions where phrenologists place the organs of ideality and wonder; and his brown and waving hair was of a singularly fine and soft texture. No portrait of William Bertram could have been complete in its individuality without including his hands, which were particularly graceful, long, slender, and white as a woman's, but full of a character of their own, which corresponded with his whole appearance. It was, altogether, a form and aspect indicative of a nervous and highly-imaginative temperament, and of a nature full of sweet and gentle impulses; more attractive, perhaps, than much more perfect beauty might have been.

So thought Mr. Carmichael, as with the

fine taste in personal appearance, and in physiognomy, which belongs only to the refined and ideal cast of mind, he looked at his young friend, and felt that as yet, at all events, there was infinitely more to admire in him than in the glowing, passionate, more human, and less spiritual, beauty of young Arthur.

"You are labouring hard in your own way too, I see, Bertram," he observed, examining some of the books and papers which crowded the table beside his seat.

"Yes," answered William. "I am reading for honours, you know. I sit very late over my books."

"Take care," said Mr. Carmichael; "don't sit too late, Bertram. Don't injure your health."

"*My* health! my dear Carmichael. Did you ever know me have a day's illness?" exclaimed William, laughing. "I am invulnerable. An Achilles—so far as health is concerned."

"Well, well, very true—but Achilles after all——"

"I think it will not be reading for honours that will wound Achilles' heel, in this case," said William, filling up the pause his friend had

made. "I hope to do great things; and then, when I leave Cambridge, I must travel farther than I have ever yet done. I have the travelling mania very strong upon me, certainly. Oh! if *you* could but go with me, Carmichael!"

"I should desire no better, if so it might be," replied the other. "And then, when you have satisfied yourself with wandering, Bertram, I suppose you will turn your mind to public life?"

"Not willingly, I think. My father's wishes evidently point that way; but as yet, I have no such ambition. I would not cross him; but it will not be from personal motives, if I do; unless I alter strangely. No! books and nature are as yet all in all to me."

"And Arthur! I have lost sight of him so much between childhood and youth. What are Sir Thomas's views with regard to him? and what are his own?"

"Arthur," said William, "has more ambition, more passion, in his character than I possess. He is a boy for whom I feel almost more than a brother's love; one of those erring and repenting creatures who excite such a strong degree of attachment, kept alive by the alternations of hope and anxiety. Even

his personal beauty renders me uneasy; for my mother and little Emily are not judicious on that subject. But I have not answered your question. My father intends him, of course, for Cambridge in the first place,—and after that, I rather imagine, for the diplomatic line. Having followed it himself for so many years, he wishes one of his sons to do the same; and on that head I am impracticable."

"I should think so," replied Mr. Carmichael, smiling. At this moment the sound of the dressing-bell was audible through the long passages of the house. He arose from his seat, but paused to take up a book which lay beneath some others on the table. It was a volume of Shelley.

"You would rather not see that book on my table, Carmichael," observed William Bertram with a smile. "But you have read him?"

"I read everything," said Mr. Carmichael. "How can a clergyman understand the human heart as it is his duty to do, unless he knows all the avenues to it? But, dear Bertram, you are right. I *would* gladly see almost any other poet on your table rather than this."

"I do not agree with him, Carmichael. I read him for the sake of the exquisite poetry."

"I know. But such studies foster the painful habit of doubt; the restless dashing of the mind against the iron problems of existence, which nothing but the *one* solvent—faith—can avail to encounter. However, Bertram, this is not the time for an argument on that point."

"No, but will you return to-morrow, Carmichael? Will you dine here to-morrow? You can't? Why? Next day then?"

"I shall be most happy next day; at the usual hour, I suppose?"

"No, oh no! come two hours earlier; as much earlier as you can. Come *here*, and let us have a long talk together. I wish you could convince me, Carmichael. I am not willingly a sceptic, nor happy in unbelief."

"No," said Mr. Carmichael. "God never gave you the mind and heart he has done, to waste and wither in the blighting atmosphere of doubt. *I* cannot convince you, Bertram; but if my prayers be heard, a mightier than I will, in His own good time. I shall be with you as early as I can on Friday. Till then, farewell."

The young man remained standing by the sashed-door where his friend had left him, long after his departure, plunged in meditation, from which he was only aroused by the en-

trance of his servant from his dressing-room, to know if he meant to dress. Mr. Carmichael, the while, pursued his way, which led him from Sir Thomas Bertram's demesne to several poor cottages beyond the park. One of these contained a young man dying of consumption, who had through the course of his tedious illness, received many kind visits from the pastor; to whom it was now very plain that he would not have many more to bestow upon him. But the time, the exhortations, and the prayers, which he had already given him had been blessed to the soul of the expiring youth; and as he listened to the faint accents in which the voice so soon to be silenced spoke of faith and hope beyond the grave, and watched the glow which lighted up the sunken and sharpened features whilst listening to a few words from the Book of Life, the heart of the devoted minister reverted, with a mournful sense of contrast, from the hovel of the poor, unlettered, dying peasant, to the luxurious apartment of the gifted heir of Kingsconnell, whose cup of life, and youth, and enjoyment, was full to the very brim. And as he mentally owned that in the sight of the angels now waiting for the soul of the ransomed penitent, the state of the

peasant was incomparably more blessed than that of the high-born youth, his spirit ascended in a fervent prayer to God that the light of revealed truth might arise upon the mind of him he so dearly loved, and that he might be delivered from the bondage of doubt and error, even if need were, by the sharp arrows of affliction.

CHAPTER XIX.

But thou, my sister, doomed to be
  The last leaf which, by Heaven's decree
Must hang upon a blasted tree;
  Be strong:—be worthy of the grace
Of God, and fill thy destined place;
  A soul, by force of sorrows high
Uplifted to the purest sky,
  Of undisturbed humanity!

WORDSWORTH.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF BEATRICE LOCKHART'S TO HER AUNT HELEN:—

"August 25th, 1821.

* * * * "AND so it is all settled, dearest Aunt Helen. Papa is appointed to the Ajax, and must be at Portsmouth in six weeks' time. In one month we are to leave this house for ever. My Uncle Clephane has undertaken to dispose of the remainder of papa's lease of it, and to sell the furniture, all except some things which are to be sent to the Grange.

* * * * * * *

"The days seem to fly, each one quicker than the last. Oh! Aunt Helen, to think of returning to the Grange, where we were all so happy last year! No mamma now to befriend us—no happy home to look forward to! All gone,—mamma, and home, and papa.—And never to come back here any more—never to see this house again. And the poor faithful servants who have been so long with us, and who loved mamma so dearly, we must part from them too. Even poor Jessy, who is to accompany us to ——shire, leaves us, so it is arranged, in November, when the governess we are to have comes to us. Do you think if you were to ask dear kind Mrs. Sempilll, that she could find a place for Jessy in her house? She cries so when she talks of leaving us. If one could but awake and find it all a dream!"

The same packet which conveyed to Mrs. George Sempill the letter from which the above extracts are given, brought one from Captain Lockhart, a brief and mournful one, giving her the same account of his plans which his daughter had more fully done, and admitting that his chief subject of regret was being compelled to leave his poor girls at the Grange. But he had, he said, no choice. He had hoped that his

sister-in-law, Mrs. Lockhart Clephane, who had only two daughters amongst her children, might have offered to take charge of them, but she had not done so, and of course it was impossible for him to ask it.—A quick perception of the motives which had caused Mrs. Clephane to withhold this offer,—the dread of her own daughters hereafter finding themselves eclipsed by the superior attractions of their cousins,—brought an indignant flush into the check of Helen as she read these words. But this was speedily quenched in the flood of tears which poured from her eyes at the sight of an enclosure within the letter of her brother-in-law. It appeared that Captain Lockhart, having at last, after a long delay in doing it, nerved himself so far as to open his wife's desk, had found in it, along with two letters addressed to himself and to Beatrice, one for her sister, endorsed "to be delivered in the event of my death." This he now sent to Helen. It was dated about a month previous to that event, and written under the firm persuasion that she should not survive her approaching hour of trial. It breathed the very soul of love, of tenderness, of holy consolation; and though it spoke of the agony, conceivable by no heart save a

mother's, of contemplating the prospect of separation from her children; it dwelt upon the hope, the *certainty* of being enabled, when the dread hour came, to leave them in humble faith in the hands of a Father. Mingled with this was much of the tender and sisterly counsel, the sympathy, and the gentle warning, which Helen had so often received from Beatrice; and which came now with such additional sanctity from her grave. Henceforth for her there was to be no counsellor, no guide. Her heart must know its own bitterness, and have no stranger to intermeddle with its joy. The letter concluded with a passage which many and many a time in after years returned to the memory of Helen.

"I do not say to you, my own beloved one, be a friend, be a mother, to my motherless children. Why should I say so, who know your heart so well. *That* would be no hard duty to you. You are more likely to be called to a harder; and it is of that I would warn you in this solemn hour. I would say to you, my Helen, do not murmur, have faith and patience, if you find the power denied you to befriend those children of your love and prayers in their desolation. Such seems but too likely to be the trial appointed you, in His inscrutable

wisdom who sees that you need to learn that lesson—hard, hard for our human hearts!—'To stand and wait,'—and to remember that God has no need of anything that we can do. Have faith, my Helen, have patience, reflect that man is but God's instrument; and leave with Him what He shews you that you are not to be granted leave to perform. I, who have prayed unnumbered times that the future of my children might be ordered otherwise than I fear it will be, have been enabled to say this to you at last, and to feel it. And now what remains to be said? The last word of all—the last to me, for on the other side of the dark portal through which I shall have passed ere this meets your eye, that word is heard no more. Farewell—my Helen! Dearest, kindest, truest, best of sisters! Farewell! May the God of consolation, the compassionate Saviour, hear my prayers for you, and bless you, and sanctify to your soul's eternal weal this bitter trial, and bring us in His own good time to meet where we shall never part again.

"In life and death, my Helen, your own

"BEATRICE."

It was evening. The long hot day was over; and Helen and her husband sat in a lux-

urious apartment of their villa in the neighbourhood of Funchal. The soft and brilliant moonlight, pouring in at the open windows, rendered the light of the shaded lamps nearly superfluous. Not a sound was audible without, save the tinkling plash of a fountain, amongst the odoriferous shrubs and flowers in the parterre beneath; nor any within, save the occasional rustling of Mr. Sempill's newspaper, as he lay half-extended on a low divan, perusing one of several that day received from London. To Helen's ears another sound seemed to break the stillness,—the loud quick throbbing of her own heart; as nerving herself to the effort which she had for many days been meditating, she sat with the sensation of the diver about to plunge into the boiling Maelström, and whispered to herself,—"Now is the time, or never."

"George" she said, "you did not tell me whether you had any letters from Sempilltower to-day?

"Did I not?" asked Mr. Sempill, looking up. I had one from Reginald."

"And did he give you any news?"

"Nothing very particular. He says Walter's sons are there, and seems highly pleased

with them. There is not much else in his letter. He talks of having been several times of late, shooting, and dining, and so forth, at Castle-Guthrie. I sometimes think Reginald will end by marrying one of the girls there, and disappoint Walter's wife, who I know looks upon her boy as the heir of Sempill-tower."

"I am sure," said Helen timidly, for this was rather a tender subject, "he could not do better. They are nice girls; and any one might be happy with Reginald. I had a letter from Harry Lockhart to-day, George," she added, endeavouring to steady her voice, and to get the better of the nervous dryness in her throat.

"Ah!" ejaculated Mr. Sempill, reverting to his newspaper, "so I observed."

"And one from poor Beatrice. Such a sad letter! Do you know that Harry has applied for a ship again, already? and has just been appointed to the Ajax."

"Indeed! Well, he could not do better. I always expected he would return to sea again."

"So did I; but not so soon. I thought he would have remained a little longer with the poor children. I did not expect him to have

broken up his household so very speedily. And it is *such* a breaking up!"

Helen paused, half expecting that her husband would ask what was to become of the children; but it was a question which, literally, never occurred to Mr. Sempill. His heart was in his newspaper, and what were Harry Lockhart's children to him? Finding that he made her no answer, she presently went on.

"I am so grieved, George, to find that Harry has thoughts of leaving the poor dear girls at the Grange, with his mother and sisters."

"Has he really?" asked he, with some slight degree of interest in his tone, which gave Helen strength and courage to proceed, but which, in fact, was entirely attributable to his extreme dislike to the style of the Grange and its inhabitants. "I regret to hear that for your nieces' sakes. It is a bad plan, very."

"But what else can he do, George, after all? He could not, as he truly says, leave them alone in his own house; and his mother's was the only home that offered for them."

"I should have sent them to school, of

course. Why on earth does he not? Imagine two young ladies brought up by Willie and Grace Lockhart!"

"My beloved Beatrice," said Helen, alternately flushing and becoming deadly pale, "had the greatest dislike to a boarding-school education for girls; in which feeling I confess I concur. She made it her dying request to Harry that he would not send the girls to school."

"Ah! well," replied Mr. Sempill in a tone of resignation, "then of course there's no more to be said. Only I must confess that in Lockhart's case, I should deeply regret having fettered myself by any such unadvised pledge. It is much to be deplored! No business of mine of course; only as connexions,—and pretty girls, too, they promise to be,—I regret to think of their being left amongst such a set of people."

"They are to have a governess," said Helen; and their father is of course to pay an annual sum for their board with his mother. It is not so much for their education that I regret it; *that* a governess can carry on anywhere. It is the want of tenderness, the harshness of Mrs. Lockhart and Miss Willie, the weak-

ness of Grace, that I dread for young girls. And creatures like them, too, who have been so cherished, so loved and cared for. It is such a bitter thought to me, George!"

"Mr. Sempill made no reply. He probably thought that time and words more than sufficient had been expended on the subject. He folded out the opposite side of his newspaper, and leant back in his seat, as if to settle himself to its perusal. Helen plainly perceived that it was in vain to attempt any indirect method of dealing with him, and felt emboldened by the crisis.

"George," she said, "will you listen to me for a moment? I have something to say to you."

"Well, Helen?" He laid down his newspaper as he spoke, and turned towards her with an air of absolute unconsciousness of what she was about to say.

"George, I have a favour to ask of you. Listen to me, dear George. My heart is breaking for my sister's motherless children! George, will you let *me* offer to take charge of them? Will you let them come and live with me?"

Mr. Sempill gazed at her for a moment in

speechless astonishment; then, turning away from her, he again took up the paper. "My dear Helen," he said, "I really believe you are not in your senses. Let me hear no more of such folly."

"George," she exclaimed, "it is not folly. I have thought of it, considered it, deeply. It has dwelt on my mind ever since I heard the tidings of my Beatrice's death. There could be nothing simpler or more easily arranged. They are to have a governess; let her come here with them. In this immense house we could accommodate four times as many more, and find them in no one's way. It is a lovely climate; there can be no objection on that score; and to have these dear girls with me would be such an interest—such an occupation! You know how much I want both; how many solitary hours I have to pass! The blessing they would be to me! They would give me a new object in life. George, will you let me ask for the charge!"

"Helen," returned Mr. Sempill, in a tone whose measured coldness and calmness fell upon the current of her agitated feelings like ice upon fire, "I can hardly bring myself to believe that you are serious. If so, I can only

attribute it to your being most fatally over-excited by those home-letters; and treat you as I should do a person in a brain-fever. Nothing short of that could account for your seriously imagining that I should allow my wife to set up a boarding-house, and undertake the care of another man's children."

"George, dear George; my own sister's children. My sister's poor motherless girls. Think of it reasonably, dearest George! how many married sisters, even with families of their own, have the care of each others' children? And here am I with none, nothing to hinder my doing them justice, and imploring, beseeching you, to listen to me, and grant my request. Oh! George, do not turn away so coldly. Do not refuse me. Listen to me, George."

"You are mad, Helen; I believe you are. You never *are* yourself on the days when these letters arrive. Once for all, let me hear no more of this."

"George, it is no common request that I am urging. I am asking leave to rescue the children of my beloved Beatrice from mismanagement and unkindness. You yourself feel that their grandmother's house is not a fit home for them; and who so proper to offer

them one, as the only sister of their mother? You loved my Beatrice, George; you mourned for her death. Do not condemn me, with my heart bleeding for her loss, to sit by and do nothing for her children, when they so sorely need my help. Do not be so harsh to me, George, in this foreign land, where I have no one but you to look to. Have pity on me, and hear me." And in the passion of her entreaty, Helen sunk at her husband's feet.

If anything in the world could have rendered George Sempill's heart more determinedly obdurate than it was already, or more effectually steeled him against the prayers of his wife, a scene like the present would have done it. It was with a look and gesture not to be misunderstood or resisted, that he commanded Helen to "recollect herself, and rise up *instantly*."

"Another word, Madam, upon this subject," he said; "another attempt at repeating this frightful violence; another allusion, in short, to any such request as you have thought proper to urge in a manner so unprecedented; and I give you distinctly to understand that I shall at once and for ever prohibit any further correspondence with your nieces or your bro-

ther-in-law. You hear me, and are aware that I am not to be trifled with, nor is the peace of my domestic life to be broken by the constant interchange of incendiary letters. Now no reply. You know the conditions upon which your correspondence is to depend henceforward, and if you wish it to continue, you will be careful to observe them."

Helen stood erect before him, pale, calm, and tearless. "I do, George," she said. "I am in your power, and I bow to it. You shall hear no more vain requests from me."

She walked from the room without another word, and Mr. Sempill, with a lofty sense of injury mingling in his self complacency, once more applied himself to his newspaper.

And Helen? Those alone who have known what it is "to write, with the heart's fiery rain, wild words on dust," as she had done, can fully sympathise with her crushed, wounded, trampled heart. On her face upon a couch, her heaving bosom pressed against its cushions, her burning, tearless eyes hid from the pitiless moonlight; her whole being one tumultuous throbbing agony; how long she lay she could not tell. But still she seemed to feel those young clinging arms around her neck, the

pressure of those soft lips, those warm tears falling on her cheeks in the parlour of the Grange. Still arose before her the figure of Beatrice, with her pale face, her uncurled locks, her dress all dank with the morning dew, as she ran in under the old gateway, for another last embrace and last farewell. "My children, my own poor children. It *was* a long farewell;" she again and again repeated in her heart. And then, by that inexplicable species of oblivion that sometimes comes over the mind which has sorrowed deeply, she said to herself: "How Beatrice will feel for me when I write all this to her." Alas, alas, poor Helen! for her that blessed outlet for all her troubles was closed for ever. A pang, a thrill of anguish unutterable dispelled the illusion in the next instant, and brought before her mental eye the prophetic words of her sister's last letter.

"Faith and Patience." Yes, my sainted Beatrice; yes, angel of my life, that being dead yet speakest, I *do* need to learn them. I do need to be taught "to stand and wait." God be merciful to me! I may ask mercy in vain from man, but none ever asked it in vain from Him.

And on her knees before her God, tears,

blessed, salutary tears flowing in torrents, and dispelling the tension of her brain; the soothing, sanctifying spirit of her sister's latest prayer, falling over her bleeding heart like balm, thus, for a space, our narrative takes leave of Helen Sempill. We leave her through long years to carry on the silent warfare with her own rebellious spirit, which marks the progress of the Christian pilgrim in this vale of sorrow. We leave her to woman's lot,

> "Silent tears to weep,
> And patient smiles to wear through suffering's hour."

To have "long patience," to submit to inaction; to repose the cause of those she would have died to serve, and might not, in the hands of God; to this we leave her; blessed in the midst of trials so peculiarly trying to a disposition such as her's, if she be enabled thereby to experience the gradual purification of her earthly nature, and to look with confidence for the fulfilment of the promises made to those who "commit their ways unto the Lord."

CHAPTER XX.

"The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary."

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

IT was a cheerless afternoon in the latter end of September. The rain had been falling all day; not in hearty downright showers, which come pouring all at once, and then are over, but in that small driving mist, which is at once the most hopeless and the most penetrating species of aërial moisture. The hills were blotted from the face of creation; the trees only visible through a dim hazy medium, save

when close upon the high road; country towns looked dirty, wretched, and comfortless, and country villages worse; heavy drops hung to the thatch and to the house eaves, whence they did not seem to have life enough in them to fall; dejected dogs skulked about barn doors, and miserable draggled fowls collected under sheds and upturned carts, for shelter. The very ducks around the *dubs* and ponds seemed to have less of life in them than they usually manifest on a rainy day, and any human bipeds to be met with looked upon a par with the feathered. The only objects possessing some faint show of cheerfulness were the village smithies, whence a warm and ruddy glow of light was here and there cast upon the close dank atmosphere, and whence, occasionally, the sound of voices might be heard to issue, as the farm-servants, interrupted in their usual work by the weather, congregated there with their horses, and awaited their turn to have them shod.

Such was the aspect of external nature which presented itself to the eyes of a party occupying a post-chaise, which was traversing the high-road from Edinburgh to ——shire. This was no other than Captain Lockhart and

his two daughters, with Jessy Christie, enveloped in cloaks, and covered by an enormous umbrella, on the driving box. Under auspices so dispiriting had taken place their departure, on that morning from their once happy home, and was to take place their arrival at their new one; and poor Beatrice, as with eyes dimned by ever-gathering tears she gazed from the chaise-window on the dreary view without, thought in her own mind that the weather well-befitted the occasion, and that she would scarcely have had it otherwise if she might have chosen.

It had been a woful day; a day to be marked in the heart's calendar as black with a weight of sorrow, such as peculiarly belongs to the afflictions of early life, more akin in their intensity to despair, while they last, than the calmer and more enduring, but not deeper, grief of later years. And in the case of Beatrice Lockhart, the poetical intensity of feeling which marked her character, in proportion as it tended to heighten every enjoyment, did in like manner deepen every affliction. The last strong clinging of the poor girl's heart to the home of her infancy, was full of a pathos beyond her age; the visits to every room, in

each one to live over again some scene of the past, the gathering and treasuring up of the last flowers she should ever gather in the garden; the farewell to the chamber where her mother had died; where on her knees beside the bed, clinging to the pillows which had last supported that beloved head, she poured forth a passion of tears, and sobs, and inarticulate prayers, from a heart full of more bitter anguish than, it is to be hoped, often falls to the lot of one so young; each and all of these were eras in her soul's history that never could be, and never were, forgotten. This had passed on the previous night; for their journey began at an early hour in the day, but the morning brought its own share of bitter grief. The last breakfast together in the old familiar room, the last time of Beatrice's acting as housekeeper for her father, the last vestige of home; these, and the overwhelming distress of the two servants who were left behind, at parting with the children whom they had seen grow up from infancy, formed an accumulation of woe to mark the day which saw their once happy and united household dispersed for ever. It may be, now the last moment was arrived, so full of a weight of anguish beyond his ideas, that

Captain Lockhart might have regretted the precipitation with which he had flung from him everything that belonged to his former life; that when he saw his poor girls, in their deep mourning, clinging with such heart-rending sobs to the servants they were leaving, while Jessy, weeping to suffocation herself, was vainly endeavouring to comfort them, he might have felt that he had scarcely acted as their mother would have done, in thus tearing open the unhealed wounds of such young and tender hearts, and abandoning them so immediately to the care of others who could not feel for them as they had been felt for at home. It might be, that when he looked around his own dwelling for the last time, and felt that it *was* the last, a thousand thousand reminiscences might have rushed upon him, as if to reproach him for so hastily quitting, and for ever, the spot where they dwelt, and the objects with which they were connected. But it was now too late to dwell on these things; and in silence, in total silence, he shook hands with the sobbing women, and followed his daughters through the wet and cheerless garden, to the gate where stood the chaise, and where the dripping shrubs that overhung it shed their

heavy drops upon him as he passed out, like the tears of a final farewell.

A woful day it was indeed, and a melancholy journey. But while the travellers are still at a considerable distance from its termination, we shall profit by the Asmodean privilege of an author's craft, to observe what is taking place under the roof of what was henceforward to be their home.

The party at the Grange had partaken of an early dinner, with the view of having tea ready on the arrival of the travellers; Captain Lockhart having announced his intention of dining on the road. The meal being over, and the room, according to custom, aired for a few minutes after it by the opening of a window, which admitted more damp than air, Miss Grace, shivering and rubbing her hands, approached the fireplace, and seized the poker.

"Dear! how cold it is!" she exclaimed, inflicting as she spoke a heavy blow upon a black smouldering lump of coal, which filled up half the grate.

"What are ye about, lassie?" said the old lady in a sharp tone, rousing herself from a doze into which she was just beginning to sink in her easy chair, "let alane the fire."

"Fire, mother!" returned Miss Grace, somewhat offended, "do you call *that* a fire? We must have a better fire than this for Harry and the children when they arrive. This is perfect starvation on such a day."

"The fire's weel eneuch," replied the old lady, "and would have been better if ye had let weel alane. Willie, tak' an' gather the coals thegither; she'll hae it a' burnt awa in nae time. Where did ye learn sic wastrie, lassie?"

"I must say, Grace," said Miss Willie, as in conformity with the old lady's directions, she proceeded to collect the fragments of scattered coal within the grate, and pile them up, so as to concentrate the fire, and diminish its force, "I must say you are rather apt to forget the high price of fuel."

"High price, Willie? You don't pretend to say that coals are dear in this country?" responded Miss Grace, as drawing a chair close to the fire-place, and ruffling up the hearth-rug in the process, she planted her feet inside the fender, turned up the skirt of her black cotton gown that it might not be discoloured, and opened a volume of "Emmeline; or, the Orphan of the Castle," which lay on a table close by.

"A' thing's dear, bairn, where folk's scarce o' money," was the oracular response of the old lady; as, satisfied that the fire was now in less imminent peril of burning away, she once more closed her eyes, and suffered herself to sink into slumber.

"I am afraid, Grace," said Miss Willie in a solemn tone, "that you are disposed to forget the double necessity we shall be under now of observing and inculcating economy. Harry's girls have many notions on that subject which must be subdued, as I did not fail to observe when I stayed there. They have been accustomed to many indulgences which they must not look for here; and we cannot begin too soon as we mean to continue."

"Poor things!" exclaimed Miss Grace, the good-natured self-indulgence of her disposition coming in aid of her better feelings. "I can't see any extravagance in that way, Willie, in having a comfortable fire for them, when they arrive cold and comfortless, and sad enough, I doubt."

"Nobody wants to have a bad one," retorted Miss Willie sharply; "but that's no reason why we should make the room like an oven now. I am sure," she added, after a

short pause, and fetching a deep sigh, "it is a very serious charge we are undertaking, and will involve a great sacrifice of comfort on *our* parts."

"Certainly, the children will be rather in one's way now and then," said Miss Grace, leaning back in her chair, crossing her legs, and holding up one slip-shod foot to the fire, "but they are nice creatures. The governess will be the worst trouble."

"Yes, indeed," almost groaned Miss Willie. "A stranger living in the house, always in one's way; interrupting all one's privacy; and a most serious addition to the expense of living!"

"But, Willie," interposed her sister, somewhat timidly, "after all, the girls and she are not going to live with us for nothing. The board that Harry is to pay for them ought to do more than cover their expenses."

"You are no great judge of expenses, Grace," replied Miss Willie with a sardonic smile, and sewing very fast, "I advise you to talk of what you understand. When you take the girls' keep, and their clothes, and extra expenses, and the governess's board, and the washing for them all, into consideration, there is not too much left over, I can tell you. But I myself mean to take charge of their clothes,

and enforce rigid economy in that and washing, and every thing else. I don't expect to be able to do as I should like with them till that nursery-maid of their's, Jessy Christie, leaves, for she has most unsuitable ideas! But, thank goodness! the term is not very far off."

Miss Grace had ceased to attend ere her sister ceased to speak, and was again deep in "The Orphan of the Castle." Time rolled on; the old lady woke up, resumed her knitting, and the fire having now died very low within the grate, permitted it to be reinforced with another black lump of coal, which did little more than keep it alive. Soon after this had been done, one of the servants entered, and announced that from the window of an upper room she thought she had descried a post-chaise turning in at the gate. This intelligence caused some little stir. The old lady, with her own hands, lent a very careful touch to the smouldering fire, and pushed her arm-chair a little back from the hearth. Miss Grace removed her feet from the fender, let down the skirt of her gown, and, being under considerable flutter and excitement, dropped her book very nearly into the grate, and wholly amongst the ashes, from which she picked it up a little dirtier than it

had been before, and laid it, only partially free from the dust, on the little table near the fire, which sustained Miss Willie's plain work, exciting thereby the extreme indignation of her sister; who, on her part, folded up her work, and pushed the uncovered mahogany table in the middle of the room, a little farther from the hearth, so as to leave more space near it.

It *was* the chaise which had been discovered approaching through the mist and rain. Its wheels were now heard grinding on the wet gravel, and stopping at the door; and the whole party simultaneously issued forth into the lobby to meet its occupants.

They alighted,—the pale, cold, trembling girls, in their deep mourning, crossed the threshold, and entered the door of their future home. They were clasped in the arms of their grandmother and aunts; and the soft-hearted Miss Grace, melting into a flood of tears, again and again kissed Beatrice, who, as we have seen, was in secret her great favourite. Their reception from all was kind; and yet it were vain to attempt describing the sensation of chill and dreariness which sunk upon the sad and weary travellers on entering the parlour. The cold, smouldering, black fire, the bare brown

table, the disorderly grouping of chairs around the hearth, the crumbs which had fallen at dinner still reposing on the ruffled floor-cloth, the total absence of any thing like elegance, or even comfort,—the very atmosphere of the room,—chilly, yet close and oppressive,—it was not to be told how each and all struck upon the perceptions and the hearts of those who had left so different a home behind, and left it for ever. It was scarcely so much the discomfort, or the chilling cold, as the feeling that no one had cared to disturb the usual routine of the house to prepare for their reception,—that no one had felt the necessity of giving them a cheerful welcome, which fell with so depressing an influence upon them. The impression of that comfortless and cold arrival at the Grange remained, as the impressions of early youth do remain, burnt in upon Beatrice's very soul, and even, though in a less degree, upon that of the little Helen; and never was forgotten by either.

The sisters were, after a little while, taken up-stairs by their aunts, and installed in a room near to that which had been their old sleeping-place, with a window looking out into the garden. The furniture of this room, originally not very handsome or abundant, had received the additions

of their mother's wardrobe and toilet-table, which had been sent before them from Edinburgh, and on which as their eyes now rested, neither found it easy to refrain from a burst of tears. Jessy, too, was there, disrobed of her wet cloaks, and with a woe-begone countenance, occupied in arranging her young ladies' trunks, and to her Miss Willie, even at this moment, could not refrain from giving utterance to some of the irritation caused by the sight of her.

"What!" she exclaimed, "could the girls not unpack their own trunks? High time they should learn then. And now she must beg Jessy to recollect that the room was to be kept tidy,—that there was to be no splashing of the mahogany wash-stand, nor of the paper on the wall behind it." And after sundry similar injunctions, delivered in a sharp and dictatorial tone, she descended to make tea; while Miss Grace lingered a few minutes behind her, sighing, wiping her eyes, and patting her nieces on the shoulder; then prepared to follow, telling Beatrice to make haste down stairs, for she must be *so* cold.

"We shall be down immediately, Aunt Grace, thank you," said Beatrice, clasping her arms round her aunt's neck, and kissing her.

Miss Grace fervently returned the caress, and departed in a fresh burst of tears.

"Cold!" exclaimed Helen, shivering. "Yes, it is cold, and such a bad fire in the parlour; and Aunt Willie so cross!"

"Hush, Helen, dearest! Poor Aunt Grace is very kind."

"Yes, Beatrice, I know. But oh! Beatrice—oh! Jessy, dear! I wish we were at home again."

"Helen, don't make me cry," said Beatrice, biting her quivering lip. "I don't want to go down stairs crying; and—and if I once begin,—I——"

"No, my dear bairn, dinna gang doon crying," added Jessy, not in the steadiest voice possible. "Miss Helen, my lamb, let me smooth your bonny curls. Now, rin awa' and get your tea; it 'll pit some heart into ye."

And having seen her young ladies quit the room with dry eyes, Jessy seated herself in a chair, and gave free vent to the dreary load of sorrow lying at her own faithful heart, in a long and copious fit of weeping. From this she at last composed herself, and having given the room as "tidy" an aspect as circumstances would admit of, she too descended the stairs; but to a better fire and warmer wel-

come. Seated at tea, by the blazing kitchen hearth, in the midst of Mrs. Lockhart's respectable and old-fashioned servants,—required by them to go over in minute detail every particular of the late mournful scenes, down to the moment of their parting from home; and seeing and hearing on all sides tears of sympathy and expressions of regret for the affliction of the widower and his children,—Jessy, in spite of all her sorrow, felt her heart expand under the genial influence of kindness, and no longer experienced the same desolate feelings which she had done on their first arrival.

Very different was it with her young ladies. No blazing fire awaited them on entering the parlour. The black mass of coal had, it is true, been partially broken, and some feeble tongues of flame began to curl up around it; but still the room was bleak, chill, and comfortless. And yet it bore a well-known character about it; it was full of miserable contrasts between the vividly-remembered past and the present. The old lady's easy-chair, her little black horse-hair footstool, her small spider-legged work-table, and exaggerated knitting-basket,—nay, her very self (for she was always dressed in black)—were just as they had been in the previous November, when Captain Lockhart and his

family last had left the Grange. And there —where he sat, so silent, sad, and gloomy, in the corner of the old clumsy sofa against the wall,—there had Beatrice last seen her father sit, although with a very different aspect from his present one. There lay Aunt Grace's dirty novel, with the same circulating-library badge upon it; there Aunt Willie's coarse needle-work. And there sat Aunt Willie herself, presiding at the tea-table, which but little pains had been taken to render more comfortable, though the meal was a little more substantial than ordinary. All bore its wonted aspect of plenty, devoid of elegance, despoiled of all the little *agrémens* which lend a charm to life. And then the change—*the* change—since last the same party, and another—had assembled round that table! But upon that subject Beatrice dared not trust herself to think.

It was a miserable evening,—a long, dark, desolate evening! And it was but the precursor of many more of its kind; till speedily, and yet laggingly, the days had glided on, and Captain Lockhart, with bitter sorrow, aggravated by self-reproach for having brought his children to so uncongenial a home, had at last departed, and left them there. Yet so deep

had been the gloom of his spirits from the hour in which he had entered the house;—so painfully was his naturally sweet temper chafed and rendered irritable by the discomforts and the disagreeable natures around him; and so depressing were the silence and reserve in which he seemed to have sought refuge from the burden of his own reflections, that after the first anguish of parting was over, it was perhaps less of an abiding trial to his young daughters to live there without him, than to have had him present with them as he had lately been. Of this feeling they were unconscious; yet, as must inevitably be the case wherever sorrow is suffered to affect the temper, it nevertheless existed, even in their warm and loving hearts.

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