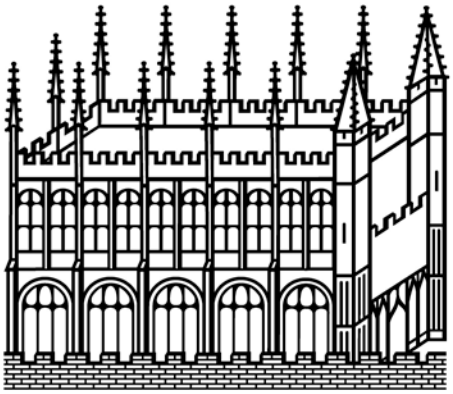

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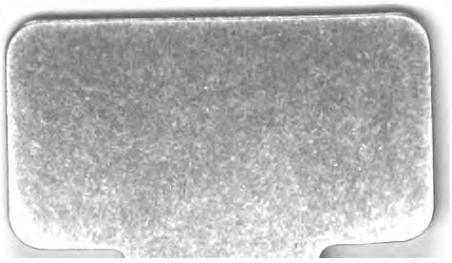

CASTLE WARLOCK

A HOMELY ROMANCE

BY

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"ALEC FORBES," "MARY MARSTON," "THE VICAR'S DAUGHTER,"

"GUILD COURT," "SIR GIBBIE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE & RIVINGTON,

CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1882.

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251. i. 849.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

TO

MRS. RUSSELL GURNEY:

A broken tale of endless things,
  Take, lady: thou art not of those
Who in what vale a fountain springs
  Would have its journey close.

Countless beginnings, fair first parts,
  Leap to the light, and shining flow;
All broken things, or toys or hearts,
  Are mended where they go.

Then down thy stream, with hope-filled sail,
  Float faithful, fearless on, loved friend;
'Tis God that has begun the tale,
  And does not mean to end.

G. M. D.

BORDIGHERA, *March*, 1882.

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CASTLE WARLOCK.

CHAPTER I.

CASTLE WARLOCK.

A ROUGH, wild glen it was, to which, far back in times unknown to its annals, the family of Warlock had given its name, sharing in return no small portion of its history, and a good deal of the character of its inhabitants. Glenwarlock lay in debatable land between Highlands and Lowlands; most of its people spoke both Scotch and Gaelic, and there was in them a notable mingling of the chief characteristics of the widely differing Celt and Goth. The country produced more barley than wheat, more oats than barley, more heather than oats, more boulders than trees, and more snow than

anything. It was a thinly peopled region, consisting mostly of bare hills and partially cultivated glens, each glen with its small stream, on the banks of which grew here and there a silver birch, a mountain ash, or an alder tree; but the trees were small, and there was nothing capable of giving much shade or shelter, except cliffy banks and big stones. From many a spot you might look in all directions without seeing a sign of human or other habitation. Even then, however, you might, to be sure, most likely smell the perfume—to some nostrils it is nothing less than perfume—of a peat fire, although you might be long in finding out whence it came; for the houses, if indeed the dwellings could be called houses, were often so difficult to distinguish from the ground on which they were built, that except the smoke of fresh peats were coming pretty freely from the wide-mouthed chimney, it required an experienced eye to discover the human nest. The valleys that opened northward produced little;

there in some years the snow might be seen lying on patches of oats yet green, destined now only for fodder; but where the valley ran east and west, and any tolerable ground looked to the south, things put on a different aspect. There the graceful oats and the long-bearded barley would wave and rustle in the ripening wind; in the small gardens would be found potatoes and peas in their season; and there also would lurk for weeks a few cherished strawberries.

Upon a natural terrace of such a slope to the south stood Castle Warlock. But it turned no smiling face to the region whence came the warmth and the growth. A more grim, repellent, unlovely building would be hard to find; and yet, from its extreme simplicity, its utter indifference to its own looks, its repose, its weight, and its gray historical consciousness, no one who loved houses would have thought of calling it ugly. It was like the hard-featured face of a Scotch matron, with no end of story, of life, of character, holding a defensive if

not defiant front to the world, but within warm, and tending carefully the fires of life. Summer and winter, from the chimneys of that desolate-looking house issued smoke; for though the country was inclement, and the people that lived in it were poor, the great, sullen, almost unhappy-looking hills held clasped to their bare cold bosoms exposed to the bitterness of freezing winds and summer hail, the warmth of household centuries: their peat-bogs were the store-closets and wine-cellars of the sun, for the hoarded elixir of physical life.

The House of Glenwarlock, as it was also sometimes called, consisted of three massive, narrow, tall blocks of building, which showed little connection with each other beyond juxtaposition, two of them standing end to end, with but a few feet of space between, and the third at right angles to the two. In the two which stood end to end, hardly a window was to be seen on the side towards the valley; while in the third, which, looking much of the same period, had all its

upper part of later origin, were more windows, though none in the ground story. Narrow as were these buildings, and four stories high, they had a solid, ponderous look, suggesting a thickness of the walls such as to leave little of a hollow within for the occupiers; they were like the huge shell built for itself by a small mollusk. On the other side of them was a kind of court, completed by the stables and cow-houses, and towards this court were most of the windows, some of them small enough for a cottage. The court was now little better than a farmyard.

In the block that stood angle-wise to the other two was the kitchen, the door of which opened immediately on the court; and behind the kitchen was the milk-cellar, as they called the dairy, and places for household storage. A rough causeway ran along the foot of the walls, connecting the doors in the different blocks. Of these the kitchen-door for the most part stood open. Sometimes the snow would be coming fast down the

wide chimney, with little soft hisses in the fire, and the business of the house going on without a thought of closing it, even when you could not have seen from it across the yard for the falling flakes.

But at the time when my story opens, the summer held the old house and the older hills in its wide embrace. The sun was pouring torrents of light and heat into the valley, and the slopes of it were covered with green. The bees were about, contenting themselves with flowers while the heather was getting ready its bloom for them. And a boy of fourteen was sitting in the little garden that lay like a dropped girdle about the feet of the grim old walls, parting the house from the slope where the corn stood now with the half-formed ear. He sat on a big stone, which once must have had some part in the house or its defences, but which he had never known except as a seat. His back leaned against the hoary wall, and he was in truth meditating, although he did not look as if he were.

He was already more than an incipient

philosopher, though he could not yet have put into recognizable shape the things that were now passing through his mind. He thought how glad the bees would be when their crop of heather was ripe; then he thought how they preferred the heather to the flowers; then, that the one must taste nicer to them than the other; and next awoke the question whether their taste of sweet was the same as his own. "For," thought he, "if their honey is sweet to them with the same sweetness with which it is sweet to me, then there is something in the make of the bee that's the same with the make of me; and perhaps a man might some day, if he wanted, try the taste of being a bee all out." But to see him, nobody would have thought he was doing anything but basking in the sun. The scents of the flowers about his feet came borne on the eddies of the air, and paid my lord many a visit in the ante-chamber, his brain; the windy noises of the insects, the watery noises of the pigeons, the family noises from the poultry-

yard, the rushing song of the mountain river, all visited him through the portals of his ears; but at the moment the boy seemed lost, not in thought as was the fact, but in the fundamental enjoyment of mere existence.

Neither, although broad summer was on the earth, and all the hill-tops and as much of the valleys as their shadows did not hide were bathed in sunlight, although the country was his native land, and he loved it with the love of his country's poets, was the consciousness of the boy free from a certain trouble connected with, if not immediately arising from the landscape before him. A Celt through many of his ancestors, and his mother in particular, his soul, full of undefined emotion, was aware of an ever-recurring impulse to song—ever as it came, checked and broken, and thrown back upon itself. There were a few books in the house, amongst them certain volumes of verse—a copy of Cowley, whose notable invocation of Light he had instinctively blundered upon, Milton's

poems, the translated Ossian, Thomson's Seasons, with a few more; and from the reading of these, among other results was this—that, in the midst of his enjoyment of the world around him, he sighed after a lovelier nature than he beheld. Then there were in the house one or two old engravings of forest, mountain, and ocean scenery, on which he looked with a strange, inexplicable reverence; and sometimes he would wake weeping from a dream of such or yet grander mountains, such trees, or such endless wilds of water. Once with his waking eyes he saw a mist, afar between the hills that ramparted the horizon, grow rosy in the upshot rays of the sunken sun, and his heart filled with the joy of a discovered loveliness. Around him, it was true, the waters rushed well from their hills, but their banks had little beauty. Not merely did their lack of trees distress him, but the nature of their channels: most of them, instead of rushing through rocks, as he would have had them, cut their way only through beds

of rough gravel, and their bare surroundings were desolate without grandeur—almost mean to eyes that were not yet able to see the soul of them; nor had he yet learned to admire the lucent brown of the bog-waters. There seemed to be in the boy a strain of some race nursed in a richer home, while yet all the time the frozen regions drew his fancy more than the azure glories of the south.

His name was Cosmo, a name brought from Italy by one of the line who had lent for hire his arm and sword and fought for strangers. Not a few from the younger branches of the family had followed the same evil profession and taken foreign pay—chiefly from poverty and prejudice combined, but not a little in more than one case from the inborn love of fighting that seems to characterize the Celt. The last soldier of them had served the East India Company both by sea and land. Tradition plainly delivered that he had yet more served himself. For several generations the

heads of the house had been the chief cultivators of their own property, drawing from it what to many farmers nowadays would seem but a scanty return. The estate had dwindled to the twentieth part of what it had been a few centuries before, though even then it could never have made its proprietor rich in anything but the devotion of his retainers.

Finding it too hot between sun and wall, Cosmo rose, left the garden, and crossing a certain heave of grass, came upon one of the hitherto unfailing delights in his lot—a preacher whose voice, inarticulate it is true, had, ever since he was born, been at most times louder in his ear than any other. It was a mountain stream, which, unlike most of the rest, ran through a channel of rock, and went roaring, rushing, sometimes thundering, with an arrow-like, foamy swiftness, down to the river in the glen below. The rocks were dark, and the foam shone brilliant against them. From the hill-top came the stream, sloping steep from far. When you looked up, it seemed to come

flowing from the horizon itself, and when you looked down, it seemed suddenly to find it could no more return to the regions it had left, and shoot headlong in dismay to the abyss. There was not much water in it now, though plenty to make a joyous white rush through the deep-worn brown of the rock, but in the autumn and spring it came down gloriously, dark and fierce, as if it sought the very centre, wild with greed after an absolute rest.

The boy stood and gazed, as was his custom. Always when he grew weary, or when the things about him put on a too ordinary look, he would seek this endless water. Let the aspect of this be what it might, it seemed still inspired and sent forth by some essential mystery, some endless possibility.

There was in him an unusual combination of the power to read the hieroglyphic aspect of things, and the scientific nature that bows before fact. He knew that the stream was neither in its first nor its second stage when it rose from

the earth to rush to the river, that it was pumped from the great ocean up to the reservoirs of the sky, and thence descended in snows and rains to wander down and up through the veins of the earth; but until now his growing knowledge had never assailed his feeling of its mystery. The poetic nature was not merely predominant in him, but dominant, sending itself a pervading spirit through the science that else would have stifled him. For there is nothing in the outer fact by which man can live, any more than by bread; it needs the poetic eye, illuminating with polarized ray as it pierces, to reveal in the heart of fact its life, that is, its eternal relations.

But now he stood gazing in a mood different from any that had come to him before, for he had discovered something very sad about the stream. He had long vaguely known that what in the stream, from earliest childhood, drew him with an unfailing power, was the sense, for a long time an ever-growing one, of

its *mystery*—the form the infinite first takes to the simplest and liveliest hearts. He loved it because it was *always* flowing, because it could not stop: whence it came was unknown to him, and he did not care to know. When he learned that it issued from the dark hard earth, the mystery had only grown. He imagined a wondrous cavity below, in black rock, where the water gathered and gathered, nobody could think how—not coming from anywhere else, but beginning just there. When, later on, he had to shift his idea of its source, and think of it as in the great sky, the marvel was no less marvellous, and more lovely; it bound closer the gentle earth and the awful withdrawing heavens. The sky was a region of endless hopes and ever recurrent despairs; that the beloved earthly thing should rise there, gave him one homely fact concerning the unknown and appalling. But from the sky he was sent back to the earth in yet farther pursuit; for whence came the rain, as his books told him, but from the sea? The sea

he had read of, though never yet beheld, and he knew it magnificent; gladly, as he thought with himself under the wall, would he have hailed it an intermediate betwixt the sky and the earth, with the sky coming first, but, alas, the sea was before the sky in the order of the stream's genesis! And then, worse and worse! how was the ocean fed but from the torrent? How was the sky fed but from the ocean? How was the dark fountain fed but from the sky? How was the torrent fed but from the fountain? As he sat in the hot garden, leaning against the old gray castle, the nest of his family for countless generations, with the scent of the flowers in his nostrils, and the sound of the bees in his ears, he became aware that he had lost the stream of his childhood—the mysterious, infinite idea of endless, inexplicable, original birth, of outflowing because of essential existence within. There was no production any more, nothing but the merest rushing around, like the ring-sea of Saturn, in a never ending circle

of formal change! Like a great dish, the mighty ocean was skimmed in particles invisible; these were gathered aloft into sponges all water and no sponge; and thence through many an airy, many an earthly channel, deflowered of its mystery, his ancient, self-producing fountain to a holy, merry river, was *fed*—only *fed!* It was but a cistern after all! He grew very sad, and well he might. Moved by the spring eternal in himself, whereof the love in his heart was a river-shape, he turned away from the deathened stream, and without knowing why, sought the humanity in the castle.

CHAPTER II.

THE KITCHEN.

He entered the wide kitchen, paved with large slabs of slate. One brilliant gray-blue spot of sunlight lay on the floor. It came through a small window to the east, and made the peat-fire glow red in contrast. Over the fire, from a great chain, hung a three-legged pot, in which something was slowly cooking. Between the fire and the sun-spot lay a cat, content with fate and the world. At the corner of the fire sat an old lady, in a chair high-backed, thick-padded, covered with striped stuff. She had her face to the window that looked into the court, and was knitting without regarding her needles. This was Cosmo's grandmother. The daughter of a small laird in the

next parish, she had started in life with an overweening sense of her own importance through that of her family, nor, old as she was, had she lived long enough to get rid of it. I fancy she clung to it the more that from the time of her marriage nothing seemed to go well with the family into which she had married. She and her husband had struggled and striven, but to no seeming purpose; poverty had drawn its meshes closer and closer around them. They had but one son, the present laird, and when he succeeded, the estate was yet smaller and more heavily encumbered than before. In all likelihood he must leave it to Cosmo, if indeed he left it, in no better condition. Partly from the growing fear of its final loss, he loved the place more than any of his ancestors had loved it, and his attachment to it had come out yet stronger in his son.

But although Cosmo the elder fought and wrestled with encroaching poverty, gaining no real advantage, he never forgot small rights in anxiety to be rid of

large claims. What man could, he did to keep his poverty from bearing hard on his dependents, and never master or landlord was more beloved.

Such being his character and the condition of his affairs, it is not surprising he should have reached middle age before thinking seriously of marriage. Nor did he then fall in love, in the ordinary sense of the phrase; he reflected with himself that it would be cowardice to yield so far to poverty as to run the boat of the Warlocks aground. He would not wilfully leave the scrag-ends of a property and a history without a man to take them up, and possibly bear them on to redemption; who could tell what life might be in the stock yet? Better leave an heir to take the remnant in charge, and carry the name a generation farther, even should it be into yet deeper poverty. A Warlock could face his fate! Thereupon, with a sense of the fitness of things not always manifested on such an occasion, he paid his addresses to a woman of five and thirty, the only daughter of

the minister of the parish, and was by her accepted with little hesitation. She was a capable and thoroughly brave woman, and, fully informed of the state of his affairs, married him partly in the hope of doing something to help him in his difficulties. A few pounds which she had saved up, and a trifle that her mother had left her, she placed unreservedly at his disposal, and he, in his abounding honesty, spent the money on his creditors. This bettered things for a time, and, which was of much more consequence, greatly relieved his mind, and gave the life in him a fresh start. Nor was this by any means the only or most operative mode in which the marriage aided his growth, and thus was of infinitely more salvation to the laird than if it had set him free from all his worldly embarrassments, for growth is the only final path out of oppression.

Whatever were the feelings with which the laird took his wife home, they were at least those of a gentleman; and it were a good thing indeed if, at the end

of five years, the love of most pairs who marry for love were equal to that of Cosmo Warlock and his middle-aged wife. Now that she was gone, his reverence and love for her were surpassing. From the day almost of his marriage the miseries of life had lost half their bitterness, nor did that half return at her death. He had long instinctively known that outsiders, those even who respected him as an honest man, believed that, somehow or other, they could only conjecture how, he must be to blame for the circumstances he was in. That he was to blame, or that Providence did not take care of the just man, was indeed virtually the unuttered alternative conclusion of many who nevertheless accepted the Bible, the Book of Job included, and would have counted Glenwarlock's rare honesty, had they known it in its fulness, pride or fastidiousness or unjustifiable free-handedness. Whether to blame or only God-forsaken, they thought and spoke of him as a poor creature; and the man, from the keen sensitiveness of his nature,

had become aware of the fact. But to the wound caused by the misprision of neighbours and friends came the faith and indignant confidence of his wife, closing and binding up and mollifying. The man was of a far finer nature than any of those who judged him, though some of them doubtless would have got rid of their difficulties sooner than he, for he was more honourable in debt than they were out of it: his wife, a woman of strong sense, with an undeveloped stratum of poetry in the heart of it, was able to appreciate his moral delicacy, and she let him know it. This was strength and a lifting up of the head to the husband. And now, although since her death he had had to fight the wolf as constantly as ever, things retained the look she had helped to give them.

They had been five years married when she brought him an heir to his poverty, and she lived five years more to help train the child, then, after a short illness, departed, and left the now ageing man

virtually alone with his son, a spark of fresh vitality amidst the ancient surroundings. This was the Cosmo who now, somewhat sore at heart from the result of his cogitations, entered the kitchen in search of his kind.

Just inside the door sat another woman on a three-legged stool, paring potatoes—throwing each, as she cut off what the old lady watching her judged a paring far too thick, into a bowl of water. She looked nearly as old as her mistress, though in reality ten years younger. She had come with the late mistress from her father's house, and had always taken, and still took her part against the opposing faction—namely, the grandmother.

A second seat of state—not over easy, but comfortable enough, being simply a wide armchair of elm, with a cushion covered in horse-hair—stood at the other corner of the fire. This was the laird's seat, at the moment, as generally all the morning till dinner-time, empty. Cosmo, not once looking up, walked to it straight from the door, seated himself in it, and

there sat like one verily lost in thought. Now and then, as she pared, Grizzie would cast a keen glance at him out of her bright blue eyes, round whose fire the wrinkles had gathered like rippled ashes. Those eyes were sweet and pleasant, and the expression of her face was one of lovely devotion; otherwise she was far from beautiful. She gave a grim smile every time her look returned to her potatoes, seeming to say to herself she knew well what he was thinking, though no one else did. "He's 'maist a man a'ready!" she thought in her heart.

The old lady also now and then looked over her stocking at the boy, where he sat with his back to the white deal dresser, ornate with homely dishes.

"It'll be lang or ye fill that cheir, Cossie, my man!" she said at length—but not with the smile of play, rather with the severity of admonition, as if it was the boy's first duty to grow in breadth and fill the ancestral seat.

Cosmo looked up, but did not speak,

and presently was lost again in the thoughts from which the voice of his grandmother had roused him as one on a journey is roused from a waking dream by a jolt of the carriage.

"What are ye thinkin' aboot, Cossie?" she said again, in a tone imperative.

Her speech was that of a gentlewoman of the old time, when the highest-born in Scotland spoke Scotch.

Not yet did Cosmo reply. Reverie is sometimes a traitor even to respect.

"Mph!" said his grandmother, offended at his silence, "ye'll hae to learn mainners afore ye're fit to be laird o' Glenwarlock, yoong Cosmo!"

A shadow of indignation passed over Grizzie's rippled, rather than wrinkled face, but she said nothing. There was a time to speak and a time to be silent; nor was Grizzie indebted to Solomon, but to her own experience and practice, for the wisdom of the saw. Only the potato next pared splashed loud in the water, and the old lady knew as well what that meant, as if the splash had

been an articulate sound from the lips of the old partisan.

The boy rose, and coming forward like one walking in his sleep, stood up before his grandmother, and said absently—

"What was ye sayin', gran'mamma?"

"I was sayin' what ye wadna hearken till, an' that's eneuch," she answered, willing to show offence.

"Say't again, gran'mamma, gien ye please. I wasna noticin'."

"Na! I s' warran' ye frae noticin'! There ye winna gang, whaur yer ain fule fancy doesna lead the gait. Cosmo, ye gie ower muckle tether to wull (*wild*) thoucht; some day ye'll be laid i' the dub (*mire*), followin' what has naither sense intil't nor this warl's guid. What was ye thinkin' aboot the noo? Tell me that, an' I s' lat ye gang."

"I was thinkin' aboot the burnie, gran'-mamma."

"It wad be tellin' ye to lat the burnie rin, an' stick to yer buik, laddie!"

"The burnie wull rin, gran'mamma, and the buik 'ill bide," returned Cosmo,

perhaps not very clearly understanding himself.

"Ye're gettin' on to be a man, noo," said his grandmother, heedless of his defence, "an' ye maun learn to put awa' bairnly things. There's a heap depen'in' upo' ye, Cosmo. Ye'll be the fift laird o' the name i' the faimily, an' I'm some feart ye may be the last. It's but sma' honour, laddie, to ony man to be the last at onything; an' gien ye dinna gaither the wit ye hae, an' du the best ye can, ye're b'un' to be the last laird o' Glenwarlock. Gien it wasna for Grizzie there, wha has no richt to owerhear the affairs o' the faimily, I micht think the time had come for enlicht'nin' ye upo' things it's no shuitable ye sud gang ignorant o'. But we'll put it aff till a mair convanient sizzon, 'atween oor ain twa lanes (*us two alone*)."

"An' a mair convanient spokesman, I houp, my leddy," said Grizzie, deeply offended.

"An' wha sud that be?" rejoined her mistress, bridling.

"Ow, wha but the laird himsel'?" answered Grizzie. "Wha daur come 'atween father an' son wi' licht upo' faimily-affairs? No even the yoong mistress hersel' wad hae prezhumt upo' that!"

"Keep your place, Grizzie," said the old lady with dignity.

And Grizzie, who had gone farther in the cause of propriety than propriety itself could justify, held her peace. Only the potatoes splashed yet louder in the bowl. Her mistress sat grimly silent, for though she had had the last word and been obeyed, she was rebuked in herself. Cosmo, judging the specialty of the interview over, turned and went back to his father's chair; but just as he was seating himself again, his father appeared in the doorway.

The form was that of a tall, thin man, a little bent at the knees and bowed in the back, who yet carried himself with no small dignity cloaked in an air of general apology—as if he would have said, "I am sorry my way is not yours, for I see very

well how mistaken you must think it." He wore large strong shoes—I think a description should begin with the feet rather than the head—fit for boggy land; blue, ribbed, woollen stockings; knee-breeches of some home-made stuff: most of the cloth they wore was shorn from their own sheep, and spun, woven, and made at home; an old blue dress-coat with gilt buttons; a drab waistcoat which had once been yellow; and, to crown all, a red woollen nightcap, the top of which hung down on one side, and blossomed in a tassel.

"Weel, Grizzie!" he said, in a gentle, rather sad voice, as if the days of his mourning were not yet ended, "I'm ower sune the day."

He never passed Grizzie without greeting her, and Grizzie's devotion to him was like that of slave and that of sister combined.

"Laird," she answered, "ye can never be ower sune for yer fowk, though ye may be for yer stamack. But the taties winna be lang bilin' the day; they're some sma'."

"That's 'cause ye pare them sae near, Grizzie," said the grandmother.

"There's poosion (*poison*) i' the skins o' them," returned Grizzie.

The moment young Cosmo saw whose shadow darkened the doorway, he had risen in haste, and now stood with his hand upon the arm of the chair, waiting for his father, as if it had been a horse he held for him. The laird acknowledged the attention with a smile, sat down, and looked like the last sitter grown suddenly old. He put out his hand to his boy across the low arm of the chair; the boy laid his hand in his father's, and so they remained, neither saying a word. The laird leaned back, and sat resting. All were silent.

Notwithstanding the oddity of his dress, no one with any knowledge of humanity could have failed to see in Cosmo Warlock the elder a high-bred gentleman. His face was small, and the skin of it was puckered into wrinkles innumerable; his mouth was sweet—none the less that he had lost his teeth, and the lips sank

inward; his chin was large and strong; his blue eyes looked out from under his narrow high forehead with a softly piercing glance of great gentleness and benignity. A little gray hair clustered about his temples and the back of his head—the red nightcap hid what more there might be. There was three days' growth of gray beard on his chin, for *now that he had nobody*, he would say, he had not the heart to shave every morning.

For some time he sat looking straight before him, smiling to his mother's hands as they knitted, she casting on him now and then a look that seemed to express the consciousness of blame for not having borne him more of a man; for neither did his mother believe in him farther than that he had the best possible intentions. At the same time she never doubted he was more of a man than ever his son would be—their mothers were so different!

"Grizzie," said the laird, "hae ye a drappy o' soor milk? I'm some dry."

"Ay, that hae I, sir!" answered Grizzie with alacrity, and rising, hastened

into the darker region behind the kitchen, whence presently she emerged with a white basin full of rich milk—half cream it was indeed. Without explanation or apology she handed it to her master, who received and drank it.

"Hoots, wuman!" he said, as he returned her the empty bowl, "ye wad hae me a shargar (*a skin-and-bone calf*)! That's no soor milk!"

"I'm vexed it's no to yer taste, laird!" returned Grizzie coolly, "but I hae nane better, an' what's guid for the shargar 's guid for the mairt (*beast fattening to be killed at Martinmas*)."

"Ye tellt me ye had soor milk!" insisted the laird—without a particle of offence, rather in the tone of apology for having made away with something too good for him.

"Weel, laird," replied Grizzie, "it's naething but the guidman's milk (*the topmost after the skimming*); an' gien ye dinna ken what's guid for ye at your time o' life, it's weel there sud be anither 'at diz. What has the heid o' a faimily

to du drinkin' soor milk—eneuch to lapper (*turn to curds*) a' i' the inside o' 'im! It's for me to luik efter ye, for divna I min' ye a sma' wean i' my leddy's airms there?—an'——"

"Ye may weel that!" interrupted her mistress.

"I wasna far intil my teens, my leddy!" returned Grizzie. "An' I'm sure," she added in revenge, "it wad ill become ony wuman to grudge a man o' the laird's stan'in' a drap o' the best milk in ony cellar—no to say his ain!"

"Wha spak o' grudgin'?" said her mistress angrily.

"Ye spak yersel' sic an' siclike," answered Grizzie.

"Hoots, Grizzie! haud yer tongue, my wuman," said the laird, in the gentlest tone, yet with reproof in it. "Ye ken weel it's no my mother wad grudge me the milk ye wad gie me! It was but mysel' 'at thoucht it ower guid, bein' it's no a week yet sin' bonny Hawkie de'ed!"

"An' wad ye hae the Lord's an'intit

depen' upo' Hawkie ?" cried Grizzie with indignation.

The contest ceased; Grizzie had had the best of it, none knew better than she. In a minute or two the laird rose and went out, and Cosmo went with him.

While Cosmo's mother was alive, old Mrs. Warlock would have been indignant at the idea of sitting in the kitchen, but things had since conspired to bring her to it. She found her state very lonely in the drawing-room; there, without a daughter-in-law to go and come, she learned little or nothing of what was doing about the place; and there few that came cared to seek her out, for she had never been a favourite with the humbler neighbours, and scarcely one of any worldly standing ever called. Besides, as money grew scarcer, it became yet more necessary to economize light in the winter. Also, the drawing-room could not be made so warm as the kitchen, and with growing age the old lady grew colder. There was no lack of firing, for, as long as there were horses on the farm, peats were to be had in

plenty; but for light, even for train-oil, money had to be paid, and money was of all ordinary things the seldomest seen at Castle Warlock.

The second winter, therefore, after the death of the young mistress, as she had been called, the old lady, for the sake of company, of warmth, of economy, had a chair placed for her in the kitchen; and the change once made, custom crept in, and there she sat throughout the year; for she who had laid aside her dignity in the winter, could hardly without additional loss attempt to resume it in the summer. To the laird it was a matter of no consequence where he sat, ate, or slept. While his wife was alive, wherever she was, that was the place of his choice; when she was gone, all places were alike to him. There was, besides, that in the disposition of the man which tended to the homely—a homely graciousness characterized his whole behaviour. Hence, and from other causes evident enough, it came that not a few of the rooms of the house were by this time partially

neglected. Both the dining-room and drawing-room had grown very cold, cold as with the coldness of what is dead; and though the young laird slept in the same part of the house, not often did he enter either. But he associated with them an idea of vastness and grandeur, and attributed to the latter in particular a vague sanctity, whose origin it is not quite easy to arrive at. I think, however, such childish veneration must have the same root with all veneration for place: if there were not a natural inborn reason in such veneration, would any after influence make men capable of it? I think we shall come at length to feel all places, with all times and all spaces, venerable as the outcome of the eternal nature and the eternal thought.

CHAPTER III.

THE DRAWING-ROOM.

As soon as they were out of the kitchen, the boy pushed his hand into his father's; the father's grasped the boy's, and without a word spoken, they walked on. They would often be half a day together without a word passing between them. To be near, each to the other, was for the time enough.

Cosmo had thought his father was going somewhere about the farm, but instead of crossing to the other side of the court where stood the sheds and stables, etc., or leaving it by the gate on the right, the laird turned to the left, and led the way to a door at the farther end of the next block. It was a heavy oak door, studded with great broad iron knobs

arranged in lozenge pattern, and set deep in the thick wall. There had been a second, doubtless still stronger, flush with the external surface, for the great hooks of the hinges remained, with the bolt-hole in the stone on the opposite side. Except Grizzie to open and shut windows and attend to Cosmo's room, and Cosmo to go to it, seldom any one entered the place.

The door opened into a narrow passage, no wider than itself. Off this passage to the left was a good-sized hall with a huge fireplace. It had a great oak table at which had often feasted a jubilant company, and very little furniture besides. The walls were of bare plaster, and stained with damp. Against them were fixed a few mouldering heads of wild animals—the stag and the fox and the otter—also one ancient wolf's-head. But it was not into this room the laird led his son.

The passage ended in a spiral stone stair. It was much worn, and had so little head-room that the laird could not

ascend without stooping. Cosmo was short enough as yet to go erect, but it gave him always a feeling of imprisonment and choking, a brief agony of the imagination, though he passed through the narrow curves twice every day at least. That staircase was the oldest-looking thing about the place.

On a step broader than the rest the laird halted, and turning to the right, lifted a latch: all the doors of the house were latched. This one screaked dismally as it opened. The light in the room was just enough to show its panels divided by a great cross. The laird entered and folded back a shutter. An abiding flash of the ever young light of the summer day lit up the ancient room. It was some time since Cosmo had been in it, and the sunshine seemed to wither it up as it entered. It looked to him like a long withered wallflower.

It was a well furnished room. Some one lady at least with taste must have presided in it! But then withering does so much for beauty! The furniture was

very modern compared with the house, but not much of it was younger than the last James, or Queen Anne, and almost all of it had a stately old-maidish look. Such venerable rooms have been described, and painted, and put on the stage, and dreamed about, tens of thousands of times; yet they haunt me as if they were as young as the new children who keep the world from growing old. On the floor was an ancient carpet, wondrously darned and skilfully patched, with all its colours faded into a sweet, faint, ghost-like harmony. Several spider-legged, inlaid tables stood about, but most of the chairs were of a sturdier make; one or two were of the rich carved work of India, no doubt a great rarity when first brought to Glenwarlock. The walls had some colour, but it had grown so indistinct that no one could with certainty have said what it had been. There were three or four cabinets—one of them old Japanese; and on a table a case of gorgeous humming-birds. The cloth that covered the table and had once been scarlet was now

a dirty orange, but the birds were as bright as when they darted live jewels through tropical sunlight. They had not for the boy, however, half so much interest as a certain faded old fire-screen, lovelily worked in silks by hands to him unknown and long returned to the earth. It stood before a cold iron grate, with bulging bars, and a tall brass fender. A variety of nicknacks and ornaments, not a few of which would have been of value in the eyes of a connoisseur, crowded the chimney-piece—each with a history, mostly vanished. How still and solemn-quiet was the room with its melancholy show in the midst of the great triumphant sunny day—like some far-down hollow in a rock, the matrix of a gem! It looked as if it had done with life—as much done with it as if it were a room of the dead, hollowed in Egyptian rock; yet was it full as that of the memories of keenest life.

Having opened the shutter, the laird returned and closed the door of the room; then advancing the whole length of it,

followed by Cosmo, stopped at a sofa covered with a rich brocade, and seating himself thereon, drew the boy down beside him, and began to talk to him. There was this difference between the relation of these two and that of most fathers and sons, that, thus conducted into solemn solitude by the old man, the boy felt no dismay, no sense of fault to be found, no troubled expectation of admonition. Reverence and love held equal sway in his feeling towards his father. While the grandmother looked down on Cosmo as the son of his mother, for that very reason his father in a strange lovely way reverenced his boy: the reaction was utter devotion. He sat and looked up in his father's eyes with eyes of the same colour — that bright, sweet, soft Norwegian blue, his left hand leaning gently on his father's knee, and his face worshipping his. The old man laid his gnarled right hand on his boy's left, and, I say, began to talk to him. A silent man ordinarily, it was from no lack of speech, for he had a Celtic gift of eloquence.

"This is your birthday, my son," he said.

"Yes, papa."

"You are now fourteen."

"Yes, papa."

"You are nearly a man."

"I don't know, papa."

"So nearly, at least, Cosmo, that I think from this day you had better call me *father*, for I am going to treat you like a man, and talk to you about things I have not talked about since your mother left me. You remember your mother, Cosmo?"

This question he was seldom alone with his boy without asking—not from forgetfulness of his answer, but from desire to keep fresh his remembrance of his mother, and for the pure pleasure of talking of her to the only one with whom it did not seem profane to converse about his worshipped wife.

"Yes, father, I do."

The laird always spoke Scotch to his mother and Grizzie; the latter would have thought him seriously offended had

he addressed her in book-English; but to his Marion's son he always spoke in the best English he had, and Cosmo did what he could with it in return.

"Tell me what you remember of her," said the old man.

He had heard the same answer again and again from the boy, yet every time it was as if he hoped and watched for some fresh revelation from the lips of the lad—as if, truth being one, memory might go on recalling, as imagination goes on foreseeing.

"I remember," said the boy, "a tall beautiful woman, with long hair, which she brushed before a great big looking-glass."

The love of the son, kept alive by the love of the husband, glorifying through the mists of memory the earthly appearance of his mother, gave her the form in which he was to see her again, rather than that in which he had actually beheld her. In the mirror of love's memory the husband saw her after a similar fashion. Tall to the boy of five, she was little

above the middle height, yet the husband saw her stately in his dreams. There was nothing remarkable in her face except the expression, which after her marriage had continuously gathered tenderness and grace; yet the husband as well as the child recalled her as absolutely beautiful.

"What colour were her eyes, Cosmo?"

"I don't know, father; I never saw the colour of them; but I remember they looked at me as if I could hardly help running into them."

"She would have died for you, my boy. We must be very good, that we may see her again some day."

"I will try. I do try—father."

"You see, Cosmo, when a woman like that condescends to be wife to one of us and mother to the other, the least we can do when she is taken from us, is to give her the same love and the same obedience as when she was with us. She is with her own kind up in heaven now, but may be looking down and watching us. It may be God lets her do that, that she may see of the travail of her soul and

be satisfied—who can tell? She can't be very anxious about me now, for I am getting old, and my warfare is nearly over, and she may be getting things ready to rest me a bit. She knows I have for a long time been trying to keep the straight path, so far as I could see it, though sometimes the grass and heather have got the better of it, and made it hard to find. But she may be anxious about you, Cosmo. For you must remember that it is not enough to be a good boy, as I shall tell her you have always been; you've got to be a good man, and that is a rather different, and sometimes a harder thing. For, as soon as a man goes amongst other men, he finds they expect him to do things they ought to be ashamed of doing themselves; and then he has got to stand on his own honest legs, and not move an inch for all their pushing and pulling; and where a man loves his fellow-man and likes to be on good terms with him, that is not easy. The thing is just this, Cosmo: when you are a full-grown man, you must

be a good boy still—and there lies the difficulty. For a man to be a boy still, and a good boy, he must be a thorough man. The man that's not manly can never continue a good boy to his mother. And no man can be right manly, no man can keep true to his mother, except he remember him who is father and mother both to all men. I wish my Marion were here to teach you as she taught me. She taught me the reasonable way of prayer, Cosmo, as I have tried to teach you: when I was in any trouble, just to go into my closet, and shut to the door, and tell my secret Father—that same Father who loved you so much as to give you my Marion for a mother. But I am getting old and tired, and must soon go where I hope to learn faster. Oh, my boy! hear your father who loves you, and never do the thing you would be ashamed for your mother or me to know. Remember, nothing drops out; everything hid shall be revealed. But, of all things, if ever you should fail or fall, don't lie because you are down; get up

again; for God's sake, for your mother's sake, for my sake, get up and try again.

"It is time you should know a little about the family of which you come. Doubtless there have been many in it who would count me a foolish man for bringing you up as I have done, but those of them that are up there with your mother don't. They see that the business of life is not to get as much as you can, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with your God—with your mother's God, my son. Men may say I've made a poor thing of it, but I shall not hang my head before the public of that country because I've let the land slip from me that I couldn't keep—any more than this weary old carcase that's now crumbling away from about me. Some would tell me I ought to shudder at the thought of leaving you to such poverty, but I am too anxious about yourself, my boy, to think much about the hardships that may be waiting you. I should be far more afraid about you if I were leaving you rich. I have seen

rich people do things no poor gentleman would do. I don't mean to say anything against the rich—there are good and bad in all sorts; but I just can't be so very sorry that I am leaving you to poverty, though, if I might have had my way, it wouldn't have been so great. But he knows best who loves best. I have struggled hard to keep the old place for you; but there's hardly an acre outside the garden and close but was mortgaged before I came into it. I've been all my life trying to pay off, but have made little progress. The house is free, however, and the garden; and don't you part with the old place, my boy, except you see you *ought*. But rather than anything not out and out honest, anything the least doubtful, sell every stone. Let all go, if you should have to beg your way home to us. Come clean, my son, as my Marion bore you."

Here Cosmo interrupted his father, to ask what *mortgaged* meant. Then the laird laid before him the whole condition of the property, showed him where the

papers concerning it were, and told him who was his legal adviser. Weary then of business, of which he had all his life had much more than he liked, the laird turned to pleasanter things, and began to tell Cosmo anecdotes of the family.

"What in mercy can hae come o' the laird, think ye, my leddy?" said Grizzie. "Here's the yoong laird's birthday, an' I kenna whaur to gang to cry them til their denners!"

"Ring the great bell," said the grandmother, mindful of old custom.

"'Deed I s' du naething o' the kin'!" said Grizzie—but to herself; "it's eneuch to raise a regiment—gien it camna doon upo' my heid!"

But she had her suspicion where they were, and finding, as she expected, the great door open, ascended to the drawing-room.

The two were sitting at a table, with the genealogical tree of the family spread before them; the father had been telling tale after tale, and the son listening with delight. The laird's design was neither

to glorify his family, nor teach its history, but to impress all he knew of ancestral nobility upon his boy. So much absorbed were they, that Grizzie's knock startled them.

"Yer denners is ready, laird," she said, standing erect in the doorway.

"Verra weel, Grizzie! I thank ye," returned the laird. "Cosmo, we'll take a walk this evening, and then I'll tell you more. Come to dinner now. You go first.—I houp ye hae something in honour o' the occasion, Grizzie," he said in a half-whisper when he reached the door, where the old woman waited to follow them.

"I teuk it upo' me, laird," answered Grizzie in the same tone, while Cosmo was going down the stair, "to put a cock an' a leek thegither, an' they'll be nane the waur 'at ye hae keepit them i' the pot a while."

They descended and overtook the boy, who was lingering at the door.

"The Lord bless ye upo' this bonnie day, Cosmo!" said Grizzie. "An' may

ye be aye a comfort to them 'at awes (*owns*) ye, as ye hae been to this present."

"I houp I may, Grizzie," responded Cosmo; and all went to the kitchen.

There the table was covered with a clean cloth of the finest of homespun, and everything set out with the same nicety as if the meal had been in the dining-room. The old lady, who had in truth forgotten what day it was until reminded by Grizzie, had now her best cap on, and was seated at the head of the board, waiting their arrival. She made a kind speech to the boy, the laird said a short grace, and then dinner began. It did not last long. They had the leek-soup first, then the fowl that was boiled in it, with the potatoes of Grizzie's paring, then pancakes, and dinner was over—except for the laird, who had a little toddy. Cosmo had never even tasted strong drink. Leaving the table he wandered out, pondering many things.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AFTERNOON SLEEP.

WITHOUT having thought whither he went, he found himself presently in a favourite haunt, in which, notwithstanding, he always had a curious feeling, not only of being far from home, but of being in a strange country. He had followed the torrent down to the valley river, then ascended the latter beyond a sudden sharp turn, and crossed it. He was now in a lonely nook of the glen, with steep *braes* about him on all sides, some of them smooth and covered with grass, others rugged and unproductive. He threw himself down in the clover of the little meadow, and straightway felt as if he were miles from home. Not a shadow

of life was to be seen—cottage-chimney or any smoke, human being, work of hands, or sign of cultivation except the grass and clover. I do not know whether it came from his having learned in childhood that here he was beyond his father's land, or from an early sense of loneliness which a brooding fancy had fixed, but as often as he visited the spot, he felt like a hermit of the wilderness cut off from human society, and was haunted with a vague sense of neighbouring hostility. Possibly it came of a childish fancy that the nook ought to be theirs still, as it had once been; but by no wrong outside of itself had the family lost it.

His sense of *away-from-homeness*, however, was not strong enough to keep Cosmo from falling into such a dreamful reverie as by degrees naturally terminated in slumber. Seldom is sleep far from one who lies in the grass, with the sound of waters in his ears. And ever active as Cosmo's mind was, perhaps in part because of its activity, he was very ready to fall asleep when warm and supine.

The moment he woke from what seemed a dreamless slumber, his half-roused senses were called upon to render account of something extraordinary of which they could not immediately lay hold: what could the strange thing be which he saw on the crest of the height before him on the other side of the water? Was it a fire in a grate, thinned away by the sunlight? How could there be a grate where there was neither house nor wall? As his eyes recovered themselves, even in heraldry the thing he saw would have seemed strange. There stood a frightful-looking creature half consumed in light—yet a pale light, surely not strong enough to burn! It could not be a phœnix, for he saw no wings, and thought he saw four legs. He burst out laughing, and laughed that the hills echoed. His sleep-blinded eyes had at length found their focus!

"I see!" he said, "I see what it is! It's Jeames Gracie's coo 's been loupin' ower the mune, an' stucken upo' 't!"

In very truth there was the moon between the legs of the cow! She did

not remain there long, however, but was soon on the cow's back.

He bethought him of a couplet that Grizzie had taught him when he was a child: —

> "Whan the coo loups ower the mune,
> The reid gowd rains intil men's shune."

And in after-life he recalled not unfrequently the odd vision. When, imagining he had solved some difficulty, the same would presently emerge in a new form, as if it had but taken the time necessary to change its garment, he would say to himself with a sigh, "The coo's no ower the mune yet!" and set himself afresh to shape a handle on the infinite.

Grizzie, who was out searching for him, heard the roar of his laughter, and guided by the sound, spied him where he lay. Presently she was looking down upon him like a benevolent gnome that had discovered a friendless mortal asleep in a place of danger.

"Eh, Cosmo, laddie, ye'll get yer deid o' caul'!" she cried. "An' preserve's

a' ! what set ye lauchin' in sic a fearsome fashion as yon? Ye're surely no fey (*acting unlike one's self from the approach of doom*) ! "

"Na, I'm no fey, Grizzie. Ye wad hae lauchen yersel' to see Jeames Gracie's coo wi' the mune 'atween the hin' an' the fore legs o' her. It was terrible funny."

"Hoots ! I see naething to lauch at i' that. The puir coo cudna help whaur the mune wad gang. The haivenly boadies is no to be restricket."

Again Cosmo burst into a great laugh, and this time Grizzie, terrified lest he should in reality be *fey*, grew angry, and seizing hold of him by the arm, pulled lustily.

"Get up, I tell ye !" she cried. "Here's the laird speirin' what's come o' ye 'at ye come na hame to yer tay !"

But Cosmo instead of rising only laughed the more, and went on until at length Grizzie made use of a terrible threat.

"As sure's sowens (*oat-meal jelly*) !" she said, "gien ye dinna haud yer tongue

wi' that menseless-like lauchin', I'll no tell ye anither auld-warld tale afore Mairti'mas."

"Will ye tell me ane the nicht gien I haud my tongue an' gang hame wi' ye?" rejoined Cosmo.

"Ay, that wull I—that's gien I can min' upo' ane."

He rose at once, and laughed no more, and they walked home together in the utmost peace.

After tea, father and son went out for their walk, and in the course of it called on James Gracie, the owner of the cow whose *instellation* had so much amused Cosmo. James was an old man, a weaver to trade, whose father and grandfather before him had for many a decade done the weaving-work, both in linen and wool, required at the castle, but who had been on the property, in the person of his ancestors, from a time almost immemorial. He had but a cottage, and a little bit of land, barely enough to feed the cow, the playmate of the moon; but, poor little place as James's was, if the laird would

have sold it, the price within his reach would have gone a good way towards clearing the rest of his property of its encumbrances. For the situation of the cottage was such as to make it a very Naboth's vineyard in the eyes of a certain lord Lumbiggin, on the border of whose land it stood—a lord of session he was, whose father had been so little of a gentleman, that the lordship in addition had not been enough to make a gentleman of his son. He was one of those trim, orderly men, who will sacrifice anything—not to beauty—of that they have in general no sense—but to tidiness. To them it is the first thing, apparently because its pursuit is the nearest approach to creative energy of which they are capable. Hence the dwelling of James Gracie, visible from not a few of his windows, and very near the gate of his private road, was an eyesore to him, for it was not tidy, though to any life-loving nature as pleasant to know as it was picturesque to look at. But the decentest show of poverty seems to be felt as a reproach by

some of the rich!—why else are they so anxious to get it out of their sight? Anyhow lord Lumbiggin could not bear the proximity of a cottage which no painter would have consented to omit themselves from his landscape.

The laird sat down and had some talk with James and his wife, while Cosmo went into the little garden with Agnes their granddaughter. There they seated themselves under an elder tree.

"Yon'er 's lord Lickmyloof leanin' ower his gate, an' glowerin' at 's!" said Agnes.

That was the name by which lord Lumbiggin was generally known throughout the country. Many who called him by it had never even heard his real title. It was given him because of a nasty habit he had, which I need not indicate further than by mentioning that the word *loof* in Scotch means the palm of the hand.

"Ye're no feart at 'im, are ye, Aggie?" said Cosmo.

"Na; he canna du mair nor kill 's," answered Agnes with a wise smile.

"My father 'ill never lat 'im come near ye," said Cosmo.

"I ken that—no gien he can help it," rejoined Agnes.

"My father wad jist protec' a'body," said Cosmo.

"An' wha is there to protec' *him?*" returned Agnes sadly.

"Ane 'at 's abune a'," replied Cosmo.

"Ye're richt there, I doobtna a hair," responded Agnes.

"That's jist like ane o' Grizzie's sayin's," remarked Cosmo, and they laughed together.

CHAPTER V.

THE SCHOOL.

THE next morning, by the steep farm road, and the parish road which ran along the border of the river, Cosmo, on his way to school, with his books in a green baize bag hung by the strings over his shoulder, came out from among the hills upon a comparative plain. But there were hills all around him yet, though farther off. They were not very high hills—few of them reaching two thousand feet—but bleak and bare, even under the glow of the summer sun: the time of heather was not yet; then they would show warm and rich—to the eyes of poet and painter, that is; the farmers there would have felt it an insult to be asked to admire them at any time: they were

incapable of production! And in truth many a man who now admires and enjoys waste places, would be unable to do so if, like those farmers, he had to struggle with nature for little more than a bare living. What with early, long-lasting, and bitter winters, and the poverty of the soil in many parts, the struggle there was a severe one.

Leaving the river, the road ascended a little, and joined the highway, which here ran along a level consisting mostly of peat-land lately subjugated. It went for two miles in a straight line, fenced in parts by stone walls without mortar, abhorrent to the eye of Cosmo; in other parts by low walls of earth, covered with grass for the vagrant cow, sprinkled with loveliest wild flowers for the poet-peasant, burrowed in by wild bees for the adventurous delight of the honey-drawn schoolboy. Glad I am such had not vanished from Scotland before I found myself there. In some parts only a small ditch divided the fields from the road, and in others there was no kind of

fence at all. It was a dreary road even in summer, though not therefore without its own attendant interests and even beauties.

A short way past the second milestone, he came to the first straggling houses of the village. It was called Muir o' Warlock, after the moor on which it stood, as the moor was named after the river that ran through it, and the river after the glen, and that from the family of Warlock, which had thus scattered its cognomen around it. A somewhat dismal-looking village it was—except to those that knew its people: to some of them it was beautiful—as the plainest face is beautiful to him who through it sees a fair soul inside. The highway, a broad fine road, fit for the richest country under the sun, formed, with a path on each side, its only street. Some of its houses stood immediately on the edge of the path; some of them receded a little, with a garden between. They were almost all of one story, built of stone, and rough-cast—*harled* they called

it there. They had mostly roofs of thick thatch, in which an occasional half-smothered pane of glass might hint at some sort of room beneath. A few were slated, and had dormer windows.

As Cosmo passed along, he saw every craftsman in the place at work; from blacksmith to tailor all were busy. Now and then he was met by a strong scent, as of burning leather, from the oak-bark which, after its astringent power had been exhausted in the tanpit, some of the housewives used for fuel; but mostly the air was filled with the odour of burning peat. He knew almost everybody, and was kindly greeted as he went along —nor the less that some of them, when they heard he was not at school the day before, had remarked that his birthday hardly brought him enough to keep it with. The vulgarity belonging to the worship of Mammon is by no means confined to the rich. Many of the villagers, having next to nothing, yet thought possession the one thing—money, houses, lands, the only inheritances. It is a

marvel that even world-loving people should never see with what a load they oppress the lives of their children when, instead of bringing them up to earn their own living, and thus enjoy at least *the game* of life, they leave them a fortune enough to sink a devil yet deeper in hell. Was it nothing to Cosmo to inherit a long line of ancestors whose story he knew—their virtues, their faults, their wickedness, their humiliation? Was it nothing to inherit the nobility of a father such as his—the graciousness of a mother such as that father caused him to remember her? Was there no occasion for the laird to rejoice on the birthday of a boy whom he believed to have inherited all the virtues of his race, and left all their vices behind?

From time immemorial, until the present schoolmaster took it upon himself to abolish it, the birthday of "the yoong laird" had been a holiday to the school as well as to himself. Throughout the village, although there were several proprietors whose lands came closer to it,

nearly all of whom were lairds, and although the village itself had ceased to belong to the family, Glenwarlock was yet always *the* laird; and the better part in the hearts of even its least elevated inhabitants honoured him as the best man in the country, "thof he hed little skeel o' haudin' his ain nest thegither."

There is scarce a money-making man who does not believe poverty the cousin, if not the child of fault; and the more unscrupulous, *within the law*, a man has been in making his money, the more he regards the man who seems to have lost the race he has won, as somehow or other to blame. "People with nought are naughty." Nor is this judgment confined to the morally unscrupulous. Few permitted to be successful care to conjecture that it may be the will of the power that, in part through their affairs, rules men, that some, of whom better can be made by preventing their so-called success, should therefore be unsuccessful: some men rise with the treatment under which others would sink. But although few of

the inhabitants of Muir o' Warlock would have taken interest in such a theory of discipline, they all loved the man to whom they were incapable of yielding the just benefit of its application.

They all liked, and some who knew him best loved the young laird too; for if he had no lands, neither had he any pride, they said, and was as happy sitting with an old woman, sharing her tea, as at a lord's table. He was less of a favourite at school, however. Incapable of self-assertion, his inborn consciousness of essential humanity rendering it next to impossible to him to claim anything, some of the bigger boys were less than friendly with him. But the point in his behaviour particularly distasteful to them was that he seemed to scorn even an honest advantage, for he never could bring himself, in the small matters of dealing that pass between boys at school, to make the least profit. He had a passion for fair play, which, combined with an active love to his neighbour, made an advantage, although perfectly understood and recognized,

almost a physical pain to him: he shrank from it with something like disgust. I may not, however, conceal my belief, that there was in this a rudimentary tinge of the pride of those of his ancestors who looked down upon commerce, though not upon oppression or even on robbery. But the true man will change to nobility even the instincts derived from strains of inferior moral development in his race—as the oyster makes, they say, of the sand-grain a pearl.

Greeting the tailor through his open window, where he sat cross-legged on his table, the shoemaker on his stool, which, this lovely summer morning, he had brought to the door of his cottage, and the smith in his nimbus of sparks through the half-door of his smithy, and receiving from each a kindly response, the boy walked steadily on till he came to the school. There, on the heels of the master, the boys and girls were in the act of crowding in, and he entered along with them.

The religious preliminaries over, con-

sisting of a dry and apparently grudging recognition of a sovereignty that required the homage, and the reading of a chapter of the Bible in class, the *secular* business of the school commenced. Cosmo was sitting with his books before him, occupied with a hard passage in *Cæsar*, when the master left his desk and came to him.

"You'll have to make up for lost time to-day, Cosmo," he said.

Now if anything was certain to make Cosmo angry, it was the show, however slight, of disapproval of anything his father thought, or did, or sanctioned. His face flushed, and he answered quickly—

"The time wasn't lost, sir."

This reply made the master in his turn angry, but he restrained himself.

"I'm glad of that," he said. "I may then expect to find you prepared with your lessons."

"I learned my lessons for yesterday," Cosmo answered, "but my father says it's no play to learn lessons."

"Your father's not master of this school."

"He's maister o' me!" returned the boy, lapsing into the mother tongue.

The master took the youth's devotion to his father for insolence to himself.

"I shall say no more," he rejoined, still using the self-command which of all men an autocrat requires, "till I find how you do in your class. That you are the best scholar in it, is no reason why you should idle away hours in which you might have been laying up store for the time to come."—This last was a phrase much favoured of the master—in present application foolish.—"But probably your father has no intention of sending you to college?"

"My father hasna said, an' I haena speirt," answered Cosmo, with his eyes on his book.

Still misinterpreting the boy, the conceit and ill-temper of the master here overcame him, causing him to forget the proprieties and his English together.

"Haud on the gait ye're in, laddie, an' ye'll be as great a fule as yer father himsel'!" he said.

Cosmo rose, white as the wall behind him, looked in the master's eyes one brief moment, caught up his *Cæsar*, and dashed it in his face. Most boys would then have made for the door, but that was not Cosmo's idea of bearing witness. The moment the book left his hand, he drew himself up, stood like a statue, looked full at the master, and waited. Not by a motion would he avoid or avert any consequence of his act.

He had not long to wait. But a corner of the book had gone into the master's eye, and clapping his hand to it, he seemed for a moment or two lost in suffering. All at once he clenched his fist, and knocked the boy down. Cosmo fell backward, with his legs over the form, his head struck the floor, and he lay.

A shriek arose, and a girl came rushing up.

"Go to your seat, Agnes!" shouted the master, and turning from her, stood, with his handkerchief to one eye, looking down on the boy. So little did he know

him, he suspected him of pretending to be more hurt than he was.

"Touch me gien ye daur," cried Agnes, and stooped to take his legs off the form.

The master seized her, pulled her away, and flung her from him that she almost fell.

But by this time the pain in his eye had subsided a little, and he began to doubt whether indeed the boy was pretending. He began also to feel uneasy as to the possible consequences of his hasty act—not half so uneasy, however, as he would have felt had the laird been as well-to-do as his neighbour, Lord Lickmyloof: he, the master thought, would be rather pleased than otherwise at any grief that might befall either Cosmo or the lass Gracie, and he did not therefore much fear anything serious from the failure of his self-command. He dragged the boy up by the arm and set him in his place on the form ere Agnes could return; but his face was as that of one dead, and he fell forward on the desk. With a second great cry, Agnes

sprang to him. She was a strong girl of sixteen, accustomed to all kinds of work, outdoor and indoor. She put her arms round Cosmo's waist from behind, drew him from the form, and sped with him thus to the door, which because of the heat stood open. There she took him in her arms, and literally ran with him along the street. The master had had enough of it, and did not attempt to hinder her.

CHAPTER VI.

GRANNIE'S COTTAGE.

She had not to pass many houses before she came to that of her grandfather's mother, an aged woman, I need not say, but in very tolerable health and strength, nevertheless. She sat at her spinning wheel with her door wide open. Suddenly, and to her dulled sense noiselessly, Aggie came staggering in with her burden. She dropped him on the old woman's bed, then collapsed on the floor, her heart and lungs going wildly.

"I' the name o' a'!" cried her great-grandmother, stopping her wheel and breaking her thread, the end of which twisted madly up amongst the revolving iron teeth now emerging from the mist

of their own speed, in which a moment before they had looked ethereal as the vibration-film of a dragon-fly's wings.

She rose with a haste marvellous for her years, and approaching, looked down on the prostrate form of the girl.

"It can never be my ain Aggie," she faltered, "to rush intil my quaiet hoose that gait, fling a man upo' my bed, an' fa' her len'th upo' my flure!"

But Agnes was not yet able to reply. She could only sign with her hand to the bed, which she did with such energy that her great-grandmother — *Grannie*, she called her, as did the whole of the village —turned at once thitherward. She could not see well, and the box-bed was dark, so she did not at first recognize Cosmo. But the moment she suspected who it was, she uttered a cry, feeble and wailful.

"The Michty be ower's! what's come to my bairn?" she said.

"The maister knockit him doon," gasped Agnes.

"Eh, lassie! rin for the doctor."

"Na, na!" came feebly from the bed.

"I dinna want ony notice ta'en o' the business."

"Are ye sair hurtit, my bairn?" asked the old woman.

"My heid's some sair, an' throughither-like," answered Cosmo; "but I'll jist lie still a wee, an' syne I'll be able to gang hame. I'm some sick. I winna gang back to the schuil the day."

"Na, my bonny man, that ye sanna!" cried Grannie, in a tone of mingled pity and indignation.

A moment more, and Agnes rose from the earth, for earth it was, quite fresh; and the two did all they could to make him comfortable. Agnes would have gone at once to let his father know: she was perfectly able, she said, and in truth seemed nothing the worse for her fierce exertion. But Cosmo said, "Bide a wee, Aggie, an' we'll gang hame thegither. I'll be better in twa or three minutes."

He did not get better so fast as he expected, however; and the only condition on which Grannie would consent not to send for the doctor, was that Aggie should go and tell his father.

"But eh, Aggie!" said the boy, "dinna lat him think there's onything to be fleyt aboot. It's naething but a gey knap o' the heid, for I'm sure the maister didna inten' duin' me ony sarious injury. But my father's sure to gie 'im fair play! He gies a'body fair play."

Agnes set out, and Cosmo fell asleep.

She hurried to the castle, and in the yard found the laird.

"Weel, lassie!" he said, "what brings ye here this time o' day? What for are ye no at the school? Ye'll hae little eneuch o' 't by an' by whan the hairst (*harvest*) 's here."

"It's the yoong laird!" said Aggie, and stopped.

"What's come till 'im?" asked the laird quickly, and in the sharpened tone of anxiety.

"It's no muckle, he says himsel'. But his heid's some sair yet."

"What maks his heid sair? He was weel eneuch whan he gaed i' the mornin'!"

"The maister knockit 'im doon."

The laird started as if one had struck him on the face. The blood reddened his forehead, and his old eyes flashed like two stars. The battle-fury of his fighting race rushed up from ancient fountains in the roots of his being, and almost whelmed his throbbing brain. He clenched his withered fist, drew himself up straight, and made his knees strong. For one moment he was again in the prime of life and its pride. The next his fingers relaxed, his hand fell by his side, and he bowed his head.

"The Lord hae mercy upo' me!" he murmured. "I was near takin' the affairs o' ane o' his intil *my* han's!"

He covered his face with his wrinkled hands, and the girl stood beside him in awe-filled silence. She did not quite comprehend, and was troubled at seeing him stand thus motionless. In the trembling voice of one who would comfort a superior, she said at length—

"Dinna greit, laird. He'll be better, I'm thinkin', afore ye win til 'im. It was Grannie gart me come—no him."

Speechless the laird turned, and without entering the house, walked away.

He had reached the valley-road before he discovered that Agnes was behind him.

"Dinna ye come, Aggie," he said, looking over his shoulder; "ye may be wantit at hame."

"Ye dinna think I wad ley ye, laird! —'cep' ye was to sen' me frae ye. I'm 'maist as guid's a man to gang wi' ye—wi' the advantage o' bein' a wuman. Ye see we can daur mair nor a man—but, guid forgie me!—no mair nor the yoong laird when he flang his *Cæsar* i' the maister's face."

The laird stopped, turned sharply round, and looked at her.

"What did he that for?" he asked.

"'Cause he ca'd yersel' a fule," answered the girl, with the utmost simplicity, and no less reverence.

The laird drew himself up once more, and again for a moment looked twenty years younger. It was neither pride that inspired him, nor indignation, but the

father's joy at finding in his son his champion.

"Mony ane's ca'd me that, I weel believe, lassie, though no to my ain face or that o' my bairn afore—whether deservt or no, Ane kens. It's no by the word o' man we stan' or fa'; but by hoo the Maister luiks upon oor endeevour to gang by the thing he says. Min' this, lassie—lat fowk say as they like, but du ye as *he* likes, an', or a' be dune, they'll be upo' their k-nees to ye. An' sae they'll be yet to my bairn—though I'm some tribled he sud hae saired (*served*) the maister—e'en as he deservt."

"What cud he du, sir? It wasna for himsel' he strack! An' syne he muved na an inch, but stude there like a rock, nor liftet a han' to defen' himsel', but jist loot the maister tak his wull o' 'im!"

A flash of the joy eternal illuminated the father's soul. He turned again to the road, and the pair tramped swiftly along, heeding nothing on either hand as they went, Aggie lithe and active, the laird stooping greatly in his forward

anxiety to see his injured boy, but walking much faster "than his age afforded."

Ere they reached the village, the mid-day recess had come, and everybody knew what had happened. Sincere were all, and some loud, in praise of the boy's behaviour, and many were the eyes that from window and door watched Glen-warlock as he hurried down the street to Grannie's, where everybody knew the young laird was lying, but as he passed, no one spoke above a whisper. The laird walked straight on, with his eyes to the ground, glancing neither to the right hand nor the left; and as did the laird, so did Aggie.

The door of Grannie's cottage stood open. There was a step down, but the laird knew it well. Turning to the left through a short passage, in the window of which stood a large hydrangea, shadowing two wooden pails of water below, he lifted the latch of the inner door, bowed his tall head, and entered the room where lay his darling. With a courteous obeisance to Grannie, he went straight up to

the bed, saw that Cosmo slept, and stood regarding him with a full heart. Who can tell but him who knows it, how much more it is to be understood by one's own, than by all the world beside! To him who is supported by his own few, how small a thing is the misprision of the multitude!

The room was dark though it was summer, and although it had two windows, one to the street, and one to the garden behind: both were nearly filled up with plants favoured of Grannie, so that little light could get in, while that little was half swallowed by the general brownness. For ceiling and floor were of a dark brown, the beams and boards of the one old and interpenetrated with smoke, and the other of hard-beaten clay, also full of smoke. A tall eight-day clock stood in one corner, up to which whoever would learn from it the time had to advance confidentially, and consult its face on tiptoe with peering eyes. Beside it was a beautifully polished chest of drawers; a tea-table of old mahogany stood in the

centre, and some dark-shiny wooden chairs against the walls. A closet opened at the head of the bed, and at the foot of it was the door of the room, so that the bed was in a recess,—with doors, which were in a line with those of the closet and the room. A fire, partly of peat, partly of tan, burned on the little hearth.

Cosmo opened his eyes, and saw those of his father looking down upon him. He stretched out his arms, and drew the aged head upon his bosom.

"How do you find yourself, my boy?" said the laird, gently releasing himself. "I know all about it; you need not trouble yourself to tell me more than just how you are."

"Better, father—much better," answered Cosmo. "But there is one thing I must tell you. Just before it happened, we were reading in the Bible class about Samson—how the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and with the jaw-bone of an ass he slew ever so many of the Philistines; and when the master said the bad word, it seemed as if the spirit of the

Lord came upon me; for I was not in a rage, but filled with what seemed a holy indignation; and as I had no ass's jaw-bone handy, I took my *Cæsar* and flung it as hard and as straight as I could in his face.—I am not so sure about it now," he added, a little sadly.

"Tak' ye nae thoucht anent it, Cosmo, my bairn," said the old woman, taking up the word. "It's no a hair 'ayont what he deserved 'at daured put sic a word to the best man in a' the cuintry. By the han' o' a babe, sic as Dawvid 'afore Goliah o' Gath, heth the Lord rebuked the enemy. The Lord himsel's upo' yer side, laird, to gie ye siccan a son."

"I never kent him lift his han' afore," said the laird, as if he would fain mitigate judgment on youthful indiscretion, "—excep' it was to the Kirkmalloch bull whan he ran at 's as gien he wad hae cleart the warl o' 's."

"The mair like it *was* the speerit o' the Lord, as the bairn himsel' jaloost (*jealoused, suspected*)," remarked Grannie, in a tone of confidence, to which the laird

was ready enough to yield; "an' whaur the speerit o' the Lord is, there's leeberty," she added, quoting for the words rather than the meaning.

Glenwarlock stooped and kissed his son, then went to fetch the doctor. Before he returned, Cosmo was asleep again, and the doctor would not have him waked. He assured the laird there was no danger, and recommended him to go home. The boy must remain where he was for the night, he said; if the least cause for uneasiness should appear, he would send his gig for him at once.

"I don't know what to think," returned the laird: "it would occasion Grannie so much trouble and inconvenience!"

"'Deed, laird, ye sud be ashamed to say sic a thing: it'll be naething o' the kin'!" cried the old woman. "Here he s' bide—wi' your leave, sir, an' no muv frae whaur he lies! There's anither bed in the cloaset there. But, troth, what wi' the sorrow i' my banes, an'—an'—the din o' the rottans (*rats*), we s' ca' 't,

mony's the nicht I gang to nae bed ava' (*of all, at all*); an' to hae the yoong laird sleepin' there, an' keep watch ower him, 'ill be jist like haein' a bairn i' the hoose, an' bein' o' some consequence again. Eh, sir, it's a lang time sin' I was onybody i' this warl'! I'm sure I houp they'll hae something for auld fowk to du i' the neist, for there's unco* little here."

"Hoots, Mistress Forsyth," returned the laird, "the' 'll be naebody auld there!"

"Hoo am *I* to win in than, sir? *I'm* auld, gien onybody ever was auld! An' hoo's yersel' to win in, sir—for ye maun be some auld by this time, thof I min' weel yer father a bit loonie (*a small boy*) in a tartan kilt?"

"What wad ye say to bein' made yoong again, auld freen'?" suggested the laird, with a smile of wonderful sweetness.

"Eh, sir! there's naething to that effec' i' the word."

* *Unco* is from the old *uncouth*, which meant *unknown*. It is here used as an intensifying adverb, and has the force of *extremely*.

"Hoot!" rejoined the laird, "wad ye hae me plaguit to tell the laddie there a' thing I wad du for him, as gien he hadna a hert o' his ain to tell 'im a score o' things—ay, hun'ers o' things? Dinna ye ken 'at the speerit o' man 's the can'le o' the Lord?"

"Hoo is 't 'at sae mony follows their ain fancies than, laird? What comes o' yer can'le there?"

"That's them 'at never luiks whaur the licht fa's, but aye some ither gait, no carin' to walk by the same. But them 'at orders their w'ys by what licht they hae, there's no fear o' them. Even sud they stummle, they sanna fa'."

"'Deed, laird, I'm thinkin' ye may be richt! I hae stummlet mony's the time, but I'm no doon yet! I hae a guid houp 'at maybe, puir dissiple as I am, the Maister may lat on (*allow*) 'at he kens me."

Cosmo began to stir. His father went to the bedside, and saw at a glance that the boy was better. He told him what the doctor had decreed. Cosmo declared

himself able to get up and go home that minute. But his father would not hear of it.

"I can't bear to think of you walking back all the way alone, papa—father!" objected Cosmo.

"Ye dinna think, Cosmo," interposed Aggie, "'at I'm gaein' to lat the laird gang hame himlane, an' me here to be his body-gaird! I ken my duty better nor that."

But the laird did not go till he had taken tea with Grannie, and the doctor had again come and gone, having said decidedly that all Cosmo needed was a little rest, and that he would be quite well in a day or two.

CHAPTER VII.

DREAMS.

THE gloaming came down much sooner in Grannie's cottage than on the sides of the eastward hills, but though the room was always dusky, it was never at this season quite dark at any time of the night. The old woman made up her little fire, and it glowed a bright heart to the shadowy place, for, though it was summer, such an old nurse needed a little extra warmth to her limbs during the night-watches. Then she sat down in her great chair, and all was still.

"What for arena ye spinnin', Grannie?" said Cosmo. "I like fine to hear yer wheel singin' like a muckle flee (*fly*) upo' the winnock.* It spins i' my heid lang

* Diminutive of *window*.

lingles * o' thouchts, an' dreams, an' *wadbe's*. Neist to hearkenin' til a tale, I like to hear a wheel spinnin'. It has a w'y o' 'ts ain wi' me."

"I was feart it micht vex ye wi' the soomin' o' 't," answered Grannie, and rose, lighted her little lamp, and sat down to her wheel.

For a long unweary time, Cosmo lay listening — an aerial Amphion, building castles in the air to its monotonous music, which, like the drone of the bagpipes, would accompany any of his dream-tunes.

When a man comes to trust in God thoroughly, he shrinks from castle-building, lest his faintest fancy should run counter to that loveliest Will; but a boy's dreams are nevertheless a part of his education. And the true heart will not leave the blessed conscience out even in its dreams.

Those of Cosmo were chiefly of a gracious woman, much older than himself, whom he obeyed and served. They

* A *lingle*—something long by entanglement.

came from the heart that needed a mother, and were bodied out from the memory, far-off and faint, of his own mother, and the imaginations of her so often roused by his father. This woman would be now one, now another of the powers of the fire, the air, the earth, and the water, who favoured, helped, and protected him, through dangers and trials many. Such imaginings may be unhealthy for those who will not face duty; but to those who labour in the direction of their ideal, dreams, I think, do no hurt, fostering rather the ideal.

When at length the spinning-wheel ceased its hum, the silence enwrapped Cosmo like the silence after a song, and his thoughts refused to do their humming alone. He had been all the time with sylphs in a great palace, on the tree-tops of a forest ages old; where the buxom air bathed every limb, and was to his ethereal body as water; where every room rocked like the baby's cradle of the nursery rhyme, but equilibrium attended the merest motion of the will; where the birds nested

in the cellars, the squirrels ran up and down the stairs, the woodpeckers pulled themselves along the columns and rails by their beaks, and all kinds of flashing winged things haunted the domes and ceilings, and perched on the cornices, brackets, and couches; where the wind swung the whole city with a rhythmic roll and rime, and the sway as of tempest-waves, music-ruled to ordered cadences; where, far below, lower than the cellars, the deer, and the mice, and the dormice, and the foxes, and all wild things ran in its caves; and there he was watched and loved and taught by the most gracious and graceful, the most ethereally tender and powerful of beings: from this high city of the sylphs, he fell supine into Grannie's box-bed, with the departed hum of her wheel spinning out its last ghost-thread of sound in his disappointed brain.

In after years recalling the dreams of his boyhood, he never sighed after them as something gone, but would say to himself, "What matter! My own mother is waiting me, fairer and stronger and real.

I imagined the elves; God imagined my mother."

Here the unconscious magician of the mystery, who had seemed to be spinning his very brain into dreams, rose, and, drawing near, said, as if to sweep down the last cobweb of the airy phantasy she had first called up—

"Ir ye waukin', Cosmo, my bairn?"

"Ay am I," answered Cosmo, with a faint pang, and a strange sense of loss: when should he dream the like again?

"Soon, soon, Cosmo!" he might have heard, could he have interpreted the telephonic signals from the depths of his own being. "Wherever the creative Pneuma can enter, there it enters; and no door stands so wide to it as that of the obedient heart."

"Weel, ye maun hae yer supper," said Grannie, "an' syne ye maun say yer prayers, an' hae dune wi' Tyseday, an' gang on til Wudensday."

"I'm nae wantin' ony supper, thank ye," said the boy.

"Ye maun hae something, my bonny

man; for them 'at aits ower little, as weel's them 'at aits ower muckle, the nichtmear rides—an' she's a fearsome horse! Ye can never win upo' the back o' *her*, for as guid a rider as ye're weel kent to be, my bairn! Sae wull ye hae a drappy parritch, or a sup o' gruel, sic as yer mother used to like weel frae my han', whan it sae happent I was i' the hoose?"

Cosmo chose the gruel, and from his nest watched the process of its making. Several times he fell asleep and woke again before it was finished, but when he had taken it, he fell asleep in earnest.

When he woke next, it was in the middle of the night. The lamp was nearly burned out: it had a long, red, disreputable nose, that spoke of exhausted oil. Grannie was asleep in her chair. The clock had struck something, and the sound of its bell was yet faintly pulsing the air. He sat up, and looked out into the room. Almost a sensation was upon him—he could not tell of what. He felt as if something had been going on besides the striking of the clock, and were

not yet over—as if something was even now being done in the room. But there the old woman slept, motionless, and apparently in perfect calm! Her calm, however, could not have been so profound as it seemed, for presently she began to talk. At first came only portions of broken sentences, parted occasionally by a long pause; and just as he had concluded she would say nothing more, she would begin again. There was something awful to the fancy of the boy in this issuing of words from the lips of one apparently unconscious of surrounding things, and her voice, hardly the voice he knew, came to him like that of one speaking from another world. He was a brave boy; conscience or imagination could make him tremble, but of cowardice he knew nothing: his hair might rise upon his head, but that head he never hid beneath the bed clothes. He now sat staring through the gloom at the old woman leaning back in her chair, muttering at irregular intervals. By and by she spoke a little more continuously, and now

Cosmo's heart had got a little quieter, and making less noise in his ears allowed him to hear better. After a few words seemingly unconnected, she began to murmur something that sounded like verse, and Cosmo soon perceived that she was saying the same thing over and over. At length he had not only made out every word of the few lines, but had them so as to remember them :—

"Catch yer naig an' pu' his tail;
In his hin' heel caw (*drive*) a nail;
Rug his lugs (*pull his ears*) frae ane anither—
Stan' up, an' ca' the king yer brither."

When first he repeated to himself the lines in their completeness, the old woman still muttering them, he could not help laughing, and the noise roused her. She woke—not, like most young people, with gradual recovery of consciousness: all at once she sat wide awake in her chair.

"Was I snorin', laddie, 'at ye leuch?" she asked, in a tone of slight offence.

"Eh, na!" replied Cosmo. "I leuch or (*before*) I kent—ye was sayin' some-

thing sae funny i' yer sleep—a queer jingle o' poetry like."

Therewith he repeated the rime, and Grannie burst into a merry laugh—which, however, sobered rather suddenly.

"I dinna won'er I was sayin' ower thae fule words," she said, "for 'deed I was dreamin' o' the only ane I ever h'ard them frae. It's mony a year sin' syne (*since then*), but I'm no muckle gi'en to forgettin': I was a lass, maybe aboot thirty. Onybody micht hae h'ard the auld captain sayin' them—ower an' ower til himsel', as gien he cudna weary o' them, but naebody seemed to tak muckle notice. I used whiles to won'er whether he un'erstude what he was sayin', or gien there was onything til un'erstan' in sic havers."

"Was there ony mair o' the ballant nor jist thae fower line?" asked Cosmo.

"Gien there was mair, I h'ard na 't," replied Grannie. "An' weel I wat, he wasna ane to sing, the auld captain! H'ard ye never tell o' 'im, laddie?"

"Gien ye mean the brither o' the laird o' the time, wha was my father's gran'-

father, him 'at cam hame frae his seafarin' to the East Indies——"

"Ay, ay; that's him! Ye hae h'ard tell o' 'im! He had a ship o' 's ain, an' made mony a voyage afore you or me was born, an' was an auld man whan at len'th hame cam he, as the sang says—ower auld to haud by the sea ony mair. Never sall I forget the luik o' the man whan first I saw 'im, nor the hurry an' the scurry, the rinnin' here an' the routin' there got up whan the face o' 'm luikit ower the yett (*gate*)! Ye see, they a' thoucht he was hame wi' a walth 'ayont figures. Eh, but he was no a bonny man! an' fowk said he dee'dna a fair-strae deith: hoo that may be, I maunna say I ken, but there *war* unco (*strange* things aboot the affair—things 'at winna weel bide speykin' o'. Ae thing's clear, an' that is, 'at the place has never thriven in' syne—only, for that maitter, it hedna hriven for mony a lang afore.

re was a fowth o' awfu' stories
the cuintry, like ghaists 'at
l get a grup o'—as to hoo he

had gotten his siller, an' sic like—the siller 'at naebody ever saw; for upo' that siller, as I tell ye, fint (*fiend*) a sowl ever cuist an e'e. Some said he had been a pirate upo' the hie seas, an' tuik the siller in lumps o' gowd frae puir ships 'at hadna men eneuch to haud the grip o't; some said he had been a privateer; an' ither some 'at there was sma' differ 'atween the twa. An' some wad hae't he was ane o' them 'at tuik an' sauld the puir black fowk, 'at cudna help bein' black, for as ootlandish as 't maun luik,—I never saw nane o' the nation mysel'—ony mair nor a corbie (*raven*) can help his feathers no bein' like a doo's; an' gien they turnt black for ony deevilry o' them 'at was their forbeirs (*ancestors*), I ken na, an' it maks naething to me or mine—I wad fain an' far raither du them a guid turn nor tak' an' sell them; for gien their parents sinned, the mair are they to be pitied. But as I was sayin', naebody kent hoo he had gethert his siller, the mair by token 'at maybe there was nane, for naebody, as I was tellin' ye, ever saw a glimp o'

siller aboot 'im. For a close-loofed (*palmed*), near kin' o' a man he was, gien ever ony! Aye ready was he to borrow a shillin' frae ony fule 'at wad len' 'im ane, an' lang wad him 'at lennt it forget to luik for 't, er' he wad think o' peyin' the same. It was mair nor ae year or twa 'at he leeved about the place, an' naebody cared muckle for his company, though a'body was ower feart at 'im to lat 'im ken he wasna welcome here or there; for wha cud tell but he micht oot wi' the swoord he aye cairriet, an' mak a speedy en' o' 'im! For 'deed he feartna God nor regairdit man, ony mair nor the jeedge i' the Scriptur'. He drank a heap—for a'body he ca'd upo' aye hed oot the whusky bottle, weel wullin' to please the man they dreidit."

The voice of the old woman came sounding in the ears of the boy on and on across the gloom; and through the voice, possibly from the effects of the blow he had had, he kept constantly hearing the foolish rime: it seemed to have laid hold of him as of her in some

odd, inexplicable way—perhaps from its very foolishness :

> Catch yer naig an' pu' his tail;
> In his hin' heel caw a nail;
> Rug his lugs frae ane anither—
> Stan' up, an' ca' the king yer brither.

On and on went the rime, and on and on went the old woman's voice.

"Weel, there cam a time whan an English lord begud (*began*) to be seen aboot the place, an' that was nae common sicht i' oor cuintry. He was a freen', fowk said, o' the yoong markis o' Lossie, an' that was hoo he cam to sicht. He gaed fleein' aboot, luikin' at this, an' luikin' at that; an' whaur or hoo he fell in wi' *him*, I dinna ken, but for lang the twa o' them was a heap thegither. They playt cairts thegither, they drank thegither, they gaed drivin' thegither—for the auld captain never crossed beast's back—an' what made sic freen's o' them no ane cud imaigine. For the tane was a rouch sailor chield, an' the tither a yoong laad—little mair, an' a fine gentleman as weel's a bonny man. But the upshot o' 't a'

was an ill ane; for, efter maybe aboot twa month or sae o' sic freen'ship as was 'atween them, there cam a nicht 'at brouchtna the captain hame. For ye maun un'erstan' 'at hoo, wi' a' his rouch w'ys, an' his drinkin', an' his cairt-playin', he was aye hame at nicht, an' intil 's bed, whaur he sleepit i' the best chaumer i' the castel. Ay, he wad come hame—aften as drunk as man cud be, but hame he cam! Sleep intil the efternune o' the neist day he wad, but never oot o' 's bed —or if no aye in his nakit bed, for I fan' him ance mysel' snorin' upo' the flure, it was aye intil 's ain room, as I say, an' no in ony strange place, drunk or sober. Sae there was some surprise at his no appearin', an' fowk spak o' 't, but no that muckle, for naebody cared i' their hert what cam o' the man. Still, whan the men gaed oot to their wark, they bude (*behooved*) to gie a luik gien there was ony sign o' 'im nigh: it was easy to think he micht hae been ance at last ower sair owertaen to win hame. But that wisna hit—though whan they

cam upo' 'im lyin' on 's back i' the how (*hollow*) yon'er 'at luiks up to my dauchter's bit gerse for her coo, they thoucht he bude to hae sleepit there a' nicht. Sae he had, but it was the sleep 'at kens nae waukin' — at least no the kin' o' waukin' 'at comes wi' the mornin'."

Cosmo recognized with a shudder the spot where he fell asleep on his birthday.

"Deid was the auld captain—as deid as ever was man wi' nane left to greit for 'im! But thof there was nae greitin', na but sic a hullybaloo as rase upo' the corp! They rade an' they ran; the doctor cam an' the minister, the lawyer an' the gravedigger. But whan a man's deid, what can a' the warl' du for 'im but beery 'im? —puir hin'er en' (*last end*) thof it be to him 'at draws himsel' up, an' blaws himsel' oot! There was mony a conjectur as to hoo he cam by his deith, an' mony a doobt it wasna by fair play. Some said he dee'd by his ain han', driven on til 't by the enemy; an' it's true the blade he cairriet was lyin' upo' the gerse (*grass*) aside 'im; but ither some, 'at exem't him,

said the hole i' the side o' 'im wasna made wi' that. But o' a' 'at cam to luik upo' the corp, the English lord was nane. He hed vainished the cuintry; an' the general opingon sattled doon to this, 'at they twa bude til hae fa'en oot at cairts, an' fouchten, an' the auld captain, for a' his skeel an' exparience, had gotten the warst o' 't, an' sae there they faun' 'im. But I reckon, Cosmo, yer father 'ill hae tellt ye a' aboot it mony's the time, an' I'm jist deivin' (*deafening*) ye wi' my clavers, an' haudin' ye ohn sleepit!"

"Na, Grannie," answered Cosmo, "he never tellt me. He did mak mention o' some gran'-uncle 'at cam til a sair hin'er en', an' I think maybe he was gaein' on to tell me aboot 'im, whan Grizzie cam to say the denner was ready. That was only yesterday—or the day afore, I'm thinkin', by this time.—But what think ye cud hae been i' the auld man's heid wi' yon jingle aboot the horsie?"

"Ow, what wad be intil 't but jist fulish nonsense! Ye ken some fowk has a trick o' sayin' the same thing ower an' ower

again to themsel's wi'oot ony meanin' intil 't. There was the auld laird himsel' was ane o' sic. He wad be aye an' ower again, an' that lood oot, sayin' til himsel', 'A hun'er poun'! ay, a hun'er poun'!' It maittered na what he micht be speykin' aboot, or wha til, oot it wad come its lane i' the middle o' onything, ye cudna fore-tell whan or whaur: 'A hun'er poun'!' says he; 'ay, a hun'er poun'!' Fowk leuch whan they first h'ard him, but gat sae used til't as hardly to ken mair nor himsel' whan he said it, for what has nae sense has little hearin'. I believe thae rimes war never sae muckle as a verse o' an auld ballant, but jist a clatter o' clinkin' styte (*clanking nonsense*) 'at he had learnt, maybe, frae some blackamore bairn, an' cudna drive 't oot o' 'is heid ever efter, but bude to say 't, aye thinkin' sae to hae dune wi' 't. Whan the cat gangs scrattin' at the door, ye hae to get up whether ye wull or no an' open 't, an' the cratur gangs oot; but the fule ower-come (*foolish repetition*) 's nae suner oot nor it's in an' scrattin' again."

Cosmo did not feel quite satisfied with the explanation, but he had nothing ready to advance against it.

"I maun alloo, hooever," the old woman went on, "'at there's something by ord'nar' aboot thae rimes; for the verra moment I got a haud o' *them* they tuik a grip o' *me;* an' ever sin' syne they hae an unco queer w'y o' hauntin' me like, noos an' thans, aiblins (*possibly*) as they did the man himsel', sae 'at I'm i' the same perdickyment wi' him, an' canna get quit o' them. They come, as I say, only at noos an' thans, but whan the fit 's upo' me, I can *not* get them oot o' my heid. The verse gangs tum'lin' ower an' ower intil 't till I'm jist scunnert (*disgusted*) wi' 't. Awa' it winna gang, maybe for a haill day—or maybe a haill nicht in ae dream efter anither; an' syne it mayna come again for months."

True enough, the rime was already running about in Cosmo's head like a mouse in a clock, and he fell asleep with it ringing its changes in the ears of his mind.

Before he woke again he had a curious dream.

He thought he was out late in the moonlight. It was a summer night, but there was something very strange about it: right up in the top of it was the moon, looking down as if she knew all about it, and something was going to happen. He did not like the look of her—he had never seen her look like that before! and he turned and went home to get away from her.

As he was going up the stairs to his chamber, something moved him, as he was passing the door of the drawing-room, to stop and go in. It was flooded with moonlight, but he did not mind that, so long as he could keep out of the sight of the moon herself. The place, however, had a strange, eerie look, and the things in it seemed to cast shadows different from those that by rights belonged to them. He gazed at this thing and that, feeling almost as if he had never seen it before. Presently he found there was some kind of spell upon him, that he could

not leave the room. He seated himself therefore on the brocaded couch, and sat staring—with a sense, which by degrees grew torturous, that he was where he would not be, and that if he did not get up and go, something would happen. But he could not rise—not from physical impediment, but lack of resolve. He was like one in irksome company, who longs to leave, but waits in vain a fit opportunity. Delay grew agonizing, and still he sat.

He became aware that he was not alone. His entire skin seemed to contract with a shuddering sense of presence.

Gradually, slowly, in the chair on the opposite side of the fireplace, a form grew visible, until he saw it plainly. It was that of a seafaring man, in a blue coat, with a red sash round his waist, in which were stuck pistols and a dagger. He had a brown and red, weather-beaten face, crossed diagonally by a great scar, and wearing an expression of horror trying not to look horrible. Out of it stared fierce eyes, black, yet glowing, as

if set on fire of hell. They filled Cosmo with a fear that threatened to turn him into clay, but something seemed to sustain him under it. He felt as if there must be a third in the room—protecting him, and met his fear with scorn, strove against it, would not and did not yield to it. The figure sat staring without motion, as if to fascinate him, then slowly at length rose, and with a look whose willed intensity seemed meant to rivet the foregone stare, turned, and led the way from the room. Thereupon Cosmo felt not merely that he could but that he must rise and follow him, nor did he desire to resist, for even in his dreams he had courage, and feared nothing so much as yielding to fear. The figure went up the stair, nor ever turned its head, and entered the state bedroom, the guest-chamber of the house. Cosmo entered also. It walked across the floor as if making for the bed, but in the middle half turned, and went round the foot of it, and the curtains hid it. Cosmo followed—but the shape was nowhere to

be seen, and he woke, his heart beating terribly.

Grannie was snoring in her chair. For a while he lay and looked at the dying fire, and the streak from the setting moon, that stole in at the window as if seeking shelter, and lay weary at the foot of the wall. But soon he fell fast asleep again, and slept far into the morning. Lessons were long begun in school, and village affairs were in full swing, and still he slept; nor did he wake till his father entered.

"I'm quite well, father," he said in answer to his inquiry; "—able to go to school in the afternoon."

"I don't mean you to go again, Cosmo," replied his father gravely. "It would not be pleasant either for you or the master. The proper relation between you is destroyed."

"If you think I was wrong, father, I will beg his pardon."

"If you had done the thing for yourself, I should say you must. But as it was, I am not prepared. The father is above the master—to the son, that is."

"What am I to do then? How am I to prepare for college?"

The laird gave a sigh, and made no answer: alas! there was another and greater difficulty in the path. He went to call on the doctor, and Cosmo rose and dressed himself.

Grannie was again at her wheel when he sat down in her chair to await his father's return.

"Whaur did the auld captain sleep at the castel?" he said—across the burr and whiz and hum of the wheel.

Through the low window, betwixt the leaves of its many shadowing plants, he could see the sun shining hot upon the bare street, but inside was soft gloom filled with murmurous sound.

"Whaur but i' the best bedroom?" answered Grannie. "Naething less wad du for *him*. Na, he thouchtna sma' o' himsel'! Ance there cam the markis to the hoose—whan things warna freely sae scant aboot the place as sin' yer father cam to the throne—an' at his back cam a storm sic as comes but seldom in a life

lang as mine, an' sic 'at his lordship cudna win awa'. Thereupon yer father, that is yer gran'father—or wad it be yer grit-gran'father?—I'm turnin' confeest amo' ye: ye aye haud on comin'!—whilk-ever o' them it was, he gae the auld captain a hent like 'at he wad du weel to mak offer o' his room til 's lordship. But wad he, think ye! Na, no him! He grew reid, an' syne as white 's the aisse (*ashes*), an' luikit to hae in him the awfu'est rage mortal wessel cud weel haud. Sae yer gran'father, no 'at he was feart at 'im, for I s' be b'un' he never feart the face o' man, but jist no wullin' to anger his ain kin, an' maybe no wullin' to luik like a respecker o' persons, heeld his tongue an' said nae mair, an' the markis hed the second best bed, for he sleepit in Glenwarlock's ain."

Cosmo told her the dream he had had. All the time she was narrating herself, it had been to the accompaniment of her wheel, but he had not got far before she ceased spinning, and sat absorbed—listening as to a real occurrence, not the

feverish dream of a boy. Then she made him describe the person he had seen in it more particularly, asking him several minute questions, as if concerning one he had beheld with his bodily eyes. When he had answered her as well as he could—

"It maun hae been the auld captain himsel'!" she said under her breath.

Cosmo saw her lips moving, but heard no sound. She heaved a great sigh, closed her mouth, and remained speechless. Nor did she make any reply to the one or two questions with which he sought to rouse her. There was something indescribably strange in her silence—which she did not break until his father returned.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOME.

Cosmo was not particularly fond of school, and he was particularly fond of holidays; hence the laird's resolve that he should go to school no more, seemed to him the promise of an endless joy. The sun himself seemed swelling in his heart as he walked home with his father. A whole day of home and its pleasures was before him—only the more welcome that he had had one like it so lately, and that so many like it were yet to come. Every shadow about the old place was a delight to him. Never human being loved more the things into which he had been born, than did Cosmo. His whole home surrounding had to him a sacred look, such as Jerusalem, the temple, and its vessels,

may have borne to those of the Jews who were not capable of loving them for God's sake. There was hardly anything that could be called beauty about the building—strength and gloom were its main characteristics—but its very stones were dear to the boy. There never was such a rushing river, there never were such bees, there never were such thick walls, there never were such storms, as those about his beloved home!—and this although all the time, as I have said, he longed for more beauty of mountain and wood than the country around afforded him. Then there were the books belonging to the house!—was there any such collection in the world besides! They were in truth very few—all contained in a closet opening out of his father's bedroom; but to Cosmo they bore the aspect of wealth inexhaustible—partly because his father had as yet restricted him to certain of the shelves—as much to cultivate his self-restraint as to keep from him one or two of the books for a time—partly because he read so faithfully that books

remained books to him, he believed in them after he had read them, nor imagined them capable of being exhausted. The only thing to keep us from wearying of our friends is to be true to them. But the range at least of his taste was certainly not a limited one. While he revelled in *The Arabian Nights*, he read also, and with no small enjoyment, the *Night Thoughts*—two books, it will be confessed, a tolerable distance apart both in scope and in style. To enjoy life, however, it was to him enough to lie in the grass. In certain moods the smell of the commonest flower would drive him half crazy with delight. On a holiday his head would be haunted with old ballads like a sunflower with bees: on other days they would only come and go. He rejoiced even in nursery-rimes—only, somehow or other, in his head they got glorified. With its swing and hum and *bizz*, a verse that had to him no meaning would yet play its tune in him, as any mountain-stream its infinite water-jumbled melody. This holiday one kept coming and coming,

as to Grannie the old captain's foolish rime—that one of Grizzie's which came into his head when he saw the moon playing bo-peep betwixt the cow's legs :—

Whan the coo loups ower the mune,
The reid gowd rains intil men's shune.

I think there must at one time have been a poet or poetess in close relations with the Glenwarlock nursery, for there were rimes, and modifications of rimes, floating in the family for which nobody could account. Here is one of such :

Hither an' thither, here an' awa',
Into the dub (*mire*) ye maunna fa' ;
Oot o' the dub wad ye come wi' speed,
Ye maun lift yer han's abune yer heid.

Cosmo's mother too had been, in a fragmentary way, fond of verse ; and the laird delighted himself with saying over and over some of her favourite rimes. Here is one :—

Make not of thy heart a casket,
  Opening seldom, quick to close ;
But of bread a wide-mouthed basket,
  And a cup that overflows.

Here is another :—

> The gadfly makes the horse run swift :
> "Speed," quoth the gadfly, "is my gift."

One more :—they serve as dim lights on the faint form of the all but vanished mother, of whom the boy she bore knew so little :—

> In God alone, the perfect end,
> Wilt thou find thyself or friend.

Cosmo's dream of life was, to live all his days in the house of his forefathers—or at worst, to return to it at last. In his castle-building, next to that of the fairy-mother-lady, his fondest fancy was—not the making of a fortune, but the returning home with one to make the house of his fathers beautiful, and the heart of his father glad. About the land he did not think much ; the country was open to him as if it had been all his—only he had a different feeling for that portion yet lying within the sorely contracted marches : to see any smallest nook of that sold would have been like to break his heart. His love of place was in danger of becoming

a disease. It had something of the nature, if not of the avarice that grasps, yet of the avarice that clings. He was generous as few in the matter of money, but then he had had so little—not half enough to learn to love it! Nor had he the slightest idea of any mode in which he would like to make it. Most of the methods he had come in contact with, except that of manual labour, repelled him as involving elements of the unhandsome where not the dishonest: he was not yet able to distinguish in them between substance and mode. The only way in which he ever imagined himself coming into the possession of money—it was another cherished though less favoured dream—was finding in the old house a room he had never seen or heard of, and in it a hoard of riches.

As they walked home together his father told him he had been thinking all night what it would be best to do with him, now that the school was closed against him, and had resolved to ask his friend Mr. Simon to take charge of his education.

"He is a man of peculiar opinions," he said, "as I dare say you may have heard; but everything in him, both of practice and theory, is on a scale so grand, that to fear harm from him would be to sin against the truth. Every man must learn to judge for himself, and he will teach you that."

"I have heard that he believes in ghosts, father!" said Cosmo.

His father smiled, and made him no answer. Born into an age whose incredulity, growing more and more active, had reached at length the remote region where he lived, his mind had become as it were a border-land between an intelligent reception and a rationalistic refusal of the marvellous. An active believer in the care and providence of God, with no conscious difficulty in accepting any miracle recorded in the Bible, he was, on all points concerning which the oracles were dumb, inclined to scepticism. This scepticism, however, was confined to the region of his intellect: his imagination loved the atmosphere of the so-called

supernatural, and welcomed any glimmer of light that reached him through it.

In the history of the world the imagination has been oftener right than the intellect, and the things in which it has been right are of much the greater importance; only, wherever Pegasus has shown the way through a bog, the packhorse which followed has got the praise of the discovery; while many of the blunders made by the latter are attributed to the misleading influences of the former.

Such being his mental condition, the laird was unable to speak with authority respecting ghosts, neither was anxious to influence the mind of his son concerning them. Happily, in those days the platitudes and weary vulgarities of what they call *spiritualism* had not been heard of, at least in those quarters, and the soft light of imagination yet brooded over the wide region of mingled false and true, commonly called Superstition: the most killing poison to the imagination must be a strong course of "spiritualism." For myself, I am not so set upon entering

the Unknown as to creep through the sewers of it to get in. I would not encounter its lovers of garbage, its thieves, impostors, liars, plagiaries, and canaille of all sorts, except I could serve them. That they are on the other side, that they are what men call dead, is not reason for courting their company, taking them into my confidence, asking their advice. Neither do the cups of lukewarm Bible-and-water, which its apparently respectable inhabitants dispense, arouse in me any thirst.

"Do *you* believe in ghosts, father?" resumed the boy, noting the laird's silence, and remembering that he had never heard him utter an opinion on the subject. "The master says none but fools believe in them now; and he makes such a face at superstition, that you would think it must be in the commandments."

"Mr. Simon remarked the other day," answered his father, "that the dread of superstition might amount to superstition, and become the most dangerous superstition of all."

"Do you think so, father?"

"I could believe it. But I am prejudiced in favour of anything Mr. Simon thinks."

The boy rejoiced to hear his father talk thus, for he had a strong leaning to the marvellous, but hitherto, from the schoolmaster's assertion and his father's silence, had supposed nothing was to be accepted that was neither scientifically probable nor told us in the Bible. That we live in a universe of marvels of which we *know* only the outsides, and that we render any news of these marvels incredible by taking the outsides for all, forgetting that the roots of the seen remain unseen —this fact began to dawn upon him, falling in with certain notions his mind had already conceived and entertained. He was delighted also at the prospect of making closer acquaintance with a man of whom his father could speak with such reverence.

All day long he strayed brooding about the house and garden, and in the twilight went wandering over the hills.

There was no night there at that season, any more than all the year through in heaven. Indeed, we have seldom real positive night in this world —so many provisions have been made against it. Every time we say, "What a lovely night!" we speak of a breach, a rift in the old night: there is light more or less, positive light, else were there no beauty. Many a night is but a low starry day, a day with a softened background, against which the far-off suns of millions of other days can show themselves. The near vision vanishes, the far hope awakes. It is not said of heaven there shall be no twilight there.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FELLOW-STUDENTS.

The twilight had not yet reached the depth of its mysteriousness, when Cosmo, returning home from casting a large loop of wandering over several hills, walked up to James Gracie's cottage, doubting whether they would not all be in bed. But seeing light in the window he went to the door and knocked: had it been the daytime, he would have gone straight in.

Agnes came to it and opened cautiously, for there were occasionally tramps about.

"Eh! it's you?" she cried with a glad voice, when she saw the shape of Cosmo in the dimness. "There's naething wrang, I houp!" she added, changing her tone.

"Na, naething," answered Cosmo. "I

only wantit to lat ye ken 'at I wasna gaein' back to the schuil ony mair."

"Weel, I dinna won'er at that!" returned Agnes, with a little sigh. "Efter bein' ill used that gait, the laird couldna weel lat ye gang again. But what's he gaein' to du wi' ye, Cosmo, gien a body micht speir 'at has nae richt to be keerious?"

"He's sen'in' me to Maister Simon," answered Cosmo.

"I wuss I was gaein' tu," sighed Aggie. "I'm feart I come to hate the maister whan ye're no to be seen ony mair i' the place, Cosmo. An' we maunna hate, for that, ye ken, 's the hin'er en' o' a'thing. It wad be a heap easier no to hate him gien I had naething to du wi' him."

"That maun be confest," answered Cosmo. "But," he added, "the hairst-play (*harvest-holidays*) 'ill be here sune, an' syne the hairst itsel'; an' whan ye gang back ye'll hae won ower 't."

"Na, I doobt no, Cosmo; for, ye see, as I hae h'ard my father say, the Gracies are a' terrible for min'in'. Na, there's nae

forgettin' o' naething. What for sud onything be forgotten? It's a cooardly kin' o' a w'y to forget."

"Some things, I doobt, hae to be forgotten," returned Cosmo, thoughtfully. "Gien ye forgie a body, for enstance, ye maun forget tu—ay, forget 'at ye hae forgien him onything—an' that for yer ain sake; for what ye hae dune richt, my father says, maun be forgotten oot o' sicht for fear o' corruption, naething comin' to stink waur nor a guid deed hung up i' the munelicht o' the memory."

"Eh, but ye're unco wice for a laad o' yer 'ears!" exclaimed Aggie.

"I wad be an unco gowk," remarked Cosmo, "gien I kent naething, wi' sic a father as yon o' mine. What wad ye think o' yersel', Aggie, gien the dochter o' Jeames Gracie war nae wicer-like nor Meg Scroggie?"

Agnes laughed, but had not time to reply, for here the voice of her grandmother came from somewhere in the dark.

"Wha's that, Aggie," it said, "ye're haudin' sic a confab wi' i' the mids o' the

nicht? Ye tellt me ye was sittin' up to yer lessons!"

"I was busy at them, mother, whan Cosmo chappit at the door."

"Weel, what for lat ye him stan' there? Ye may hae yer crack wi' *him* as lang's ye like—in rizzon, that is. Gar him come in."

"Na, na, Mistress Gracie," said Cosmo; "I maun awa' hame; I hae been a gey lang walk. It's no 'at I'm tired, but I'm gey an' sleepy. Only I was sae pleased 'at I was gaein' to learn wi' Maister Simon, 'at I bude to tell Aggie. Besides, she micht hae been won'erin', an' thinkin' I wasna better, whan she didna see me at the schuil the morn."

"I s' warran' her no gang to the schuil ohn* speirt in at the castle!" said the grandmother, and therewith ceased.

"Is there onything I can help ye wi', Aggie, afore I gang?" asked Cosmo. "Somebody tellt me ye was tryin' yer han' at algebra."

"Naebody had ony business to tell

* *Without*, like the German *ohne*.

ye sic a thing," returned Aggie, rather angrily. "At the schuil I wadna think o' 't. But I *wad* fain ken what 's intil 't. Du 'at I like I can *not* un'erstan' coontin' wi' letters an' crosses an' strokes in place o' figures. I hae been at it noo a haill ook (*week*), an' I'm nane nearer 't yet. I can add an' subtrac' by the rules gi'en i' the buik, but that's no un'erstan'in', an' un'erstan' I canna an' I maun."

"It's something, Aggie, like this: ye hae a horse, an' a coo, an' a cairt to sell. But ye takna them to the market. Ye lea' the beast wi' the legs i' the stable, the beast wi' the horns i' the byre, an' the box upo' wheels i' the shed, an' bargain awa' aboot the *horse* an' the *coo* an' the *cairt*—that's the x an' the y an' the z—till ye 're agreet, an' syne ye sen' for the things themsel's an' han' them ower."

Aggie remained in silent thought for a while, then shook her head as if she had gained but little.

"*Ye* ken a' aboot algébra—divna ye, Cosmo?"

"Na, no the half, nor the hun'ert pairt.

I only ken eneuch to haud me gaein' on to mair. A body maun hae learnt a heap o' a thing afore the licht braks oot o' 't. Ye maun win throuw the wa' afore ye see. I doobt gien onybody un'erstan's a thing oot an' oot, sae lang's he canna gar anither see intil 't."

"I'm thinkin', Cosmo," said Agnes, "a body maun be nearhan' seein' o' hersel' 'afore anither can lat her see onything."

"Ye may be richt there," yielded Cosmo. "But jist lat me see whaur ye are," he went on. "I may be able to help ye, though I canna lat ye see a' at ance. It wad be an ill job for them 'at needs help, gien naebody could gie them ony but them 'at kent a' aboot the thing."

Without a word, Aggie turned and led the way to the kitchen. An iron lamp, burning train-oil, hung against the wall, and under that she had placed the table, white as scouring could make deal. Upon it lay a slate and a book of algebra.

"My cousin Willie lennt me the buik," said she.

"What for didna ye come to me to len' ye ane? I could hae gi-en ye ane 'at wad hae helpit ye mair!" expostulated Cosmo.

Aggie hesitated a moment, then turning her face from him, answered—

"I wantit to gie ye a surprise, Cosmo. Divna ye min' tellin' me ance 'at ye saw no rizzon a lassie sudna un'erstan' jist as weel 's a laddie? I wantit to see whether ye was richt or wrang; an' as algébra luikit the maist oonlikly thing, I thoucht I wad taikle that, an' sattle the queston at ance. But, eh me! I'm sair feart ye was i' the wrang, Cosmo!"

"I maun du my best to pruv mysel' i' the richt!" returned Cosmo. "I never said lassie or laddie cud learn a' o' themsel's. An' there's unco feow laddies wad try like you, Aggie!"

They sat down together at the table, and in half an hour or so Aggie had begun to see the faint light of dawn across the thickets of algebra. It was nearly midnight when Cosmo rose. She would not let him go alone, but insisted on accompanying him to the gate of the court.

The relation between the two was a curious one. While Agnes looked up to Cosmo, about two years her junior, as immeasurably her superior in all that pertained to the intellect, she assumed with him, in virtue of her two years, and of her having played the part of little nurse to him in his childhood, a sort of authority, like that a mother will assert over the most gifted of her grown-up sons. One has heard, with a kind of sacred amusement, the cynosure of some of the best literary and artistic circles rebuked with severity by his mother as if he were still a boy! And who has not heard some child of this world speak with condescending superiority of the child of light whom he loved, regarding him as a kind of God's chicken; for nothing is so unintelligible to the children of the world as the ways of the children of light—to themselves simple enough. But Agnes never treated Cosmo with anything of this patronage, for she was nearly as much a child of light as he; only, being a woman, she was keener of perception, and being

older, felt the more towards him of the mother that every woman feels, and made the most of it. It was to her the most merely natural thing to act his protector. Indeed she would have claimed the right to serve any one of the family of Warlock to the last drop of her blood. From infancy she had heard the laird spoken of as the noblest, best, and kindest of men, as the earthly power over the Gracies for their help and healing; hence her love-duty to him and his family seemed a main reason of her existence.

Notwithstanding the familiarity I have shown between them, the girl, as they went towards the castle, walking through the deep dusk and alone, kept a little behind the boy—not behind his back, but behind his left hand. Spy most curious could have detected no love-making between them, and their talk in the still, dark air, sounded loud all the way. Strange talk it would have been to most, unintelligible indeed, for it was the talk of childlike boy and girl, wise not above their own years only, but wise immeasur-

ably above all years of worldly prudence. Riches indubitably favour stupidity; poverty, where the heart is right, favours mental and moral development. They parted at the gate, and Cosmo went straight to his room.

But although his father allowed him such plentiful liberty, and would have the boy feel the night holy as the day, therefore never, save from loving interest, asked him where he had been, or at what hour he had come home—a question which, having no watch, he would have found it hard to answer—he never fell asleep until he knew that his boy was in the house. Indeed, although all were in bed, not an eye was that night closed in the castle before his entering footsteps were heard. The grandmother lay angry at the freedom her son gave to his son: it was against decency and order, she said to herself in the dark; it was against all ancient rule of family life: she must speak about it! But she never did speak about it, for, with all her pity for his attributed weakness, she had long ago grown a little

afraid of the son who, without a particle of obstinacy in his composition, yet would take what she called his own way. In the next room Grizzie lay unhappy, and grumbling to herself that the young laird was sure to come to "mischeef;" but the main forms of "mischeef" in her anxious imagination were tramps, precipices, and streams. The laird, in the room above, spent most of the time his son's absence kept him awake, in praying for him—not that he might be the restorer of the family, but that he might be able to accept the will of God as the best thing for family as for individual. If his boy might but reach the spirit-land unsoiled and noble, his prayers were ended!

In the course of his nocturnal experiences and meditations, the laird learned to understand how the catholics have come to pray to their saints, and the Chinese to their parents and ancestors; for he frequently found himself, especially when drowsiness had begun to steal upon his praying soul, seeming to hold council with his wife concerning their boy, and

asking from her such help for him as she was able to minister.

But Cosmo went up to bed without a suspicion that such holy messengers were ascending heavenward for his sake from the heart of his father. He never imagined any one anxious about him.

As he passed the door of the guest-chamber, immediately above which was his own, his dream, heralded by a shiver, suddenly possessed him. But he scorned to quicken his pace, or to glance over his shoulder, as he ascended the second stair. He lighted no candle, but in the still, faint twilight, which is the ghosts' day, he threw off his clothes, and was presently buried in the grave of his bed, under the sod of the blankets, lapt in the death of sleep.

CHAPTER X.

A MORNING.

THE moment he woke, he jumped out of bed. A new era in his life was at hand, the thought of which had been subjacently present in his dreams, and was operative the instant he became conscious of waking life. He hurried on his clothes, and rushing down the stairs like a cataract—for not a soul slept in that part of the castle but himself, and there was no fear of waking any one—ran from the house, and down the hill to the spot where, with a final dart, the torrent shot into the quiet stream of the valley. There, in the channel of rock and gravel, it had hollowed a deep basin. This was Cosmo's bath. His clothes were off again in a moment, and headforemost he shot like another torrent into the

boiling mass, where for a minute he yielded himself the sport of the foaming water, and was tossed and tumbled about like a dead thing in the heart of the turmoil. Then he struck out, and swimming from under the fall, rose to the surface panting and blowing. To get out on the bank was the work of a moment, and to plunge in again the play of the next. Half a dozen times he thus plunged, was tossed and overwhelmed, struggled, escaped, and plunged again. Satisfied at length, he ran for a minute or two up and down the bank to dry himself—he counted the use of a towel effeminacy—and dressing again, hurried home to finish his simple toilet. Then he knelt at his bedside, and did not merely "say his prayers." Next he took his slate, to try after something Aggie's bewilderment had led him to know he did not understand either. But before long, certain sensations began to warn him there was breakfast in the world, and he hastened to the kitchen, where he found Grizzie making the porridge.

"Min' ye pit saut eneuch i' them the day, Grizzie," he said. "They war unco wersh (*insipid*) thestreen." *

"An' what war they like last nicht, Cosmo?" asked the old woman, irritated at being found fault with where she counted herself as near perfection as mortal could approach.

"I had nane last nicht, ye min'," answered Cosmo. "I was oot a' the evenin'."

"An' whaur got ye yer supper?"

"Ow, I didna want nane. Hoot! I'm forgettin'! Aggie gied me a quarter o' breid as I cam awa', efter giein' her a han' wi' her algebra."

"What ca'd ye 't? an' what kin' is 't for a lass-bairn to be takin' up her time wi'? I never h'ard tell o' 't! What's its natur, Cosmo?"

He did his best to give her some far-off idea of the sort of thing algebra was, but apparently without success, for she cried at length—

"Na, sirs! I hae h'ard o' cairts, an'

* *Yestere'en*, used for *yesterday*.

bogles, an' witchcraft, an' astronomy, but sic a thing as this ye fess (*bring*) me noo, I never did hear the like o'! What can the warl' be comin' til! An' dis the father o' ye, laddie, ken what ye spen' yer midnicht hoors gangin' teachin' to the lass-bairns o' the country roon'?"

She was interrupted by the entrance of the laird, and they sat down to breakfast. The grandmother broke her fast in her own room.

Grizzie was full of anxiety to know what the laird would say to the discovery she had just made, but she dared not hazard a word that might seem to reflect on the conduct of his son, and must, therefore, only lead the conversation up alongside of it. About the middle of Cosmo's breakfast, that is about two minutes after he had attacked his porridge, she began to approach her design, addressing her master thus:

"Did ye never hear the auld saw, sir—

> Whaur 's nor sun nor mune,
> Laich (*low*) things come abune?"

"I 'maist think I hae, Grizzie," replied

the laird. "What gars ye come ower 't (*repeat it*) the noo?"

"I canna but think, sir," answered Grizzie, "as I lie i' the mirk, o' the heap o' things 'at gang to nae kirk, oot an' aboot as sharp as a gled, whan the yoong laird is no in his bed, but oot wi' 's auld gibbry, an' astronomy, an' sic like! 'Deed, sir, it wadna be canny gien they cam to ken o' 't!"

"Wha come to ken o' what, Grizzie?" asked the laird, with a twinkle in his eye, and a glance at Cosmo, who sat gazing curiously at the old woman.

"Them 'at the saw speyks o', sir," said Grizzie, answering the first part of the double question, and placing two boiled eggs before her master.

The laird smiled; he was too kind to laugh. Not a few laughed at old Grizzie, but never the laird.

"Did *ye* never hear the auld saw, Grizzie," he said—

"Throuw the heather an' how (*hollow*) gaed the creepin' thing,
But abune was the waught o' an angel's wing?"

"Ay, I hae h'ard it," confessed Grizzie, but immediately added the qualification, "—naegait 'cep' here i' this hoose:" she would disparage the authority of the saying by a doubt as to its extramural origin. "But, sir," she continued, "mortal man sud never temp' Providence. Wha kens what may be oot i' the nicht!"

"To *him*, Grizzie, the nicht shineth as the day."

"Weel, sir," cried Grizzie, "ye jist pit me 'at I dinna ken mysel'! Is't poassible ye hae lost sicht o' the fac' sae weel kent in a' the cuintry roon', 'at the auld captain's never lain a nicht in 's grave yet, an' canna lie still because o'—because o' whatever the rizzon may be, for onygait (*anyhow*) he's no laid yet, an' there's some 'at thinks him foreordeent to haunt the hoose till the day o' jeedgment!"

"I suspec' there winna be muckle o' the hoose left for him to haunt 'gen that time, Grizzie," said the laird. "But what for sud ye pit sic fule things intil the bairn's heid? Gien the ghaist haunt the hoose, isna the bairn better oot o' 't?

Wad ye hae him come hame the suner to sic company ? ”

This posed Grizzie, and she held her peace.

“ Come, Cosmo,” said the laird, rising ; and they set out together for Mr. Simon’s cottage.

CHAPTER XI.

PETER SIMON.

THE would-be wits of the neighbourhood of course called him Simon Peter. He was not a native of the district, but had for some years now been a dweller in it. He had bought the cottage he now occupied when first he came, but only of late had begun to live in it. Report said he was the son of a small tradesman in the great county-town; but he made no secret of the fact that he was only found by such a man, lying on the pavement one stormy desolate Christmas-eve. It was dark, with the wind blowing bitterly from the north, and the said tradesman seemed the one inhabitant of almost the coldest town in Scotland who dared face it. He had closed his shop, had carried

to the house of one of his customers a forgotten order, and was returning home, when he all but stumbled over the infant. He looked all about him: there was nobody but himself! Not a human being, not even what comes next to one, a dog, was in sight, and the wind was blowing like a blast from a frozen hell. There was no help for it—no one to do it instead of him; he must take up the child! He did, and carried it home—grumbling all the way. What right had the morsel to be lying there, a trap and a gin for his character—in the dark and the cold, where there was positively nobody but himself! What would his wife say? What would the neighbours say? All the way home he grumbled.

What happened there—how his wife received him with his burden; how she scolded and he went on grumbling; how it took but the one day—the Christmas Day, which happily was a Sunday, with nothing to be done—to reconcile them to the gift; and how they brought him up, blessing the night of storm on which they

found him—would be a story to make the true-hearted of my readers both laugh and cry, but I have not room or time for it.

Of course, as they were in poor circumstances, hardly able, indeed, not merely to make both ends meet, but to get them to the same side of the parcel of their necessities, their neighbours, especially their friends, and more especially their relations, called their refusal to hand over the brat to the parish utter insanity—and doubtless felt the truth of what they said, seeing it was a reflection upon all who in vain advised the step. But when the child-witched pair manifested folly enough to say—might he not have been sent them in the stead of the still-born infant that had hitherto been all their offspring?—then indeed it was too much for the neighbours—that peculiar people often in reality better acquainted with the faults and duties of others than those are themselves, and than they themselves are with their own. It was rank superstition! It was a flying in the face

of Providence! How could they expect to prosper who acted with so little foresight! Staggering under the burden of life, they actually perched a strange brat on the top of it! But the members of this self-constituted moral police did not take into account what strength the additional motive, what heart the new love, what uplifting the hope, kindled by their righteous deed, of help from on high, might give the hitherto baffled toilers; it did not occur to them that the child might be just the fresh sting of life the fainting pair required; for they had never perceived that God likes far better to help people from the inside than from the outside. To mark their disapproval, some of them immediately withdrew what little custom they had given them; one who had hardly been into their shop before offered them the whole of hers on condition they sent the child away; others, with some inconsistency, doubled theirs, and sent them fresh customers—saying they were a brace of woodcocks, but they must not be allowed to starve!

They began to get on a little better. And still as the boy grew, and they wanted a little more, they had the little more they wanted. For the boy turned out to be one of God's creatures, and the maker of him, who was also the ruler of the world, was not displeased with them for taking him to their hearts and not leaving him to the parish. He was the light of the house and of the shop, a beauty to their eyes and a joy in their hearts. But perhaps the best proof of all that they had done right, lay in the fact that they began to love each other better from that very Christmas-day; for, to tell the truth, one cause of their not getting on well had been that they did not pull well together. We can thus explain the improvement in their circumstances by the merest natural causes, without having recourse to the superstitious and distasteful idea that any unseen power, with a weakness called a special providence, was interested in the matter.

But foolishness such as theirs is apt to increase with years: they sent the

foundling to the grammar-school, and thence to college—not a very difficult affair in that town. At college he did not greatly distinguish himself; his special gifts, though peculiar enough, were not of a kind to attract attention, or gain even barren praise. He went on and prospered nevertheless. His father and mother, as he called them, would gladly have made a minister of him, but of that he would not hear, and became a master in one of the schools. He lived with his adoptive parents till they died, always taking home to them his salary, minus only what sums, not very great, he spent on books. His life, his devotion, his loving gratitude so wrought upon them, that the kingdom of heaven opened its doors to them, and they were the happiest old couple in the town. Of course this was all an accident, for, the kingdom of heaven being but a dream, natural cause cannot be supposed to work for delusion. It was therefore a part of the folly of the good-natured pair to look upon their miserable foundling as a

divine messenger, an angel entertained not for long unawares, and the cause of all the luck that followed his admission. They never spent a penny of his salary, but saved it up and added to it; and when they went, heartlessly left all they had to this same angel of a beggar, instead of to their own relations, who would have been very glad of it, for they had more than enough of their own.

The foundling then sought a situation as librarian, and was successful: in the family of an English lord he lived many years. When time's changes decreed his withdrawal, he returned to the county in which he had been brought up. In his cottage on the Warlock he was now living the quietest of quiet lives, cultivating the acquaintance of but a few—chiefly that of the laird, James Gracie, and a neighbouring minister. By the people he was generally regarded as "no a'thegither there,"—a judgment possibly founded in part on the facts, that he not unfrequently wandered about the fields from morning to night, sometimes from

night to morning, and never drank anything worthy in their eyes of the name of drink. That he never ate animal food was hardly notable where so many seldom did; and as he was no propagandist, few had any notion of his opinions, beyond a general impression that they were unsound.

Cosmo had heard some of the peculiarities attributed to him, and was filled with curious expectation as to the manner of man he was about to meet, for he had never yet even seen him except at a distance; but anxiety, not untinged with awe, was mingled with his curiosity.

Mr. Simon's cottage was some little distance up the valley, on the bank of the Warlock, at the foot of a small cliff that sheltered it from the north. The bank was of rock, but the ground about the cottage was soil washed from the hill, and Mr. Simon had his little garden of flowers and vegetables, with a summer-seat in the middle of it on a rock that came shouldering up through the earth, in which he smoked his pipe of an evening

—slowly and gently and broodingly, thinking more than he smoked, and making his one pipe last a long time. To his delight he had found the garden filled with the commonest flowers: rarity was no recommendation to him. Nor in this was he unlike himself, although some of his opinions were of the rarest; for in truth never had Peter Simon adopted an opinion because of its strangeness. He never indeed *adopted* an opinion at all; he believed, he loved, he obeyed what he saw true.

The cottage was of unhewn stone, and rough-cast, shining white in sun and moon. It contained two rooms with a smaller between, and one under the thatch.

When they entered the parlour, Cosmo was struck with astonishment: the walls from floor to ceiling were covered with books; even the chimney-piece was assimilated, turned into a book-shelf, and absorbed. Mr. Simon's pipe lay on the hob; there was not another spot suitable for it. No mere shelf, not a cupboard was

to be seen. Books, books everywhere, and nothing but books! Even the door that opened into the room where Mr. Simon slept was covered over, and, like the mantelshelf, obliterated with books. To the eyes of Cosmo it seemed a mighty library—a treasure-house for a royal sage.

There was no one in the room when they entered, but while Cosmo was staring in mute astonishment, he suddenly heard Mr. Simon address his father. How he had entered he could not think, but there he stood in the gigantic proportions, to the eyes of the boy, of a wise man, if not indeed a wizard.

Mr. Simon was in truth a little below the middle height — somewhat round-shouldered, with long arms, and small, well shaped hands. His hair was plentiful, grizzled, and cut short; his head was large and his forehead wide; his eyes were small, dark, and brilliant, with black overhanging brows; his nose had a certain look of decision—but a nose is a feature beyond description; his mouth was large, and his chin strong; his com-

plexion was sallow, and his skin rugged. His only *fine* features were his ears, which were delicate enough for a lady. His face was not at first sight attractive —looking indeed rather gloomy till he had once smiled, after which it never seemed the same as before: the old face had vanished in the smile, and a new one come; for that smile was the true interpreter of the mouth, and through the mouth, of the face.

After a word or two about a book he had borrowed of him, the laird took his departure, saying the sooner he left master and pupil to themselves the better. Mr. Simon acquiesced, and immediately Cosmo was facing his near future, not without anxiety.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEW SCHOOLING.

WITHOUT a word, Mr. Simon went to the table, and opening a drawer, took from it about a score of leaves of paper, one of which he handed to Cosmo. Upon it, in print, was a stanza—one, and no more.

"Read that," he said, with a glance that showed through his eyes the light burning inside him, "and tell me if you understand it. I don't want you to ponder over it, but to say at a reading whether you know what it means."

Cosmo obeyed, and read.

"I dinna mak heid nor tail o' 't, sir," he answered, looking over the top of the paper like a prisoned sheep.

Mr. Simon took it from him, and handed him another.

"Try that," he said.

Cosmo read, put his hand to his head, and looked troubled.

"Don't distress yourself," said Mr. Simon. "The trial is of no consequence for judgment; it is only for discovery."

The remark conveyed little consolation to the pupil. Dismay was settling upon him like a fog from the hills.

One after another Mr. Simon handed him the papers he held. With the fifth or sixth in his hand, Cosmo exclaimed, but with no exultation—

"I do understand this, sir."

"Very well," returned Mr. Simon, without, in his turn, showing any special satisfaction, and immediately handed him another.

This again was a non-luminous body, actively dark indeed, for it cast a fresh shadow over the face of the embryo student. One by one Mr. Simon handed him all the papers he held. Out of

the score there were three Cosmo said he understood, and four he thought he should understand if he were allowed to read them over two or three times. Mr. Simon laid them all back into the drawer.

"Now I shall know a little what I must be about," he said. "Tell me what you have been doing at school."

Were my book a treatise on education, it might be worth while to give some account of Peter Simon's ways of furthering human growth. But intellectual development is not my business, and I will say no more here concerning Cosmo's than that, after about six weeks' work, he one day begged Mr. Simon to let him look at those papers, and found to his delight that he understood all but three or four of them.

That first day, Mr. Simon gave him one of Horace's odes and one of Wordsworth's poems to copy—telling him to put in every point as it was in the book exactly, but to make a note of any improvement he thought possible in the

pointing. He told him also to keep his eyes open to any resemblance between the two poems.

As he sat surrounded by the many books, Cosmo felt as if he were at work under the gaze of many masters.

Before the evening the heart of the boy clave to his new guide. For one thing, Mr. Simon always, in anything done by Cosmo, took note first of the things that pleased him, and after that of its faults—most of which he treated more as imperfections, letting Cosmo see plainly that he understood how he had come to go wrong.

Such an education as Mr. Simon was thus attempting with Cosmo, is hardly to be effected with more than one at a time; and indeed there are not a great many boys with whom the attempt would be other than lost labour.

Cosmo, however, was now almost as eager to go to his lessons, as before to spend a holiday. Mr. Simon never gave him anything to do at home, judging it an imperative duty to leave room for his

pupil to grow after the fashion in which he was made, and believing that what a boy does by himself is of far greater import than what he does with any master. A great part of such room is leisure; and although it may be of comparatively small value in the case of most young people, it is an absolute necessity to one born with individuality so far determined as to be on the point of beginning to develop itself. When Cosmo, therefore, went home, he read or wrote what he pleased, wandered about at his will, and dreamed to his heart's content. Nor was it long before he discovered that his dreams themselves were growing of greater import to him—they also influenced by Mr. Simon.

One day he came late, and his eyes were swollen with weeping. His master looked at him almost wistfully, but said nothing until he had been for a while at work. Then he asked him what was amiss, and the boy told him. To most boys it would have seemed small ground for such heart-breaking sorrow.

Among the horses on the farm was a certain little mare, which, although hard-worked as any, was yet an excellent one to ride, and Cosmo, as often as there was not much work doing, rode her where he would. In the prime of the summer he would have her all his own every day for several weeks, when the harvest was drawing nigh, and the school had its long yearly holiday. Then they would be out for hours together, though perhaps not far from home all the time. Sometimes the whole sleepy afternoon would Cosmo lie in the heather on some hill-side, with Linty feeding amongst it, ready to come at his call, receive him on her back, and carry him where he would! Boy and mare loved each other greatly.

But alas! though supple and active, Linty was old—she was nine and twenty—and the day could not be distant when they must part company. And now she was ill! Two of the men had been up with her all night, and Grizzie too: she had put her own pillow under Linty's head, and sat by her for hours. When

Cosmo left, she was a little better, but there were great fears as to the possibility of her recovery.

"She's sae terrible aul', ye see, sir!" said Cosmo, ending his tale of woe, and burst out crying afresh.

"Cosmo," said Mr. Simon,—and to a southern ear the issuing of such sweet solemn thoughts in such rough northern speech might have seemed strange—only the vowels were finely sonorous, if the consonants were harsh,—"Cosmo, your heart is faithful to your mare, but is it equally faithful to him that made the mare?"

"I ken it's his wull," answered Cosmo. "I ken mears maun dee!—but eh, *she* was sic a guid ane!—Sir, I canna bide it."

"Ye ken wha sits by the deein' sparrow?" said Mr. Simon, himself taking to the old dialect. "Cosmo! there was a better nor Grizzie sat nearer to Linty a' the lang nicht. Things warna gaein' sae ill wi' her as ye thoucht. Life's an awfu' mystery, Cosmo, but it's jist the ae thing the maker o' 't can

haud nearest til, for it's nearest til himsel' i' the mak o' 't.—Fowk may tell me," he went on, more now as if he were talking to himself than to the boy, "'at I sud content mysel' an' lat alane sic useless speculations, but wi' deein' men an' mears a' aboot me, hoo can I! An' 'deed they're onything but useless to me, for gien I had naething but what I see an' hear, gran' an' bonny as a heap o' 't is, I wad jist smore (*be smothered*) for want o' room."

"But what's the guid o' 't, whan I'll never see her again!" sobbed Cosmo.

"Wha daurs to say sic a thing, laddie?"

"A'body," answered Cosmo, a good deal astonished at the question.

"Maister A'body has a heap o' the gowk in him yet, Cosmo," rejoined his master. "In fac', he's scarce mair nor an infant yet, though he wull speyk as gien the haill universe o' wisdom an' knowledge war open til 'im! There's no a word o' the kin' i' the haill Bible, nor i' the hert o' man—nor i' the hert o' the Maker, do I, i' the hert o' me, believe.

Cosmo, can *ye* believe 'at that wee bit foal o' an ass 'at cairriet the maister o' 's a' alang yon hill-ro'd frae Bethany to Jerus'lem, cam to sic an ill hin'er en' as dee forgotten by him he cairriet? No more can I believe that jist 'cause it cairriet him it was ae hair better luikit efter nor ony ither bit assie foalt i' the lan' o' Isr'el."

"The disciples micht hae min't (*remembered*) it to the cratur, an' luikit efter him for 't," suggested Cosmo.

The master looked pleased.

"They could but work the wull o' him that made the ass," he said, "an' does the best for a' thing an' a' body. Na, na, my son! gien I hae ony pooer to read the trowth o' things, the life 'at's gien is never taen; an' the love ony cratur ever waukent in a human breist 'ill no more be lost than the objec' o' the same. That a thing can love an' be loved—an' that's yer bonnie mearie, Cosmo—is a' ane to sayin' 'at it's immortal; for God is love, an' whatever partakes o' the essence o' God canna dee, but maun

gang on livin' till it please him to say haud, an' that he'll never say."

By this time the face of the man was glowing like an altar on which had descended the fire of heaven. His confidence entered the heart of Cosmo, and when the master ceased, the scholar turned with a sigh of gladness and relief to his work, and wept no more. The possible entrance of Linty upon an enlarged existence widened the whole heaven of his conscious being; the well-spring of personal life within himself seemed to rush forth in mightier volume; and through that grief and its consolation, the boy made a great stride towards manhood.

One day in the first week of his new schooling, Cosmo took occasion to mention Aggie's difficulty with her algebra, and her anxiety to test his statement that a girl could do as well as a boy. Mr. Simon was much interested. Although he knew her father well, he had made no acquaintance with Agnes yet, who was a little afraid of him notwithstanding

his reassuring smile. The same day old Dorothy, Mr. Simon's servant and housekeeper, was taken ill, and Cosmo mentioning the fact in Aggie's hearing, she ran to offer her assistance.

"Auld Dorty," as the neighbours called her, not without some hint askance at the quality of her temper, though not very seriously ailing, was yet glad of her help; and it so happened that while Aggie was on her knees washing the slabs of the passage that led through the cottage, the master, as she always called him now that Cosmo was his pupil, came from his room.

"How's the algebra getting on, Agnes?" he said.

"Naething's gettin' on verra weel sin' Cosmo gaed frae the schuil, sir," answered Aggie, rising in haste and drying her hands in her apron. "I dinna mysel' seem to hae the hert for the learnin' 'at I had. Sae lang as he was there, far aheid o' me, but no a'thegither oot o' my sicht, I bude to follow."

"Would you like," said the master,

"to do some work with me—I don't say along with Cosmo, but at any odd times you could spare?"

"There's naething upo' the airth, sir," said Aggie, "'at I wad like half sae weel. I hae a hoonger upo' me for un'erstan'in' things. It comes o' bein' sae muckle wi' Cosmo—ever sin' he was a bairn, sir; for bein' twa year aul'er nor him, I was a sma' nurse til him; an' ye ken what he's like—aye winnin' at the boddom o' things! an' that's infeckit me, sae 'at I canna rist whan I see onybody un'erstan'in' a thing till I set aboot gettin' a grip o' 't mysel'."

"A very good infection to take, Agnes," replied the master, with a smile of thorough pleasure, "—one that will do more for you than the cow-pox! Come to me as often as you can. I have some things to tell you that will make you happier."

"'Deed, sir, I'm in no want o' happiness!—o' that I hae full mair nor I deserve; but I want a heap for a' that. I canna say what it is, for the hoonger 's

for what I haena. My hert's jist toom (*empty*) like, an' wants to be fillt."

"Another of God's children," thought the master, "full of the groanings of the spirit! The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them."

He often quoted scripture as the people of the New Testament sometimes do—not much minding the original application of the words. Those filled with the spirit have always taken liberties with the letter.

That same evening, when she had done helping Dorty, she had a talk with Mr. Simon about algebra. She went no more to school, but almost every day to the master.

CHAPTER XIII.

GRANNIE'S GHOST STORY.

THE glorious days of harvest came and went, leaving the fields bare for the wintry revels of the great winds. The potatoes were all dug up, and again buried—deeper than before, in pits, with sheets of straw and blankets of earth to protect them from the biting frost. Their stalks and fruit, and many weeds with them, were burned, and their ashes scattered. Some of the land was ploughed, and some left till the spring. Many cart-loads of peats were brought from the hill where they had been drying in sun and wind through the summer, and a great stack they made. The winter stock of coal was also carted, from the nearest sea-port—not in such quantity

as the laird would have liked, for money was very scarce. Every sort of stick fit for burning was collected; those too large were cut up with saw and axe, and all were stored in the house. Good preparation was thus made for the siege of winter.

In their growing poverty, partly no doubt from consideration, they had come to be much left to themselves. The family was like an old thistle-head withering on its wintered stalk, alone in a wide wind-swept field. All the summer through, not a single visitor, friend or stranger, had slept in the house. A fresh face was more of a wonder to Cosmo than to Abraham in the desert. The human heart, like the human body, can live without much variety to feed on, but its house is nevertheless built on a lordly scale for hospitality, and is capable of welcoming every new face as a new revelation. Steadily Cosmo went to his day's work with the master, steadily returned to his home—saw nothing new, yet learned as he went and came to love more the

aspects of the country, to read better the lines and shades of its varying expression. A country far from enough to satisfy one's ideal has yet endless loveliness for him who loves it enough to understand it. When the autumn came, it made him sad, for it was not in harmony with the forward look of his young life, which, unambitious, was yet vaguely expectant. But when the hoar-frost gleamed white, when the clouds gathered, the winds began to wail, and the snows to fall, his spirit rose to meet the invading death. The old castle grew grayer and grayer outside, but ruddier and cozier within. Oh, that awful gray and white Scotch winter—dear to my heart as I sit and write with windows wide open to the blue skies of Italy's December!

Cosmo kept up his morning bath in *the pot* for some time after the arrival of the frost, but when sleet and rain came, and he could no longer dry himself by running about, he did not care for it longer, but waited for the snow. Stirred

in part by the ambition of hardy endurance, his custom in the winter, let the cold be what it might, provided only the snow lay deep, was to jump from his bed with the first glimmer of the morning, and running, in a light gray with the grayness of what is frozen, to a near hollow on the hill-side, there pull off his night-garment and roll in the snow, kneading handfuls, and rubbing himself all over with snow. He strengthened himself thus against the cold of the day, and happily he was strong enough to stand the strengthening, and did therefore so increase his hardihood: what would have been death to many was to him invigoration.

He knew nothing of boxing, or fencing, or rowing, or cricket, but he could run and jump well, ride fairly, and, above all, endure. In the harvest of this year he learned to cut corn with a scythe, and the next spring not only learned to hold a plough, but by patient persistence and fearless compulsion trained two young bulls to go in one, thus saving several

weeks' work of a pair of horses. Even his grandmother began to feel proud that she had a share in the lad. What might he not be worth by the time he was a man! It troubled her, however, that he was no sportsman—never hunted the otter, never shot hares or partridges; the fact being, that, ever since his talk with the master about Linty, he could not bear to kill anything. His heart was larger and tenderer than his grandmother's, and got in the way of the killing.

He never went to the village without going to see Grannie. The old woman suffered much from rheumatism, which she described as a sorrow in her bones, but never lost her patience, and so got the good of the discipline which is specially that of old people—sent to start them well in the next world. Before the winter set in, the laird had seen her provided with peats—that cost nothing but labour: Cosmo had carted them himself, with Linty, quite recovered, between the shafts. But no amount of fire could keep the frost out of her body,

or the sorrow out of her bones. She had often to retreat to the box-bed, and when the bitter weather came, soon after Christmas, Agnes had to go and stay with her.

One afternoon, clouds rising, and the wind blowing keen from the north, Cosmo left Glenwarlock for the village, to see how they were getting on. He tramped the two miles and a half in joyous conflict. The snow was deep and powdery, and struggle with windy space from incoherent footing brought the blood to his cheeks and the sparkle to his eyes, and he entered the cottage radiant. He found Grannie sitting up in bed, and Aggie getting her tea. Setting on the table a bottle of milk he had brought—a luxury there in the winter—and some barley-meal scons Grizzie had made that morning, he dropped into Grannie's soft chair, and they had tea together. Grannie was a little better than usual, for every disease has its inconsistencies, and pain will abate before an access: notwithstanding the storm at hand, and the

fiery serpents flying through her limbs and joints, she was talking more than for days previous. When tea was over, and Aggie was removing the things, her voice came feebly from the bed to Cosmo's ears, where he lay back luxurious in her great chair:

"Did ye dream ony mair aboot the auld captain, Cosmo?" she asked.

"No ance," he answered. "What gars ye speir, Grannie?"

She said nothing for a few minutes, and Cosmo thought she had dismissed the subject. Aggie had returned to her seat, and they were talking about a certain proposition in Euclid, when she began again.

"Ye're weel nigh a man, Cosmo," she said, "an' a body daur speyk to ye aboot things she wadna be wullin' to say afore a bairn for fear o' frichtin' him mair nor the bit hert o' 'm cud stan'."

This preamble was enough in itself—not exactly to bring Cosmo's heart into his mouth, but to send a little more blood from his brain to his heart than

was altogether welcome there. His imagination, however, was yet more eager than apprehensive, and his desire to hear far greater than his dread of what might be coming. He looked at Aggie, and she stared at him again with pupils already dilated as if by the shadow of some awful approach. Neither said a word, but their souls made haste into their ears, and there sat listening.

"There's no guid ever cam o' ca'in' things oot o' their ain names," she began, "an' it's my min' 'at gien ever ae man was a willain, an' gien ever ae man had rizzon no to lie quaiet whan he was doon, that man was yer father's uncle—his gran'-uncle, that is—the auld captain, as we ca'd him. Fowk said he saul' his sowl to the ill ane: hoo that may be, I canna tell; but sure I am 'at his was a sowl ill at ease i' this warl', an' less at ease I doobtna it maun be noo i' the neist. Them 'at sleepit 'aneth me, for there was twa men-servan's i' the hoose at that time—an' troth there was need o' them an' mair, sic war the gangin's

on!—an' they sleepit whaur I'm tauld ye sleep noo, Cosmo, an' they swore to me 'at never a nicht passed 'at they h'ardna soons 'aneth them 'at there was no mainner o' accoontin' for. There's mony ane nooadays wad explain 't a'—by w'y o'! but that explainin' I canna bide: it's jist a love o' leasin', an' taks the bluid oot o' a' thing, lea'in' life as wersh an' fusionless (*insipid and weak*) as kail wantin' saut. Them 'at h'ard it swoor to me, as I tell ye, 'at there was *no* accoontin' for the reemish (*romage*) they baith h'ard — whiles douf-like dunts (*muffled knocks*), whiles a scrapin' an' tap-tappin', an' whiles speech o' moo', like beseekin' an' groanin', as gien the enemy war bodily present to the sinner."

"He micht hae been but jabberin' in 's sleep," suggested Cosmo, with his love of fair play.

Aggie gave him a warning nudge.

"Ay micht he," returned the old woman with calm scorn; "an' it micht, nae doobt, hae been snorin', or a cat speykin' wi' man's tongue, or ony ane o' mony

things 'cep' the trowth 'at ye're no wullin' to hear."

"I'm wullin' to hear the warst trowth ye daur tell me, Grannie," cried Cosmo, terrified lest he had choked the fountain —and that although the tale had to do with the room he slept in last night, and must go back to, and sleep in again this same night that was now around him!

Grannie was mollified, and went on.

"He micht weel be ill at ease, as I was sayin'—the auld captain, gien ae half was true 'at was tauld o' him: he bude til hae led a deevilich life amo' the pirates!—only whaur was the wauges o' his ineequity? I dinna mean the wauges the apostle speyks o'; he got them—for, as ye weel ken, 'the wauges o' sin is deith.' But for the maist pairt sic-like sinners get for a time wauges o' anither speckle frae the maister o' them. Troth! he has little need to be near wi' them, seein' there's nae buyin' nor sellin' whaur he is, an' a' the gowd he has doon yon'er i' the booels o' the yird wad jist lie there duin' naething, gien he sentna 't up

abune to work his wull. Na, he seldom scrimps them 'at follows his biddin'—but i' this case, whaur, I say, was the wauges? He aye cairriet himsel' like ane 'at cud lay doon the law, an' cleemt no sma' consideration, yet was there never sign or mark o' the proper fundation for respec'.

"The Englishman, him 'at was thoucht to hae killt him, was far-awa' sib (*related*) to the faimily, an' it turnt oot 'at the twa had come thegither 'afore, somewhaur i' foreign pairts. But that's naither here nor there, nor whether he killt him, nor what for he killt him, nor wha's faut was that same: aboot thae maitters naething was ever kent for certain.

"It was an awfu' like thing, ye may be sure, to quaiet fowk, sic as we was a'—'cep' for the drinkin' an' sic like sin' the auld captain cam wi' his reprobat w'ys—it was a sair thing, I'm sayin', to hae a deid man a' at ance upo' oor han's; for whatever the men du, the warst o' 't aye comes upo' the women. It's them 'at has aye to set richt what they hae set wrang. Lat a bairn come to mischance,

or the guidman coup (*turn over*) the kettle, an' it's aye—'Rin for Jean this, or Bauby that.' Whan a man kills a body, it's the women hae to mak the best o' 't, an' gar the corp luik dacent—an' there's some corps no that easy to bonnifie! Troth there's mony ane luiks bonnier deid nor livin', but that wasna the case wi' the auld captain, for he luikit as gien he had dee'd cursin', as he bude to du, gien he dee'd as he lived. His moo' was drawn fearfu', as gien the last aith had chokit him. Nae doobt they said 'at wad hae 't they kent, 'at hoo that was the w'y wi' deith frae slayin' wi' the swoord; but I wadna hear o' 't: be that as it micht, there was rizzon eneuch wantin' that. An' whether he had fair play or no, the deith he dee'd was a just ane; for them 'at slays wi' the swoord maun be slain by the swoord. Whan they faun' him, his richt han' was streekit oot, as gien he was cryin' to somebody rinnin' awa' to bide. But there was anither at han'—ane 'at wad tak 'im wi' 'im. Only, gien he tuik 'im that same

nicht, he cudna hae cairriet him far. 'Deed, maybe, the auld sinner was ower muckle aiven for *him!*

"They broucht him hame, an' laid the corp o' him upo' 's ain bed, whaur, I reckon, up til this nicht, he had lain mair nor he had sleepit. An' that verra nicht, what sud I see—but I maun tell ye a' aboot it, an' hoo it was, an' syne ye can answer me. Sin' my ain auld mither dee'd, I haena oppent my moo' to mortal upo' the subjec'."

The minds of the two listeners were on the acme of expectation. A real ghost-story, from the lips of one they knew and must believe, was a thing of dread delight. Like ghosts themselves, all unconscious of body, they sat with fixed eyes, rapt in listening.

"Ye may weel believe," resumed the old woman after a short pause, "'at nane o' 's was ower wullin' to sit up wi' the corp oor lane, for, as I say, he wasna a comely corp to be a body's lane wi'. Sae auld auntie Jean an' mysel', we agreed 'at we wud tak the thing upo'

the twa o' 's, for, huz twa, we cud lippen til ane anither no to be ower feart, but min' 'at there was twa o' 's.

"There hadna been time yet to fess hame the coffin, though, i' the quaiet o' the mirk, we thoucht, as we sat, we cud hear the tap-tappin' o' the hemmer upo' the heids o' the nails, as they cawed them intil 't, awa' in Geordie Lumsden's chop, ower at the Muir o' Warlock—a twa mile it wad be! We was sittin', auntie Jean an' mysel', i' the mids o' the room, no wi' oor backs til the bed, nor yet wi' oor faces, for we dauredna turn aither o' them til 't. I' the ae case, wha cud tell what we micht see, an' i' the ither, wha cud tell what micht be seein' hiz? We war sittin', I say, wi' oor faces to the door o' the room, an' auntie was noddin' a wee, for she was turnin' gey an' auld, but *I* was as wide waukin' as ony baudrins (*puss*) by a moose-hole, whan suddent there cam a kin' o' a dirlin' at the sneck (*latch*) 'at sent the verra sowl o' me up intil the garret o' my heid; an' 'afore I had time to ken hoo sair frichtit I was, the door

begud to open; an', glower as I wad, misbelievin' my ain e'en, open that door did, langsome, langsome, quaiet, quaiet, jist as my auld grannie used to tell o' the deid man comin' doon the lum (*chimney*), bit an' bit, an' jinin' thegither upo' the flure, aye the last come to that was 'afore 't. I was turnt to stane, like, 'at I cudna hae fa'en frae the cheir gien I had swarfed (*fainted*) clean awa'. Eh, but it tuik a time to open that door! But at last, as sure as ye sit there, you twa, an' no anither,——"

At the word, Cosmo's heart came swelling up into his throat, but he dared not look round to assure himself that they were indeed two sitting there and not another.

"—in cam the auld captain, ae fit efter anither! Speir gien I was sure o' 'im! Didna I ken him whan he was alive as weel as my ain father—as weel as my ain minister—as weel as my ain man? He cam in, I say, the auld captain himsel'—an' eh, sic an evil luik!—the verra luik deith had frozen upo' the face

o' the corp! The live bluid turned to dubs (*mud*) i' my inside. He cam on an' on, but no straucht for whaur we sat, or I dinna think the sma' rizzon I had left wad hae bidden wi' me, but as gien he war haudin' for 's bed. To tell God's trowth—for I daurna lee, gien it war only for fear o' haein' to gang to the same place he was in, an' luik upon him again—my auld auntie declaret efterhin (*afterwards*) 'at she saw naething. She bude til hae been asleep, an' a mercifu' thing it was for her, puir body! but she livedna lang efter.

"Weel, he made straucht for the bed, as I thoucht. 'The Lord preserve 's!' says I to mysel', 'is the bein' gaein' to lie doon wi' 's ain corp?' But wi' that he turnt awa', an' roon' the fit o' the bed to the ither side o' 't, an' I saw nae mair: for a while, I kenna hoo short or hoo lang, auntie Jean sat her lane wi' the deid, for I lay upo' the flure, an' naither h'ard nor saw. It's a mercy I wasna deid, for he wad hae gotten me than! But think ye, wad auntie Jean believe

'at I had seen him, or that it was onything but a dream had come ower me atween waukin' an' sleepin'! Na, no she! for, ye see, she had sleepit throu' 't."

For some time silence reigned, as befitted the close of such a story. Nothing but the solemn tick of the tall clock was to be heard. On and on it went, steady as before: ghosts were nothing special to the clock; it had to measure out the time for both ghosts and unghosts.

"But what cud the ghaist hae been wantin'? No the corp, for he turnt awa', ye tell me, frae hit!" Cosmo ventured at length to remark.

"Wha can say what ghaists may be efter, laddie! But, troth to tell, whan ye see live fowk sae gien ower to the boady 'at they're never happy but whan they're aitin' or drinkin' or sic like—whan the boady's the best half o' them, like, an' they maun aye be duin' something wi' 't, wha can won'er 'at the ghaist o' ane sic sud fin' himsel' geyan eerie an' lanesome like wantin' his seck to fill, an' come to hae a luik hoo it was weirin'!"

"But he gaedna to the corp!" Cosmo objected.

"'Cause he wasna alloot," answered Grannie. "He wad hae been intil 't again in a moment gien that had been in his pooer, an' what wad hae come o' 's than! But the deevils cudna win intil the swine wantin' leave."

"Ay, I see," said Cosmo.

"But jist ye speir at yer new maister," Grannie went on, "what he thinks aboot it; for I ainee h'ard him speyk richt wice words to my guidson, Jeames Gracie, sittin' whaur ye sit the noo, anent sic things. I min' weel hoo he said the only thing 'at made again' the viouw I tuik—though I spakna o' the partic'lar occasion—was, 'at naebody ever h'ard tell o' the ghaist o' an alderman—wha they say 's some grit Lon'on man, sair gi'en to the fillin' o' the seck."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STORM GUEST.

AGAIN a deep silence descended on the room. The twilight had long fallen, and settled down into the dark. The only thing that acknowledged and answered the clock was the red glow of the peats on the hearth. To Cosmo, as he sat sunk in thought, the clock and the fire seemed holding a silent talk. Presently came a great and sudden blast of wind, which roused him, and made him bethink himself that it was time to be going home.

"Weel, I'm glaid to see ye sae muckle better, Grannie," he said, rising. "I maun say guid nicht to ye noo, but I'll luik in again the morn. I winna sune get yon awfu' story oot o' my heid."

"'Deed it's no mony days thegither

oot o' mine!" rejoined the old woman. "But guid nicht to ye, Cosmo, an' thank ye kin'ly. There's been but feow o' yer kin, be their fau'ts what they micht, wad forget ony 'at luikit to them for a kin' word or a kin' deed!—Aggie, lass, ye'll convoy him a bittock, winna ye?"

The few in whom yet lingered the phantom-idea of retainership to the long-faded chieftainship of Glenwarlock, seemed to cherish the notion that the heir of the house must be tended and looked after like a child, and that that was what they were in the world for. Doubtless a pitying sense of the misfortunes of the family had much to do with the feeling.

"There's nae occasion," said Cosmo.

"I'll du that," said Agnes—the two speaking together.

Cosmo began to put on his plaid, crossing it over back and chest, and leaving his arms free: that way the wind would get least hold on him. Agnes went to the closet for her plaid also—of the same tartan: drawing it over her

head and pinning it under her chin, she was quickly ready for the stormy road. Turning then to Cosmo, she was pinning his plaid together at the throat, when the wind raised a sudden howl, rushed down the chimney, and drove the level smoke into the middle of the room. It could not shake the cottage—it was too lowly; but it bellowed over it like a wave over a rock, and as in contempt blew its breath back into its throat.

"It'll be a wull (*wild*) nicht, I'm doobtin', Cosmo!" said Agnes. "I wuss ye safe at the ingle-neuk (*hearth-corner*)."

Cosmo laughed.

"The win' kens me," he said.

"Guid forbid!" cried the old woman from the bed. "Kenna ye wha's the prence o' 't, laddie? Makna a jeist o' the pooers 'at be."

"Gien they binna ordeent o' God, what are they but a jeist?" returned Cosmo. "Eh, but ye wad mak a bonny munsey (*monsieur*) o' me, Grannie, to hae me feart at the deil an' a'! I canna a'the-gither help it wi' the ghaists, an' I'm

ashamet o' mysel' for 't, but I *am not* gaein' to heed the deil. I defy him an' a' his works. He's but a cooard, ye ken, Grannie—for whan ye resist him, he rins."

She made no answer. Cosmo took her hand, bade her good-night again, and went, followed by Agnes, who locked the door behind her, and put the key in her pocket.

It was indeed a wild night. The wind was rushing from the north, full of small, sharp-stinging slugs of snow, like diminutive, ill-made hailstones. Down the wide street it came right in their faces. Through it, as through shifting gauzy veils, they saw on each hand the lights of the village homes, but before them lay darkness and the moor—a chaos, a carnival of wind and snow. Worst of all, the snow on the road was not *binding*, and was like loose sand to walk upon. So long as the footing is good, one can make progress, even in the face of a storm from the north; but to heave with a shifting fulcrum is hard. Nevertheless

Cosmo rejoiced; he saw in his mind's eye the mad waste around him, and rejoiced; invisible, it was yet a presence, and his strong young heart was eager for the conflict. There was no fear of ghosts in such a storm! The ghosts might be there, but there was no time to heed them, and that was as good as their absence—perhaps better, if we knew all.

"Bide a wee, Cosmo," cried Agnes, and leaving him in the middle of the street, she ran across to one of the houses, and lifting the latch, went in. No one there troubled a neighbour to come and open the door.

Cosmo turned his back to the wind, and stood waiting. From the house Aggie had entered, came through the wind and snow the sound of a shoemaker's hammer on his lapstone.

"Cud ye spare the mistress for an hoor, or maybe twa an' a half, to haud Grannie company, John Nauchty?" said Agnes.

"Weel that," answered the *sutor*, ham-

mering away, and intending no reflection on the social qualities of the mistress.

"I dinna see her!" said Aggie.

"She'll be in in a meenute. She's run ower the ro'd to get a can'le," returned the man.

"Gien she binna the speedier, she'll hae to licht it to fin' her ain door," said Aggie merrily, to whom also the approaching fight with the elements was welcome. She had made up her mind to go all the way to Castle Warlock, let Cosmo protest as he chose.

"Ow, na! she'll hearken an' hear the hemmer," replied the shoemaker.

"Weel, tak the key, John Nauchty—an' ye winna forget?" said Aggie, laying the key in the hollow of his stool beside his hand, amongst his smaller implements. "Grannie's lyin' there her leelane, an' gien the hoose was to brak intil a lowe (*flame*), what wad come o' her?"

"Guid forbid Grannie sud ever be forgotten!" rejoined the man heartily; "but fire wad hae sma' chance the nicht. It's win' an' hard watter the nicht!"

Agnes thanked and left him. All the time they talked he had not missed a single stroke of his hammer on the ben-leather on his lapstone.

When she rejoined Cosmo, where he stood leaning his back up against the wind in the middle of the road—

"Come nae farther, Aggie," he said. "It's an' ill nicht, an' grows waur. There's nae guid in 't, for we winna hear ane anither speyk ohn stoppit an' turnt oor back to the tempest. Gang to yer grannie; she'll be feart aboot ye."

"Feart! No a grain. I *maun* see ye oot o' the toon."

They fought their way along the street, and out to the open moor, a great part of which was still heather and swamp, fit floor for the dance of the storm. Peat-bog, ploughed land, and king's highway was all one waste of snow. Creation seemed but the snow that had fallen, the snow that was falling, and the snow that had yet to fall; or, to put it otherwise, a fall of snow between two outspread worlds of snow.

"Gang back noo, Aggie," said Cosmo. "What's the guid o' twa whaur ane only need be, an' ilk ane has to fecht for himsel'?"

"I'm no gaein' back yet," answered Aggie. "Twa's better at onything nor ane himlane. The sutor's wife's gaein' in to haud Grannie company, an' Grannie 'ill like her cracks a heap better nor mine. She thinks I hae nae mair heid nor a hen, 'cause I canna min' upo' things 'at war nearhan' forgotten or I was born."

Cosmo tried persuasion, but found it useless and desisted. Again they struggled on together, through the snow above and the snow beneath. Aggie was more than a match for Cosmo; smaller, and stronger in proportion to her size, she bored her way through the blast better than he. The moment he began to expostulate, she would increase the distance between them until she could not hear a sound he uttered.

On one such occasion, she turned at length her back to the wind, and waited for him to come up.

"Noo ye've had eneuch o' 't!" he said with a tinge of triumph. "I maun turn an' gang back wi' ye, or ye'll never win hame."

Aggie broke into a loud laugh that rang like music through the storm.

"A likly thing," she cried, "an' me wi' my back to the win' a' the ro'd hame! Gang back yersel', Cosmo, an' sit in Grannie's cheir, an' I s' gang on to the castel, an' lat them ken whaur ye are. Gien ye dinna that, I tell ye ance for a', I'm no gaein' to lea' ye till I see ye safe inside yer ain wa's."

"But, Aggie!" reasoned Cosmo, with yet greater earnestness, "what'll ye gar fowk think o' me, 'at wad hae a lassie gang hame wi' me, for fear the win' micht blaw me intil the sea? Ye'll bring me to shame, Aggie!"

"A lassie! say ye?" cried Aggie. "—I think I hear ye!—An' me auld eneuch to be yer mither! I s' tak guid care there s' be nae affront intil 't. Haud yer hert quaiet, Cosmo; ye'll hae need o' a' yer breath 'afore ye win to yer ain fireside."

As she spoke, the wind pounced upon them with a fiercer gust than any that had preceded. Instinctively they grasped each other, as if from the wish, if they should be blown away, to be blown away together.

"Eh, that's a rouch ane!" said Cosmo, and again Aggie laughed merrily.

While they stood thus, with their backs to the wind, the moon rose. Far indeed from being visible, she yet shed a little glimmer of light over the plain, revealing a world as wild as ever the frozen north outspread—as wild as ever poet's vision of despairing desolation. I see it! I see it! but how shall I make my reader see it with me? It was ghastly. The only semblance of life in it was the perplexed, multitudinous motion of the drifting, falling snow. Shape was not to be seen, sound but that of the wind was not to be heard. It was a world of gray and roaring. It was like the dream of a delirious child that had read of the birth of the world from the rushing together of fortuitous atoms. Wan and wild, tumul-

tuous-thick, innumerable to millions of angels, an interminable tempest of intermingling and indistinguishable vortices, it stretched on and on, a boundless hell of cold and shapelessness — white thinned with gray, and fading into gray blackness, into tangible darkness.

The moment the fury of the blast abated, Agnes turned, and without a word began again her boring march, forcing her way through the wind. Unable to prevent her, Cosmo followed. But he comforted himself with the certainty that, if the storm continued, his father would use his authority, and make her stay the night. The sutor's wife was one of Grannie's best cronies, and there was no fear of her being neglected.

Aggie kept the lead she had taken till there could be no more question of going back. They were now drawing near the road that, leaving the highway, ran along the bank of the Warlock river, up among the valleys and low hills that had all at one time been the property of the house of Warlock.

Aggie stopped suddenly.

"What's yon, Cosmo?" she said, with consternation in her tone.

He looked sharply forward, and saw what seemed a glimmer, but might be only something whiter in the whiteness. No! it was certainly a light—whether on the road or not, he could not tell. There was no house anywhere near! It moved! —yet not as if carried in human hand! Now it was gone! There it was again! There were two of them! They were two huge pale eyes in a head rolling from side to side! Grannie's warning about the Prince of the Power of the Air darted into Cosmo's mind. It was awful! But whatever it was, it was not to be run from! That was the readiest measure, no doubt, yet not the less the one impossible to take.

And now it was plain that the Something was not away on the moor, but on the road in front of them. It came nearer and nearer, and grew vaguely visible—a huge blundering mass. They knew no animal half so big, or half so

unwieldy: it could never surely overtake them if they had to run for it!

On the wind came sounds that might be human—like the talk of men to horses. And now it was approaching no more! With simultaneous impulse they hastened towards it.

It was a travelling carriage—a rare sight in those parts at any time, and rarer still in winter. The companions had certainly seen one before, but as certainly never a pair of lighted carriage-lamps, with reflectors that made of them fiendish eyes. It had but two horses, which now positively declined attempting a single step farther. They had tried and tried, and done their best, and finding themselves unable to move the carriage an inch, preferred standing still to sending all their eight legs slipping about under them for nothing.

Cosmo looked up to the box: the driver was little more than a boy, and nearly dead with cold. Already Aggie had a forefoot of the near horse in her hand; Cosmo ran to the off one.

"Their feet's fu' o' snaw!" said Aggie.

"Ay; it's ba'd hard!" said Cosmo. "They maun hae come ower a saft place: it wadna ba' the nicht upo' the muir!"

"Hae ye yer k-nife, Cosmo?" asked Aggie.

A head was put out of the carriage-window. It was that of a lady, in a swan's-down travelling-hood. She had heard an unintelligible conversation — and one intelligible word. They must be robbers! How else should they want a knife in a snow-storm? Why else should they have stopped the carriage? When she put out her head it was with a little cry of alarm. Aggie dropped the hoof she held, and went to the window.

"What's yer wull, mem?" she asked.

"What's the matter?" the lady returned, in a trembling voice, but not a little reassured; for, as she crossed the range of one of the reflectors, the face of the young girl seemed to come out of the storm like the face of an angel of help. "Why doesn't the coachman go on?" she asked.

"He canna, mem," answered Agnes. "The horse canna win throuw the snaw. They hae ba's o' 't i' their feet, an' canna get a grip wi' them, nae mair nor ye cud yersel', mem, gien the soles o' yer shune war roon' an' made o' glaiss. But we'll sune set that richt. Hoo far hae ye come, mem, gien I may speir? Aigh, mem, it's an unco nicht!"

The lady understood but little of what Aggie said, for she was English. Half guessing at her question, however, she answered that they had come from Cairntod, and were going on to Howglen. She told her also, now entirely reassured by Aggie's voice, that they had been much longer on the way than they had expected, and were getting anxious.

"Eh, but ye're gaein' the wrang gait for Howglen!" said Aggie. "But ye're not yer lone?" she added, suddenly bethinking herself to summon her English, of which she had plenty of a sort, though not always at hand or easy to find.

"My father is with me," replied the lady, looking back into the carriage;

"but I think he is asleep, and I don't want to wake him."

Glancing in, Aggie caught sight of a muffled mass in the farther corner of the carriage. It was breathing heavily, having indeed had more than was good in the way of refreshment.

In the mean time Cosmo was busy clearing the snow from the horses' hoofs. The young driver, stupid or dazed, sat helpless as a parrot on a swinging perch.

"You'll never win to Howglen to-night, mem," said Aggie.

"We must put up where we can, then," answered the lady.

"I dinna know of a place nearer, fit for gentlefowk, mem."

"What are we to do, then?" asked the lady, with subdued, but evident anxiety.

"What's the guid o' haein' a father like that—sleepin' an' snorin' whan maist ye're in need o' 'im!" thought Aggie to herself; but what she replied was, "Bide, mem, till we hear what Cosmo has to say til't."

"That is a peculiar name!" remarked

the lady, brightening at the sound of it, for it could, she thought, hardly belong to a peasant.

"It's the name the lairds o' Glenwarlock hae borne for generations," answered Aggie; "though doobtless it's no a name indigenous to the country. One o' them long ago brought it from Italy, where the Pop' bides."

"And who is this Cosmo whose advice you would have me ask?"

"He's the yoong laird himsel', mem. Eh, but ye maun be a stranger no to ken the name o' Warlock!"

"Indeed I am a stranger—and I can't help wishing, if there is much more of this weather between us and England, I had been more of a stranger still."

"'Deed, mem, we hae a heap o' weather up here as like this as ae snaw-flake is til' anither! But we tak what's sent, an' makna mony remarks—though to be sure the thing's different whan it's o' a body's ain seekin'!"

This speech—my reader may naturally think it not over-polite—was happily not

over-intelligible to the lady. Aggie, a little wounded by the reflection on the weather of her country, had in her emotion aggravated her Scotish tone.

"Then where is this Cosmo? How are we to find him?"

"He'll come onsoucht, mem. It's only 'cause he's cleanin' oot yer puir horse' hivs 'at he disna pey his respec's to ye. He'll be blithe eneuch to wait upo' ye whan that's dune."

"I thought you said he was a lord!" remarked the lady with disappointment.

"No, mem, I saidna that. He's nae lord. But he's a laird, an' some lairds is better nor 'maist ony lords; an' *he*'s Warlock o' Glenwarlock — at least he wull be—may it be lang or come the day!"

Hard as the snow was packed in them, all the eight hoofs were now cleared out with Cosmo's busy knife, carefully used lest he should hurt the frog. The next moment his head appeared beside that of Aggie, a little behind; and in the light of the lamp reflected from the snow, the

lady saw the handsome face of a lad seemingly about sixteen.

"Here he is himsel', mem!" said Aggie. "This is the yoong laird. Ye speir at *him* what ye're to du, and du jist as he tells ye."

Having thus said, she drew back, that Cosmo might take her place.

"Is that girl your sister?" asked the lady, with not a little abruptness, for the *best bred* are not always the most courteous.

"No, my lady," answered Cosmo, who had learned from the lad on the box her name and rank; "she is the daughter of one of my father's tenants."

Lady Joan Scudamore thought it odd. The youth and the maiden seemed on strangely familiar terms! And how came they to be out together thus in the heart of a hideous storm? The girl looked up to him certainly, but as it were from the same level, sharing in the pride of the family!—Should she take her advice, and ask his? or should she order the coachman to drive on to Howglen? There

was, alas, no counsel to be had from her father just at present! If she woke him, he would but mutter something not so much unlike an oath as it ought to be, and go to sleep again!

"We want very much to get to Howglen—I think that is what you call the place," she said at length.

"You're going the wrong way for that, my lady. But anyhow you couldn't have got there to-night," returned Cosmo, who had respectfully waited for her to speak. "The road is, as you see, no road at all. The horses would do better if you took their shoes off—only then, if they came on a bit of frozen dub, it might knock their hoofs to pieces: they are brittle in such a frost."

The lady glanced round at her sleeping companion with a look expressive of no small perplexity.

"My father will make you welcome, my lady," continued Cosmo, "if you will come with us. We can only give you what English people think poor fare, for we're not——"

She interrupted him.

"I should be only too glad to sit all night by a fire! I am nearly frozen."

"We can do a little better for you than that, I hope, though not so well as we should like," returned Cosmo.

"You are very kind. I promise you I will be comfortable," said the lady, beginning to be a trifle interested in the odd specimen of the Scotch calf.

"Welcome then to Glenwarlock!" said Cosmo. "Come, Aggie, tak ane o' them by the heid; they're gaein' wi' 's. —We must turn the horses' heads, my lady. I fear they won't like to face the wind; they've only had their backs to it yet. I can't make out whether your coachman is half drunk or more than half frozen; but Aggie and I will take care of them, and if he tumble off, nobody will be the worse."

"What a terrible country!" said the lady to herself. "The coachmen get drunk upon the box! The boys talk like old men! There is no distinction of classes! And it snows from morning to

night, and from one week's end to another's!"

Aggie had taken the head of the near horse, and Cosmo took that of the off one. The driver said nothing, but let them do as they pleased. With some difficulty and more than ordinary caution, the road being indistinguishable from the ditches that here bounded it on both sides, they got the carriage round. But when the weary animals received the tempest in their faces, they backed and would have turned again, and it was some time before they could be induced to front it: Agnes and Cosmo had to employ all their powers of persuasion, first to get them to stand still, and then to advance a little. Gradually, however, by leading, and patting, and continuous encouragement, they were coaxed as far as the parish road, and there, turning their sides to the wind and no longer their eyes and noses, they began to move with a little will of their own: horses have so much hope, that the mere fact of having made a turn is enough to revive them

with the expectation of cover and food and repose. They reached presently a more sheltered part of the road, and if now and then they had to drag the carriage through deeper drifts, they were no longer buffeted by the cruel wind or stung by its frost-arrows.

All this time the gentleman inside slept—nor was it surprising; for, lunching at the last town, and not finding the wine fit to drink, he had fallen back on an accomplishment of his youth, and betaken himself to toddy. That he had found at least fit to drink: it was proved by the state he was in.

They reached at last the ascent from the parish road to Castle Warlock. This was so steep that their conductors, though they held no conference on the subject, were both anxious as to the behaviour of the horses; but the moment their heads came round, whether only that it was another turn with its fresh hope, or that the wind brought some stray odour of hay or oats to their wide nostrils, I cannot tell, but finding the ground tolerably

clear, they took the *brae* with a will, and tore up with the last efforts of a strength all but exhausted, Cosmo and Aggie running beside them, and talking to them all the way. The only difficulty was to make the lad on the box give them head enough.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CASTLE INN.

THE noise of their approach, heard in the lonely winter castle from the bottom of the hill, awoke varied conjecture, and Grizzie proceeded at once to light the lanthorn that she might the sooner learn what catastrophe could cause such a phenomenon. But the rapidity of the horses' ascent in the hope of rest and warmth and supper was so great, that the carriage was in the close and rattling up to the door, ere she had got the long wick of the tallow candle to repent and shine. The laird laid his book aside, rose in haste from his chair, and went to the door. Just as he reached it a post-chaise stopped before it, and a dense cloud of steam began to shut in the horses from

whose quick-heaving sides it rose. And there were Cosmo and Agnes at the door of the chaise, assisting somebody to descend!

The laird was never in a hurry. Too thorough a gentleman to trouble approach by uneasy advance, he stood in the door, calmly expectant.

A long-cloaked lady got down, and leaving the assistant hand of his son, came towards him—a lady quite young yet somewhat stately, evidently weary, and probably in want of food as well as rest. He bowed with old-fashioned worship, and held out his hand to welcome her. She gave him hers graciously, and expressed the hope that in accepting the hospitality his son had offered them they had not presumed.

"Come in, come in, madam," said the old man; "the fireside is the best place for explanations. Welcome to a poor house, but a warm hearth! So much we can yet offer stranger-friends."

He led the way, and she followed him to the kitchen-fire. On a small piece

of carpet before it stood the two chairs of state, each protected by a large old screen. From hers the grandmother, perceiving the quality of the entering guest, rose with dignified difficulty.

"Mother," said the laird, "it is not often we have the pleasure of visitors at this time of the year!"

"The rarer the welcomer!" she answered, and made lady Joan a courtesy as low as she dared—for she could not reckon on her power of recovery.

Lady Joan returned her salute, less impressed with the honour done her than the old lady intended her to be, but quite recognizing the hospitality of a gentlewoman. She took the laird's offered seat, and leaning back, looked wearily at the fire.

The next minute a not very pleasant-looking old man entered, supported on the one side by Cosmo, and on the other by Agnes. They had had some little difficulty in waking him up, and he entered the house with the idea that they had arrived at an inn where they were to spend the night. If his grumbling and

swearing as he advanced was *sotto voce*, the fact was owing only to his not being sufficiently awake for a more vigorous utterance. The laird advanced to meet him, but he took no notice of him, plainly regarding his welcome as the mere obsequiousness of a landlord, and turned shivering to the fire, where Grizzie was hastening to set him a chair.

"The fire's the best flooer i' the gairden, an' the pig's the best coo' i' the herdin', my lord," she said—a saw to which his lordship might have been readier to respond, had he remembered that the *pig* meant the stone jar that held the whisky.

As soon as lord Mergwain was seated, Cosmo, drawing his father aside, informed him concerning the names of their guests and the situation in which he had found them, adding that the lady and the horses were sober enough, but for the other two he would not answer.

"We have been spending some weeks at Canmore Castle in Ross-shire, and are now on our way home," said lady Joan to Mistress Warlock.

"You have come a long way round!" remarked the old lady, displeased with the manners of the elder visitor, on whom she kept casting, every now and then, an almost admonitory glance.

"We have," replied lady Joan. "We turned out of our way to visit an old friend of papa's, the laird of Cairntod, and have been storm-bound there till he—I mean papa, could bear it no longer. We sent our servants on this morning. They are by this time waiting us at Howglen."

"I hope so," said the laird, a little doubtfully.

The fire had been thawing the sleep and rousing the normal ill-humour of lord Mergwain, so that now at length he was sufficiently awake to be annoyed that his daughter should hold so much converse with the folk of the inn.

"Can't you show us to a room," he said gruffly, "and get us something to eat?"

"We are doing the best we can for your lordship," replied the laird. "We were not expecting visitors, and as one

of the rooms you will have to occupy has not been in use for some time, it will, in such weather as this, take two or three hours of a good fire to render it fit to sleep in. But I will go myself, and make sure that the servant is attending first of all to the fires."

He put on his hat over his nightcap, and went towards the door.

"That's right, landlord!" cried his lordship. "Always see to the comfort of your guests yourself. God bless me! you don't mean we have to go out of doors to reach our bedrooms?"

"I am afraid we cannot help it," answered the laird, who had stopped half-way. "There used to be a passage somewhere, connecting the two houses, but for some reason or other, I have been told, it was built up before my father's time."

"He must have been a precious old fool!" remarked the visitor, who had not cared to hear accurately.

"My lord!"

"I said your father must have been

an old fool," repeated his lordship testily.

"You speak of my husband!" said Mrs. Warlock, drawing herself up with dignity.

"I can't help that. *I* didn't give you away! Let's have some supper, will you? I want a tumbler of toddy, and without something to eat it might make me drunk."

Lady Joan sat silent, with a placid look on her handsome face, but a twinkle of mischievous enjoyment in her shining eyes. She had too often to suffer from her father's rudeness not to take some pleasure in its bringing him into a hurtless scrape. The laird was both sharper and kinder, however, than she expected, and understanding both the old man's condition and his mistake, humoured the joke; but his mother rose trembling with indignation. He immediately gave her his arm, and conducted her to a stair which ascended from the kitchen, whispering to her at the foot of it that, as the man was their guest and the worse for

drink, and there was no other shelter to which he could betake himself, he must not quarrel with him. He then called Cosmo and Agnes, who were talking together in a low voice near the door, and taking them with him to Grizzie where she toiled to get the spare room ready, told them to relieve her, and let her go and get supper for the strangers.

"I fear, my lord," he said, returning, "we are but poorly provided for such guests as your lordship, but we will do what we can."

"A horrible country!" growled his lordship. "But, look you, I don't want jaw—I want drink."

"What drink would your lordship have? If it be in my power——"

"I'll be damned, for all your talk, if you've got anything better than your cursed whisky!" interrupted lord Mergwain.

Now the laird had some remnants of old wine in the once well-stored cellar, and, thankless as his visitor seemed likely to prove, his hospitality would not allow him to withhold what he had.

"I have a few bottles of claret," he said, "—if it should not be over old! I do not understand much about wine myself."

"Let's have it up!" cried his lordship. "I'll soon tell you what sort it is! If you don't know good wine, I do. I'm old enough, blast my soul! to know the devil in any bottle."

The laird would have had more confidence in recommending his port, which he had been told was as fine as any in Scotland, but he thought claret safer for one in his lordship's condition—one who having drunk would drink again. He brought therefore from the wine-cellar, which had once been the dungeon of the castle, a thoroughly respectable-looking magnum of claret, dirty as a burrowing terrier, and to the eyes of the imagination hoary with age. The whole wrinkled face of the toper glistened at the sight. Eagerly he stretched out both hands towards it. They trembled with desire. Scarcely could he endure the delay of its unsealing. No sooner did the fine pro-

missory note of the discharge of its tompion reach his ear, than he cried out, with the authority of a field-officer at least—

"Decant it. Leave the last glass in the bottom."

The laird placed a small deal table near the fire; then observing that lady Joan had taken his mother's chair, set his beside the table. His lordship at once occupied it. The laird filled a decanter and set it before him.

"Haven't you a magnum-jug?" he growled.

"No, my lord."

"Then fill another decanter, and mind the last glass."

"I have not another decanter, my lord."

"Not got two decanters, you fool?" sneered his lordship, angry at not having the whole bottle set down to him at once. "But, after all," he resumed, "it mayn't be worth a damn, not to say a decanter. Bring the bottle. Set it down. Here!—carefully! Bring a glass.

You should have brought the glasses first. Bring three; I like to change my glass. Make haste, will you!"

The laird did make haste, smiling at the exigence of his visitor. Lord Mergwain listened to the glug-glug in the long neck of the decanter as a lover might to a song of love, and the moment it ceased was holding the glass to his nose.

"Humph! not much aroma here!" he grumbled. "I ought to have made the old fool"—the laird must have been some fifteen years younger than he—"give it a taste of the fire, only what would have become of me while it was thawing! By Jove, by the time I've been buried as long, I shall want thawing too!"

The wine, however, turned out more satisfactory to the palate of the toper than to his nostrils—which in truth, so much had he drunk that day, were at the moment incapable of doing it justice—and he set himself to enjoy it. How that should be possible to a man for whose spiritual palate the accompanying dried

olives of memory could do so little, I find it difficult to understand. One would think, alone to enjoy his wine, a man must have either good memories or good hopes. Lord Mergwain had forgotten the taste of hope; and most men would shrink from touching the spring that would set such a panorama unrolling itself as made up his past; yet there he sat, and there he drank alone, and, truth to tell, now and then smiled grimly.

The laird put a pair of brass candlesticks on the table beside the bottle, the decanter, and the three glasses—there were no silver utensils any more in the house of Glenwarlock; years ago the last of them had vanished—and retired to a deal chair at the end of the hearth, under the lamp that hung on the wall. But first he took from a shelf an old, much-thumbed folio, which Mr. Simon had lent him—the Journal of George Fox; and the panorama which then for a while passed before his mind's eye was not a little different from that passing before lord Mergwain's. What a study to a

spirit able to watch the unrolling of the two side by side!

In a few minutes Grizzie entered, carrying a fowl just killed, its head as she came all but dragging on the ground at the end of its long, limp neck. She seated herself on a stool, somewhere about the middle of the large space of the kitchen-floor, and proceeded to pluck and otherwise prepare it for the fire. Having last of all split it open from end to end, so turning it into something not unlike an heraldic double eagle, she approached the fire, the fowl in one hand, the gridiron in the other.

"I doobt I maun get his lordship to sit a wee back frae the fire," she said. "I hae to bran'er this chuckie til 's supper."

"What does the woman mean?" said his lordship. "Oh! I see—a spread-eagle! But is there no room to sit in? Or is my chamber not ready yet? I don't relish feasting my nose so much in advance of the better sense."

"Ow, nae fear o' yer lordship's nose, 'cep' it be frae yer lordship's hose, my

lord!" said Grizzie, "—for I doobt ye're birstlin' (*scorching*) yer lordship's shins! I'll tak the cratur oot to the cairt-shed, an' sing' 't there. An' 'deed I wadna advise ye to gang to yer room a minute afore ye need, for it winna be that warm the nicht. I hae made a fire 'at's baith big an' bricht—ane fit to ro'st Belzebub —an' I beg yer pardon, laird—but it's some days—I micht say ooks—sin' it last saw fire, an' the place needs time to tak the heat intil its auld neuks."

She might have said years not a few, instead of some weeks, but her truthfulness was not strong enough to drive her so far. She turned, and left the house, carrying with her the fowl to singe.

"Here," said his lordship to his host, "move back this table and chair a bit, will you? I don't relish the old witch fussing about my knees. What a cursed mistake it is not to have rooms ready for whoever may come."

The laird rose, laid his book down, and moved the table, then, having helped his guest to rise, moved his chair also, and

placed the screen again betwixt him and the door. His lordship re-settled himself to his bottle.

In the mean time, in the guest-chamber, which had for so long entertained neither friend nor chance-visitor, Cosmo and Aggie were airing the linen, dusting the furniture, setting things tidy, and keeping up a roaring fire. For this purpose the remnants of a broken-down cart, of which the axle was anciently greasy, had been fetched from the winter store, with many peats, and a few shovelfuls of coal to give the composition a little body, and all between them had made a glorious glow. But the heat had hardly yet begun to affect sensibly the general atmosphere of the room, which was large — the same size as the drawing-room immediately under it.

This room was still less familiar to Cosmo: the drawing-room filled him with a kind of loving awe; this caused him a kind of faint terror. The genesis of the feeling was unknown to him. His late experiences in Grannie's cottage had but

deepened it. At no time, even in broad daylight, had he been willing to enter it. Now and then he would open the door in passing, and for a moment stand peering in, with a stricken, breath-bating enjoyment of the vague atmosphere of dread which issuing seemed to envelop him in its folds; so, it was like a page in a book of horrors; but to go one step nearer to that heavily curtained bed was more than he would ever of his own motion have done. What it was about the room that scared him he could not tell, but the scare was there. At the same time he rejoiced in the possession of such a room by the house, cherishing an idea of some undefined measureless value in it — almost as if it had a mysterious window looking out upon the infinite. Nor was the cause traceable of this feeling either. Until Grannie's story, he had heard no tale concerning the room—that he remembered, though doubtless hints and words dropped had made their impressions, outlasting the memory of their origin.

With a companion like Aggie, however, even after hearing Grannie's terrible reminiscence, he could enter the room and remain in it without worse than that milder dread experienced upon its threshold when he only *glowered* into the strange brooding silence of the place. But this applied only to the space on the side of the bed next the fire. Not to mention the shadowy region beyond it, the bed on which the body of the pirate had lain was awfully gruesome: it seemed scared at its knowledge both of the fact, and of the feeling its own conscious look caused in the beholder.

In the strength of Aggie's presence, notwithstanding, Cosmo was equal to taking a survey of the room. Over walls, floor, and ceiling, his eyes were wandering. But the bed hid a part of the room beyond. What was that like? When they were ready to put the sheets on the bed, he must go to that side, and then he would see! He dared not go till then! "Daurna!" he repeated to himself—and went at once.

Near the head of the bed was a door which seemed to him quite strange, but the next moment an eerie foggy memory woke in him that he had seen it in his dream. The dream, old captain and all, threatened to rush back and enfold him! What if he were about to find himself suddenly alone in the midnight of that awful time! The curtains hid Aggie, and he felt as if he were miles alone even now, and must rush back to her. But he would not yield to the folly, and compelled himself to walk up to the door: instead of a door it was an old dark screen in stamped leather, from which the gilding was long faded.

"Aggie," he said, and although he called gently, he trembled at the sound of his own voice, "did ye ever hear—did Grannie mak mention o' ony door but the ane the auld captain cam in at?"

"Whisht! whisht!" cried Aggie, in a loud hissing whisper, which seemed to pierce the marrow of Cosmo's bones. "I rede (*counsel*) ye say naething aboot yon i' this chaumer. Bide till we're oot

o' 't. As sune's we hae dune, we'll steek (*close*) the door, an' lat the fire work. It'll hae eneuch adu afore it mak the place warm: the cauld intil this room's no a common ane. There's something by ord'nar' intil 't."

Cosmo could no longer endure having the great, old, hearse-like bed between him and Aggie. With a shiver in the very middle of his body, he hastened to the other side: on the one lay the region of air, and fire, and safe earthly homeliness; on the other was the dank region of the unknown, whose march-ditch was the grave.

In silence they hurried on the rest of their work; Aggie insisted on taking the farther side of the bed when they made it, but then only was another word spoken between them till they were safe from the room and had closed its door behind them.

Their further task was to make Cosmo's room somewhat fitter for a lady's bower. Opening a certain chest, they took from it—stored there by his mother, Cosmo

loved to think—another set of curtains, clean blankets, fine sheets, and a counterpane of silk patchwork, and put them on the bed. With these, a toilet-cover, and a chair or two from the drawing-room, they so changed it that Cosmo declared he would not have known it. They then filled the grate, where the fire was already burning fiercely, with as much additional fuel as it would hold, and ran to the kitchen. At the door of it Aggie gave her companion the slip, and went back through the storm to Muir o' Warlock.

Cosmo found the table spread for supper, the English lord sitting with his wine before him, and the lady in his grandmother's chair, leaning back, and yawning wearily. Lord Mergwain looked muddled, and his daughter cast on him now and then a look more of discomfort than affection. He was not now a very pleasant lord to look on, whatever he might once have been. He was red-faced and blear-eyed, and his nose, partly from the snuff he took in large quantity, was much injured in shape and colour: closer

description the historical muse declines. His eyes had once been blue, but tobacco, potations, revellings day and night—everything but tears, had washed from them the most of their colour. He wore a jet-black wig, which added much to the strange unpleasantness of his appearance, for therein to the unnatural came the untimely, and enhanced the withered. His mouth, full of false teeth very white and ill-fitting, had a cruel expression, and Death seemed to look out every time he grinned.

As soon as he and lady Joan were seated at the table, the laird and Cosmo left the kitchen and went to the guest-chamber, for, the condition and behaviour of her father being such, the laird judged that the lady would be more comfortable without them.

"Cosmo," he said, throwing more peats on the fire, and then standing with his back to it, "I cannot help feeling as if I had known that man before. But I can recall no circumstance of the acquaintance, and it may be a mere fancy. *You*

have never seen him, my boy — have you?"

"No, father; and I shouldn't be sorry to think I was not to see him soon again," answered Cosmo. "The lady is pretty, but not very pleasant, though she be a lord's daughter."

"Ah, but such a lord, Cosmo!" returned his father. "When a man drinks like that, he's no better than a cheese under the spigot of a wine-cask; he only lives to keep his body well soaked—whether the nicer or the nastier for the worms I don't know. He drowns his soul in his body, as they drowned the duke of Clarence in the malmsey-but. The material part of us is meant to keep growing gradually thinner to let the soul out when its time comes, and the soul to keep growing bigger and stronger every day, until it burst the body at length, as a growing nut breaks its weakening shell; but when, instead, the body grows thicker and thicker, lessening the room within, it squeezes the life out of the soul, and when such a body dies, the soul inside it

is found a poor shrivelled thing. Cosmo, to see that man drink, makes me ashamed of my tumbler of toddy. I know I like my drink just the same way that man likes his—it's only a difference of degree. I don't believe it does me any good, and from this hour I will take no more.—Then," he added, after a short pause, "I shall be quite sure you will never take any."

"Oh, father!" cried Cosmo, "take your toddy all the same: I promise you—and a Warlock never breaks his word, you know—I will not taste strong drink while I live."

"The word of a man is better than that of a Warlock," said the laird. "A Warlock is nothing except he be a man. Some Warlocks have been men. The apostle says, 'Quit yourselves like men.'"

From that day the laird drank nothing that could be called strong drink, much to the satisfaction of his friend Peter Simon, who was from choice a water-drinker.

"What a howling night it is, Cosmo!"

he resumed. "If the poor old lord had held on for Howglen, he would have been frozen to death. When the drink's out of the drunkard, he's nothing but a sponge."

By this time lord Mergwain had had his supper, and had begun to drink again. Grizzie wanted to get rid of him and "redd up" her kitchen, and had not scrupled to tell him so, but he would not move. He was quite comfortable where he was, he said, and damned her kitchen. He wouldn't stir a peg, he said, till he had finished the magnum. My lady might go when she pleased; the magnum was better company than the whole houseful of them!

Grizzie was on the point of losing her temper altogether. When the laird and Cosmo re-entered, she was standing before their guest with her hands on her hips. They lingered a moment at the door, for what Grizzie said was not seldom worth hearing.

"Na, na, my lord!" she expostulated, "I canna lea' ye here. Yer lordship 'ill sune be past takin' care o' yersel'—no 'at

ye wad be a witch at it this present!—an' wad be thinkin' ye was i' yer bed whan ye was i' the mids' o' the middin' (*mixen*), or pu'in' the blankets o' the deuk-dub (*duck-pond*) ower yer heid at the deil's biddin'. Lord! my lord, ye micht set the hoose o' fire, an' burn a', baith stable an' byre, horses an' cairts an' cairt-sheds, an' hiz a' to white aisse i' oor nakit beds!"

"Hold your outlandish gibberish," returned his lordship, "and fetch me some whisky. This stuff is too cold to go to sleep on."

"Deil a drap or drap o' whusky, or oucht else, yer lordship s' hae frae my han' this nicht—nae mair nor gien ye war a bairn 'at wantit poother to blaw himsel' up wi'! Ye hae had ower muckle a'ready, gien ye war but cawpable o' un'erstan'in' 't, or failin' that, o' believin' an honest wuman 'at kens what state ye are in better nor ye du yersel'!—A bonny lordship!" she muttered to herself as she turned from him.

The laird thought it time to appear,

and advanced. Lord Mergwain had not understood the half of what Grizzie said, but had found sufficient provocation both in her refusal and in the tone of it, and was much too angry for anything articulate but swearing.

"My lord," said the laird, "I think you will find your room tolerably comfortable now: shall I have the pleasure of showing you to it?"

"No, damn you! I'm not going to stir. Fetch me a bottle of your whisky;—that's pretty safe to be good."

"Indeed, my lord, you shall have no more drink to-night," said his host, and taking the bottle, which was nearly empty, carried it from the table.

But the volley that now came pouring from the outraged heart of his guest was such, that, for the sake of Grizzie and Cosmo, the laird took the wine again in his hand, and said—

"If your lordship will drink it in your own room, you shall have what is left of the bottle."

Not too drunk to see where his ad-

vantage lay, Lord Mergwain yielded; the hellish thunder of imprecation from bellowing sank to growling, then to muttering, and the storm gradually subsided. The laird gave him one arm, Cosmo another, and Grizzie came behind, ready to support or push as occasion might require; and so in procession they moved from the kitchen along the causeway, his lordship grumbling and slipping, hauled, carried, and shoved, through the great door, up the stairs, past the drawing-room, and into "the muckle chaumer." There deposited in an easy chair before the huge fire, he was fast asleep in a moment. Lady Joan had followed them, and when they went into her father's room, passed up to her own. When the three therefore returned to the kitchen, they found nobody in it. Grizzie went back to see that the young lady was comfortable, and the laird, with a sigh of relief, sank into his mother's chair. After a little, having asked Cosmo to hand him the Journal of George Fox, he sent him to bed, and rejoicing in the

quiet, began to read. Grizzie returned, pottered about for a while, retired, and the laird was alone.

When he had read for about an hour, he thought it time to go and see after his guest. He found him still asleep before the fire. But he must not be left there through such a night, for the fire would go out, and a pack of wolves would hardly be worse than the invading cold. It was not an easy task to rouse him, and indeed remained in large measure unaccomplished, for, after having with much labour and contrivance relieved him of his coat and boots, the laird had to content his hospitality with getting him into bed in the remainder of his clothes. He then heaped fresh fuel on the fire, put out the candles, and left him to what repose there might be for him. Returning to his chair and his book, he read for another hour, paid his guest one visit more to make up the fire, and then went to bed. His room was in the same block with the kitchen, above that of his mother.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT NIGHT.

Cosmo's temporary quarters were in one of two or three chambers above his own, formerly occupied by domestics. He went to bed under many blankets, but after about four hours' sleep, woke so cold that he could not sleep again. Now Cosmo could bear any degree of cold he had yet experienced in the open air, but to be cold in bed was more than he would willingly endure. When disturbed on a summer night, he always got up and went out; and although naturally less inclined to do so on such a night as this, when, though the wind had fallen and the snow ceased, the rooks would be tumbling dead from the fir trees with pure cold, he yet thought

anything better than lying sleepless from such a cause.

On the opposite side of the court, in a gap between the stable and the byre, the men had heaped up the snow from the front of the offices, and with that heap Cosmo had been amusing himself. Snow as a plastic substance, a thing that could be compelled into shapes, was an endless delight to him, and now he had conceived and partly carried out a new fancy, which, but for the interruption of their visitors, he would have already brought to completion.

Into the middle of the mound he had bored a tunnel, and there hollowed what may be called a negative human shape—the mould, as it were, of a man, of life-size, with his arms thrown out, and his feet stretched straight, as one that had fallen and lay weary. His object was to illuminate it, in the hope of "a man all light, a seraph man," shining through the snow, and that same night had intended, on his return from Muir o' Warlock, to light it up: now that he was

driven from his citadel, he would brave the enemy in his camp, and make his experiment.

He dressed himself, crept softly out, and, for a preparation, would have a good run. He trotted down the hill, beating his feet hard, for there was comparatively little snow here, until he reached the more level road, where he set out at what speed was possible, and soon was warm as any boy need care to be.

About four o'clock in the morning the laird woke suddenly, not knowing why. But it was not long ere he knew why he must not go to sleep again. From a distance, as it seemed, through the stillness of the night, in rapid succession, came three distinct shrieks, one close on the other, as from the throat of a human being in mortal terror. Never had such shrieks invaded his ears. Whence they came, whether from some part of the house, or from outside, he could not tell. He sprang upon the floor, thinking first of his boy, and next of the old man left drunk in his bed, and drew on a garment

or two with speed, expecting every moment a fresh assault of horrible sound. But all he heard was the hasty running of far-off feet. He hurried down, passing carefully his mother's door, and listening as he passed, in the hope of finding she had not been disturbed. He heard nothing, and went on; but the old lady lay there trembling, too terrified to move or utter a sound. In the next room he heard Grizzie, evidently preparing to issue in haste. Down to the kitchen he ran, and through it to the door. When he opened it, a strange sight met his eyes, and for a moment arrested him.

The night was dark as pitch, for great clouds of snow filled the vault of the sky, and behind them was no moon. But the heap of snow on the opposite side of the court was shining with a faint, phosphorescent radiance, rendering the whole of it plainly visible. A thing yet stranger was that the light seemed to come from inside the heap, and, strangest of all, its core had a vague *shadowy* resemblance—if one may use the word of a

shape of *light*—to the form of a man. There lay what seemed to the laird's troubled eyes the shining body and outstretched limbs of one who had cast himself supine, and been swallowed by a snowy grave. The vision flickered and faded, revived and faded again, while, in his wonder forgetting for one briet moment the cries he had heard, the laird stood and gazed. It was the strangest, ghostliest thing he had ever seen! Surely he was witness of some phenomenon hitherto unknown! But Grizzie's footsteps on the stair behind roused him, and the same instant the light suddenly vanished. He hurried towards the great door, with Grizzie now at his heels.

He opened it. All was still. Feeling his way in the thick darkness, he went up the elliptic spiral of the stair.

Cosmo had left the remnants of his candle-ends burning, and had just climbed glowing to his room, to watch from its one small window the last of his successful experiment, when those quick-following,

hideous sounds rent the night, like flashes from some cloud of hellish torture. His heart stood still. Involuntarily associating them with what he had been about, he felt for a moment like a murderer. The next he caught up his light and rushed from the room, to seek, like his father, that of their guest.

As he reached the bottom of the first stair, the door of his own room opened, and lady Joan came out, in a cloak over her nightgown. She looked like marble; her wide eyes seemed immovable. But Cosmo felt it was not she who had shrieked, and passing her led the way down.

When the laird reached the door of the guest-chamber, there was his boy in his clothes, with a candle in his hand, and the lady in her nightgown, standing in the middle of the floor, and gazing downward with terror-stricken countenances. Before them lay lord Mergwain!—or was it but a thing of nought—the deserted house of a living soul? The face was drawn to one side, and hence an un-

avoidable suggestion of the ludicrous mingled hideously with the horror which was its real expression. Upon closer investigation the laird concluded he must be dead; but as he could not be certain, something must be done. Cosmo was dazed, and lady Joan stood staring with a lost look, more of fright than of sorrow, but on Grizzie's countenance, looking through between them with bright searching eyes, was neither dismay, anxiety, nor distraction. She only nodded her head now and then, as if she had expected it, and here it was.

"Rin an' fess het watter as fest 's ye can, Grizzie," said the laird. "My dear lady, go and put on your clothes, or you will be frozen to death. Cosmo, get the fire up as quickly as possible; it is not quite out. But first we must get him into bed and cover him up warm. I will rub his hands and feet till the hot water comes."

As the laird said every one did speedily. Grizzie soon brought a pail of hot water, Cosmo soon lighted the fire, and the lady soon returned more warmly clad. Grizzie

put the pail on a chair by the bed-side, and they got his feet in without raising him or taking him out of the blankets. Before long he gave a deep sigh, and presently showed other signs of revival. When at length he opened his eyes, he stared wildly round him, and seemed to have lost his reason. But the laird thought he might not yet have got over the drink he had taken, and if he could be got to sleep, would perhaps wake better. They removed therefore more of his clothes, made him as comfortable as they could, and placed hot bottles about him. The laird said he would sit with him, and sent lady Joan to bed, assuring her he would call her if in the least her presence should seem desirable. But from her behaviour he suspected the catastrophe was not altogether strange to her. She went readily, more like one relieved than anxious. Grizzie went to see how her mistress fared. Cosmo was left with his father.

In the mind of the laird had arisen the same fear that had the first moment

seized Cosmo: might he not unwittingly have had some share in the frightful event? When first he entered the room, there was Cosmo dressed, and with a light in his hand!—the seeming phosphorescence of the snow must have been one of his *ploys:* might it not have been the source of the shock to the dazed brain of the drinker?

His lordship was now breathing regularly and more softly, though every few minutes half waking with a cry—a dreadful thing to hear from a sleeping *old man.* They drew their chairs close to the fire and to each other, and Cosmo, as was usual with him, laid his hand on his father's knee.

"Did you observe that peculiar appearance in the snow-heap on the other side of the court, Cosmo?" asked the laird.

"Yes, father," replied the boy; "it was my doing."

And therewith he told him all about it.

"You're not vexed with me, are you, father?" he concluded, seeing him look grave.

"No, my son," answered the laird; "I am only uneasy lest that should have had anything to do with this sad affair."

"How could that be, father?" asked Cosmo, his heart again seeming to stand still with dread.

"He may have looked out of the window and seen it."

"But why should it do him any harm to see it?" said Cosmo, the more inclined to question, that his peace was concerned.

"It may have terrified him."

"Why should it terrify him?"

"In the half-foolish state he was in he may have taken it for something supernatural," replied his father. "I cannot help feeling uneasy about it."

"Did *you* see anything frightful about my man of light, father?" inquired Cosmo.

"No," anwered his father thoughtfully; "but, you see, it was the shape of a man lying full length as if he were dead and in his grave, and he may have taken it for his own wraith—an omen of death at hand."

"But he is an Englishman, father, and the English don't believe in the second sight."

"That does make it less likely.—Few lowlanders believe in it."

"Do you believe in it, father?"

"Well, you see," returned the laird, with a small smile, "I, like yourself, am neither pure highlander nor pure lowlander, and the natural consequence is, I am not very sure whether I believe in it or not. I have heard stories difficult to explain."

"Still," said Cosmo, "if it were so, his lordship must be the most to blame in the matter; for surely no man with a good conscience would be so frightened if he did see his wraith!"

"However that may be, Cosmo, a man must be sorry any such terror should in his house come upon a stranger. You and I, Cosmo, would have our house a place of refuge.—But you had better go to bed. There is no reason in tiring two people, where one is enough."

"But, father, I got up because I was

so cold I could not sleep. I would much rather sit with you. I should be much more comfortable here."

That his son should have been cold in the night distressed the laird. He felt as if for the sake of strangers he had neglected his own, and would have persuaded him to go to his bed, which was in a warmer room, but Cosmo begged to be allowed to remain, and the laird yielded. The boy rolled himself in his plaid, lay down at his father's feet, and was soon slumbering peacefully: his father with him, the chamber had lost its terrors, and was a homely room of the house. Many a time did the memory of his falling asleep on the rug that night before the huge fire, with his father in the great chair beside him, and the bad lord snoring within the dark curtains, return to him, and often in his after troubles would he say to himself that, if he were as faithful to his heavenly Father in his great house as he was to his earthly father in Castle Warlock, he would fear nothing in earth or hell.

To know one's self safe amid storm and darkness, fire and water, disease and pain, violence and death, is to be a follower of the Master, for that is what he knew, even in the hour of his darkness.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE MORNING.

All night long, at intervals, the old man moaned, and every now and then would mutter something unintelligible, from which stood out ugly, occasionally fearful words. In the gray of the morning he woke.

"Bring me my brandy," he cried in a voice of discontent.

The laird rose and went to him. But the moment lord Mergwain saw the laird's face above him, he shook all over, his jaw fell, and his face became like that of one who had died of fear.

"Who are you?" he gasped at length, with chattering teeth. "Where am I? How did I come to this cursed place?"

"You came for refuge from the storm last night, my lord," said the laird.

"I never had such horrible dreams in my cursed life. Where am I, do you hear? Who are you? What is your name?—Why don't you answer me?"

"You are at Castle Warlock, my lord," replied the laird.

"God damn me!" he shrieked, and throwing off the blankets, sprang from the bed.

"I entreat you, my lord, lie down again: you were very ill in the night," expostulated the laird.

"Go to hell!" roared his guest in a fierce quaver. "I don't stop another hour in the blasted hole! Out of my way, you fool! Where's Joan? Tell her to come to me directly. I'm off, tell her. I'd as soon go to bed with the devil's grandmother as stop another half-hour in this abominable old lime-kiln!"

He flew at his clothes to dress himself, but his poor old hands trembled so with rage, fear, drink, and eagerness, that he made but little speed. The laird did his

best to help him, but he was nowise recognizant.

"I will get you some hot water, my lord," said Glenwarlock at length, moving towards the door.

"No, damn you! Damn everybody!" shrieked the old man. "If you go out of that door, I will throw myself out of this window."

The laird turned, and in silence waited on him again like a servant. "It must be delirium tremens!" he said to himself. He poured him out some cold water, but he would not wash himself till he was clear of the horrible hole, he said. The next moment he cried for water, drank three mouthfuls eagerly, threw the tumbler from him, and broke it on the hearth.

The instant he was dressed he dropped into the chair before the fire, and closed his eyes.

"Your lordship must allow me to fetch some fuel," said the laird; "the room is growing cold."

"Damn you, no!" cried lord Mer-

gwain, opening his eyes and sitting up. "When I'm cold I'll go to hell and get warm again. If you attempt to leave the room, I'll send a bullet after you.—God have mercy! what's that at my feet?"

"It's only my boy," replied the laird gently. "We have been with you together all night—since your attack, at least."

"What do you mean by that?" he said, looking up sharply, with more intelligence in his face than he had yet shown.

"Your lordship had some sort of fit in the night, and if you do not compose yourself, I dread a return of it."

"You well may, if I stop here!" he answered—then, after a pause, "Did I talk?" he asked.

"Yes, my lord—a good deal."

"What did I say?"

"Nothing I could understand, my lord."

"And you did your best, I don't doubt!" rejoined his lordship, with a

sneer. "But you know nothing is to be built upon what a man may say in a fit."

"I have told your lordship I understood nothing."

"No matter; I don't stay another hour under your blasted roof."

"That will be as it may, my lord."

"What the great Satan do you mean?"

"Look at the weather, my lord.—Cosmo!"

The boy was asleep, but at his name from his father's lips, he started at once to his feet.

"Go and wake Grizzie," said the laird. "Tell her to get the breakfast ready as fast as she can. Then bring some sticks and peat for the fire, and some hot water for his lordship."

Cosmo ran to obey. Grizzie had been up for more than an hour, and was going about with the strangest look on her face. Her mouth was pursed up close, as if worlds should not make her speak, but her eyes were wide and restless, and now and then she would nod her head, as if

assenting to some unheard argument. Whatever Cosmo required of her, she did immediately, but not one solitary word did she utter. He returned with the fuel, and began to make up the fire. Lord Mergwain was lying back in his chair, with his eyes closed.

"Why don't you bring me my brandy, you devil's whelp?" he cried. "—Oh, I thought it was my own rascal! Get me some brandy, will you?"

"There is none in the house, my lord," said his host.

"What a miserable sort of public you keep! No brandy!"

"My lord, you are at Castle Warlock—not the right place, I am sorry to find, for your lordship's needs."

"Oh, damn it, yes! I remember!" he cried, sitting bolt upright. "I once knew your father, or your grandfather, or your grandson, or somebody of yours—the more's my curse! Out of this I must go, and at once! Tell them to put the horses to. Little I thought when I left Cairntod where I was going

to come to myself! Better be in hell and have done with it! Lord! Lord! to think of a trifle like that not forgotten yet! For God's sake, give me my brandy. There's some in a pocket somewhere! Damn it! where's the coat I had on yesterday? God! God! God!"

He threw himself back again. The laird thought that if he had the brandy of which he spoke, it might be well to give him some, and would have gone to search the coats his lordship had put off in the kitchen; but at his first step in the direction of the door, he burst out afresh:—

"I tell you—and damn your soul and body that you have to be told twice—I will not be left alone with that child! He's as good as nobody! What could *he* do if——?"

He stopped, as if terrified at the end he saw coming to the sentence.

"Very well, my lord," responded the laird, "I will not leave you. Cosmo shall go and look for the brandy in your lordship's greatcoat."

"Yes, yes, good boy! you go and look for it—and make the devil's own haste about it.—You're all Cosmos, damn you! It's a long line—and a cursed for me—if it shouldn't hang me! But I had the best of the game—though I did lose my diamond ring! Cursed old cheating son of a porpus! It was doing the world a good turn and Glenwarlock a better!—Damn you! what are you listening to?—Ha! ha! ha! I say, now, Glenwarlock, would you hang a man when there was nothing to be got by it—not a ha'p'orth?"

"I never had occasion to consider the question, my lord," answered the laird.

"Ha! ha! let me tell you it's quite time you did consider it. If you wait for the occasion, you'll find you have waited too long. It's no joke when a man has to decide without one moment to think. He's pretty sure to decide wrong."

"That depends, I should imagine, my lord, on how he has been in the habit of deciding."

"Come now! none of your Scotch

sermons to me! You Scotch always were a set of oily hypocrites! The better to roast at last: you won't want basting! Damn the whole nation!"

"To judge by what you said last, my lord——"

"Oh, my last speech, eh!—my dying declaration! 'Tis fairer to judge a man by anything rather than what he says. That only serves to hide what he's thinking. By God! I wish I might be judged by what I say, though, bad as it is! I've done a thing or two I wish I could forget now that age has clawed me in his clutch. So have you! So has everybody! Why should I fare worse than the rest!"

Here Cosmo returned with a brandy-flask. His lordship reached out both hands to it, more eager after it than for even the cobwebbed magnum of claret—hands trembling at once with feebleness and hunger for strength. Heedless of his host's offer of a glass, he put the flask to his mouth, and swallowed three great gulps. Then he breathed deep, seemed to say with Macbeth, "Ourselves again!"

drew himself up in his chair, and glanced around him with a look of gathering arrogance. Truculent question sat in his eyes—as if his soul were saying, "Now then, what do you make of it? What's your damned notion about me and my behaviour?" After a moment's silence—

"What puzzles me is this," he said, "—how the deuce, of all places, I should come just here! I don't believe, in all my wicked life, I ever made such a fool of myself before—and I've made many a fool of myself too!"

Receiving no answer, he took another pull at the brandy. Cosmo stood *glowering* at him openly—fascinated. The laird stood a little behind him, harking back upon old stories, putting this and that together, and resolving to have a talk with Grannie.

In a minute or two more his lordship got up, and proceeded to wash his face and hands, ordering Cosmo about after the things he wanted as if he had been his valet. The moment he had finished his toilet,

"Richard's himself again!" he said, in a would-be jaunty voice, and cast a crow-cocky look at the laird. But the laird read trouble below the look.

"Now, then, Mr. Warlock, where's this breakfast of yours?" he said.

"For that, my lord," replied the laird, "I must request your lordship to come to the kitchen. The dining-room in this weather would freeze the very marrow of your bones."

"And, by God! it don't want freezing," returned lord Mergwain with a shudder. "The kitchen, to be sure!—I desire no better place.—I'll be hanged if I enter this room again!" he muttered to himself. "—My natural tastes are quite as simple as your own, Mr. Warlock," he added aloud, "though I may not have had the same opportunity of indulging them."

He was returning to the semblance of what he would have called a gentleman.

He rose, and the laird led the way. Lord Mergwain kept muttering to himself all down the stairs, and Cosmo,

coming behind, heard what he muttered: "Mere damned nonsense! Nothing whatever but the drink!—Yes, that's the drawing-room! — What's done's done — and more than done, for it can't be done again!"

It was a nipping and an eager air into which they stepped from the great door. The storm was over, but the snow lay much deeper than before. The world seemed folded in a lucent death, of which the white mounds were the graves. Again all the morning it must have been snowing busily, for no footprints lay between the two doors but those Cosmo had just made.

When they reached the kitchen, there was a great fire on the hearth, and a great pot on the fire, in which the porridge was swelling in huge blobs that burst in sighs. Grizzie was live as the new day, bustling and deedy. Her sense of the awful was nowise to be measured by the degree of her dread: she believed and did not tremble much. She had an instinctive consciousness that a woman

ought to be, and might be, and indeed was a match for the devil.

"I am sorry we have no coffee for your lordship," said the laird; "but I hope you can take tea—and Grizzie's scons are good."

His lordship had in the mean time taken yet another pull at the brandy-flask, and was growing more and more polite.

"The man would be hard to please," he said, "whom such a display of good victuals would not entice. Tea for me before everything!—Damn the stuff! how am I to pretend to swallow it!" he added, murmuring rather than muttering to himself.

Presently he made a curious noise in his throat, and the laird, looking up involuntarily, saw his eyes fixed upon something before him. He followed their look, and saw its object was a certain pepper-pot of odd device—a piece of old china in the shape of a clumsy horse, with holes between the ears for the issue of the pepper.

"I see, my lord," said Glenwarlock,

"you are amused with the pepper-pot! It is a curious utensil, and has been in the house a long time—longer than anybody knows. Which of my great-grandmothers let it take her fancy, it is impossible to say; but I suppose the reason for its purchase, if not its manufacture, was that a horse passant is the crest of the family."

"Curse the crest! Devil take the horse!" said his lordship.

The laird started. His guest had for the last few minutes been behaving so much like a civilized being, that he was taken at unawares by the sudden relapse into barbarity. But the entrance of lady Joan looking radiant, diverted the current of things.

The fact was that lord Mergwain, like not a few old people, had formed such a habit of speaking in his worst moods without restraint, that in those which were by comparison good he would at times utter his mind as unconsciously as unintentionally.

During the rest of the breakfast his

lordship did not speak. He drank his tea, and lady Joan ate oat-cake and scons, with fresh butter and jam, and for all the frost and snow had a new-laid egg—the only one. The laird and Cosmo ate porridge and milk—the latter scanty, and tasting not a little of turnip. Grizzie, seated on a stool some yards from the table, took her porridge with treacle. Mrs. Warlock was not of the company; she had not yet left her room.

When the meal was over, lord Mergwain turned to his host:

"Will you oblige me, Mr. Warlock," he said, "by sending orders to my coachman to put the horses to as quickly as possible? We have trespassed too much already on your hospitality. I'm damned if I stop an hour longer in this hell of a place!"

"Papa!" cried lady Joan.

Thus admonished, his lordship understood that he had spoken what he ought not, but instead of looking confused, sought with much readiness to put the best face on his blunder.

"Pardon me, Mr. Warlock," he said; "I have so long had the bad habit, that now I am an old man I swear without knowing it."

"Your lordship has already accustomed me to it," replied the laird. "I will see your coachman myself—but I am more than doubtful."

He left the kitchen, and Cosmo followed him. Lord Mergwain turned to his daughter and said—

"What does the man mean? I tell you, Joan, we must go at once. Mind you don't side with him if he wants us to stop. I knew this cursed place before you were born, and hate it like hell."

"Very good, papa!" replied his daughter, with a slight curl of her lip, which was neither of contempt nor of sorrow, yet seemed to have in it a touch of both.

Regardless of the presence of Grizzie, they had spoken aloud.

"May it be lang afore ye're in a waur an' a warmer place, my lord an' my leddy," said the old woman, with the

utmost politeness of manner she could assume.

They took no more notice of her speech than if she had not spoken. Lord Mergwain threw himself into Mrs. Warlock's chair, and gazed into the fire. Lady Joan went to Grizzie where she stood washing the breakfast things, tucked up her sleeves, with a glance to make sure her father was not looking, and would have helped her.

"Haud awa' wi' ye, my leddy," said Grizzie; "ye'll du naething but chap a' yer bonny han's, an' maybe my dishes to the ill bargain. Cauld bin's the weet but lowsens the dry."

Joan went to the window, and looked out into the yard.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEFORE DINNER.

It was a glorious morning. There was not a breath of wind, and the sun was shining to the tune, "Keep up your hearts, I am up here still; we all have our parts, and must work with a will." But Nature lay dead, with a great white sheet cast over face and form. Not dead?—Just as much dead as ever is man when the neighbours say, "We shall not see him again." The poor old lord who sat looking into the fire, would have been glad to think that the approaching dank and cold of the sepulchre would be the end of all things to him—that he would be permitted to lie there, and not have to get up and go to worse quarters.

"I am sorry to be the bringer of ill news, my lord," said the laird, re-entering. "Our roads and your horses both render it impossible you should proceed to-day."

His guest turned white through all the discoloration of tobacco and strong drink. He stood silent, his pendulous under lip trembling.

"After the wind fell," resumed the laird, "it continued to snow for some hours, and it seems quite impossible you should get through. The attempt would be no small risk."

"Joan," said lord Mergwain, "go and order the rascal to put the horses to."

Lady Joan turned from the window, drew her shawl up from her shoulders over her head, and went. Cosmo ran to open the door for her. The laird looked on, and said not a word.

"Will you come and show me where to find the coachman, Cosmo?" said lady Joan as she reached the door, where the boy stood holding it. Her smile flashing out in white teeth and dark eyes be-

witched him. Then first, in the morning light and the brilliance of the snow-glare, he saw that she was beautiful. With the shadows around her, the dusk of her complexion obscured itself; against the sheeny world she stood out darkly radiant; and the boy noted how the long eyelashes made a softening twilight round the low, horizon-like luminousness of her eyes. She was just enough older than himself to make him look up to her as a grown lady.

Through the deep snow between the kitchen and the stable, were none but his father's footsteps. He cast a glance at her small feet, daintily shod in little more than sandals.

"My lady," he said, "you'll get your feet soaking wet! They're so small they'll just dibble the snow! Please ask your papa if I mayn't go and give his message instead of you. It will do just as well."

"I must go," she answered. "Sometimes he will trust nobody but me."

"Stop a minute," said Cosmo. "Come

to the drawing-room. I won't keep you more than a minute. There is a path there, you see."

He led the way, and she followed.

The fire was not only alight, but blazing powerfully: Grizzie, foreseeing, and determined she would not have strangers in the kitchen all day, had lighted it before she laid the breakfast. Lady Joan walked straight to it, and dropped, with a little shiver, into a chair beside it. To Cosmo the unaccustomed sight of a fire in that room brought a strange pleasure, like the discovery of a new loveliness in an old friend. To lady Joan the room looked the very type of old-fashioned dreariness, while to Cosmo it was an ancient marvel, ever fresh.

The moment he saw her seat herself, he left the room and ran to his own, whence presently he returned with a pair of thick woollen stockings, knitted in green and red by his grandmother, and hastening to her, dropped on his knees by her side, and, without a word of apology or explanation, began to draw

a stocking over one of the dainty feet on the rug. She gave a little start, and half withdrew her foot, but looking down at the kneeling form of her servant, recognized the self-forgetful earnestness of the boy, and submitted. With care he drew the stockings over the lovely feet, and their owner neither opposed nor assisted him. When he had done, he cast up a look in her face that seemed to say, "There now! can't I do it properly?" and rose. She thanked him, and rose also; and Cosmo conducted her to the stable, where she gave the coachman, a lad not much more than a stable-boy, her father's order.

He stared with open mouth, and speechless pointed to one of the stalls. There stood an utterly wretched horse, swathed in a cloth, with his head hanging down, heedless of the food before him. She turned and looked at Cosmo.

"The better for us, my lady!" replied Cosmo to her look; "we shall have your beautiful eyes the longer! They were lost in the dark last night, because they

are made out of it, but we can see them now!"

She smiled, and without a word more they went back to the kitchen. There not a word had been spoken since they left it. Lord Mergwain was still staring into the fire; and the laird had got his Journal of George Fox, and was reading diligently: there was nothing to be done outside for the winter, but inside was the spring, and there all eternity was busy.

When lady Joan entered, her father sat up straight in his chair, as if expecting news of opposition.

"One of the horses, my lord, is quite unfit," she said.

"Then, by my soul! we'll start with the other," he answered, in a tone that sounded defiance to whatever might say him nay.

"As your lordship pleases," replied Joan.

"My lord," said the laird, lowering his book to his knee, "if I thought four cart-horses would pull you through to Howglen before night, you should have

them; but you would simply stick fast in some snow-wreath."

"God damn me!" said the old man with an earnestness that was almost solemn, and said no more, but collapsed, and sat huddled up, staring into the fire.

"You must make the best of your quarters you can; they are entirely at your service, my lord," said the laird. "We shall at least not starve—either with cold or hunger. There are sheep on the place, pigs, and poultry, and plenty of oatmeal, though very little flour. There is milk too—and a little wine: I think we shall do well enough."

Lord Mergwain made no immediate response, but in his silence seemed making up his mind to the ineludible.

"Have you any more of that claret?" he asked at length.

"Not much, I am sorry to say," answered the laird; "but it is your lordship's while it lasts."

"If this weather last, the claret won't," returned his lordship with a feeble grin. "I may as well make a clean breast of

it, and you my confessor: From my very childhood I have never for an hour, I do believe, known what it was not to be thirsty. Thirst is the never failing birth-mark of our family. I was what the Methodists call a drunkard before I was born. My father died of drink. So did my grandfather. You must have some pity on me if I want more than seems to you reasonable. The only faculty ever cultivated in our strain was drinking, and I am sorry to say it has not been brought to perfection yet. Perfection in drinking, as I take it, is to get drunk and never know it; but I do know it: I have bad dreams, sir! I have bad dreams! And the worst of it is, if I have a bad dream once, I am sure to have it again; and if it come in a strange place, it will come every night so long as I am in it. That is the sole cause of my anxiety to leave your hospitable house: I had a very bad dream last night—as you know. I grant it came of drinking too much yesterday; but that will not keep it from coming again to-night."

He started to his feet, the muscles of his face working frightfully.

"Send to your stables, Glenwarlock," he cried. "For God's sake have them put to—your cart-horses, I mean! Four of them, you said. At once—at once! Out of this I must go. If it be to hell itself, go I must and will."

"My lord," said the laird, "I dare not send you from my house. As your host, I am bound to do my best for you. I understand the country, and you do not. I said you should have my horses if I thought they could take you through, but I do not think it. Besides, this change in the weather is, in my judgment, a deceitful one, and to-night will probably be worse than last night. Poor as your accommodation is, it is better than the road—though, to be sure, before to-morrow morning you would, somewhere between this and Howglen, be snug in the heart of a snow-wreath."

"Look here, sir!" said lord Mergwain, and put a large-jointed, big-veined, trembling hand on the laird's arm, "—if

I stop, will you pass the night with me? As I tell you, we have been drinking for generations, and my nerves are the worse for it. It's damned hard that the sins of the fathers should be visited on the children! Before God, I have enough to do with my own, let alone my father's! Every man should bear his own burden.—God! I can't bear mine. If I could, it's not much my father's would trouble me!"

"My lord, I will do anything I can for you—anything but consent to your leaving Castle Warlock to-day."

"You will spend the night with me, then?"

"I will."

"Not in that cursed room, you know!"

"Anywhere you please in the house, my lord, except my mother's room."

"Then I'll stop.—Joan, you may amuse yourself; we are not going till to-morrow."

The laird smiled: he could not flatter himself with the hope that his guest would take quite so speedy a departure. Joan turned to Cosmo.

"Will you show me over the place?" she said.

"Do you mean the castle?" returned Cosmo, glancing towards his father.

"Yes, of course," she answered.

"It is a curious old house," said the laird, "and some of it at least would interest you."

"I should like nothing better. May I go with Cosmo?"

"Certainly: he will be delighted to attend you.—Here are the keys of the cabinets in the drawing-room, Cosmo. Her ladyship may like to look at some of the things in them."

"I don't know enough about them," returned Cosmo. "Please come yourself, father, and show them to us."

"If they are not worth looking at in themselves, the facts about them cannot be of much consequence to a stranger, my boy," answered the laird, unwilling to leave the old man. "But," he added, "perhaps we may follow you by and by."

"Is the place very old, Cosmo?" asked lady Joan as they went.

"Nobody knows how old the oldest part of it is," answered Cosmo. "But you will hardly see that to-day. I do not know much of the history of it; if you want to know anything about that, you must ask my father. I know the place itself, though, as well as he does. I sometimes fancy I know every visible stone of it."

"You are very fond of it, then?"

"There's not, and there never could be, a place like it to me, my lady. I know it is not very beautiful, but I love it none the less for that. I sometimes think I love it the more for its ruggedness—its sternness—its simplicity—its ugliness, if you like. I should love my mother all the same if she hadn't been beautiful."

"Was your mother beautiful? I could well believe it," said lady Joan.

"Oh, so beautiful—and so good! There never was anybody like her."

"How old were you when she died?"

"Five."

"Then you can't remember much about her!"

"I remember everything. I have seen her so often since."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you understand that way of seeing people?"

"What way?"

"Without your eyes."

"No, I don't."

This passed on the way to the drawing-room, whither Cosmo was taking her first, in the hope his father would there join them.

When they reached it, lady Joan again dropped into the low chair by the fire, and sat staring at it. What to make of the things she saw and heard she did not know. How could people exist in such a dreary, cold, wretched country, with such poverty-stricken surroundings, and so little to amuse them! Yet they seemed happy, and seemed to love their grim home far more than she loved hers! Only that was easy to understand, for plainly they loved each other!

Lady Joan's life was not a flourishing one. She had no open fountain in her-

self, and but few wells around her at which to drink—some of those few very muddy and shallow, scarce better than slow-drying pools.

There are souls innumerable as dry as the Sahara desert—souls which now and then look gay and summer-like, flaunting flowers from other gardens, stuck rootless into their barren soil. Oh, the dreariness, the sandy sadness of such poor arid souls! They are hungry and eat husks; they are thirsty and drink hot wine; their sleep is a stupor, and their life a yielded decay. Only when praised, admired, or amused, do they feel as if they lived! Joan was not yet of such. She had been too much in the rains of trouble and the fogs of discomfort to have gone dead yet. There was water not far from the surface of her consciousness. Our springs would all go dry if we were not rained upon. We may not like the rain, but where should we be without our springs? A day will come when the water given us shall be in us a well of water that needs nor rain nor

snow, but now, coming from the outside, it must take the form of affliction. The gifts of God hurt us a little in the falling.

With no little pleasure and some pride, Cosmo opened one of the cabinets, and proceeded to take out, one after the other, its hoarded valuables—which, alas! were most of them common in the eyes of one who, with family also and history, lived in a much larger house, and had had amongst her ancestors more than one with a liking for antiquities, oddities, and *bibelots*. Lady Joan regarded them listlessly, willing to seem to attend to the boy, but, with her thoughts elsewhere, now and then turning a weary gaze towards the next window, from which all she saw was a great mounded country, dreary as sunshine and whiteness could make it. A storm-army, rushing in drift-whirls of spectral snow, would have been less dreary than the smiling of this cold antagonism. It was a picture of her own life. Evil viler than she knew had wrought a winter around her being. If her father suffered for the sins of his

fathers, she suffered for his: because of them she had to dwell in desolation and loneliness.

"This is said to be solid silver," Cosmo remarked, setting on a chair beside her a curious little horse, trapped and adorned in Indian graving, its whole surface indeed covered with a richly involved design. Its eyes were or seemed to be rubies, and saddle and bridle and housing were studded with small gems. Beyond the engraving there was little merit in the art of it, but now first Cosmo saw the eyes of the lady show interest. They fastened upon it, and the look in them grew strange.

"That is said to be the only thing the old captain ever gave his brother, my great-grandfather," observed Cosmo. "But I beg your pardon," he added; "you have never heard the story of the old captain!"

Lady Joan took the horse in her hand, and looked at it closely.

"It is very heavy!" she remarked.

"It is said to be solid silver," repeated Cosmo.

"It is heavy enough for it," she rejoined, and laying it down, put her hand to her forehead.

That moment they heard the steps and voices of the gentlemen almost at the door of the room. Lady Joan caught up the horse, rose hastily, and handing it to Cosmo, said—

"Quick! quick! put it away. Don't let my father see it."

Cosmo, delaying not even to cast on her a look of surprise, restored it to the cabinet, and had just closed the doors of it when lord Mergwain entered the room, followed by his host.

They were a peculiar-looking pair—lord Mergwain in antiquated dress, not a little worn, and neither clean nor in good condition — a snuffy, dilapidated, miserable, feeble old man, with a carriage where doubt seemed rooted in apprehension, causing him every other moment to cast about him a glance of inquiry, in which an evil spirit seemed to come running to the mouth of each eye-cave, look out, and retreat; and the laird

behind him, a head higher, crowned with his red nightcap, and dressed as I have already described, looking older than his years, but bearing on his face the repose of discomfort accepted, his eye keen and clear, and when turned on his guest, filled with compassion rather than hospitality—walking more erect than usual, either in recognition of the lady's presence, or from a feeling of protection towards her father.

"Now, my lord," he said, as they advanced from the door, "we will put you in a warm corner by the fire, and you must make the best of it. We can't have things all as we should like them: that is not what the world was made for."

His lordship returned him no answer, but threw on him a queer look from under his black wig—a look of superior knowledge—of the wisdom of this world. "You are an old fool," it said, "but you are master here! Lord! how little you know!"

He walked tottering to the fire, where

Cosmo had already set for him a chair. Something in the look of it displeased him. He glanced round the room.

"Fetch me *that* chair, my boy," he said, not unkindly; and Cosmo hastened to substitute the one he indicated—that which his grandmother had used. The laird placed a tall screen behind it. His lordship dropped into the cushions, and began to rub his knees with his hands, gazing into the fire. Lady Joan resumed her seat, and for a moment the little circle looked as if about to settle down to a mild mutual enjoyment. Cosmo drew his chair as near lady Joan's as he judged politeness would permit. The laird made up the fire and turned away: he must go and see the ailing horse, he said.

"Mr. Warlock," said lord Mergwain, and spoke with a snarl, "you will not surely deprive us of our one consolation—the pleasure of your company?"

"I shall be back in a few minutes, my lord," replied his host; "but I must give some orders about dinner, as well as have a look at the horse."

"That was wonderful claret!" said his lordship thoughtfully.

"I had not forgotten the claret, my lord."

"If I *might* suggest, let us make the acquaintance of the bottle before that of the wine. A gentle airing under my own eye, just an introduction to the fire, would improve the otherwise perfect.—And look here," he added, as, with a kindly bow of assent, the laird was going, "—you haven't got a pack of cards, have you?"

"I believe there is a pack in the house—or there may be two," replied the laird; "but they are very old, and, I fear, too much soiled for your lordship's hands."

"Oh, damn dirt!" said his lordship. "Let us have them. Cards are the only thing to make the cursed time pass."

"Have you a library?" asked lady Joan: to go and see it would be something to do; she was not particularly fond of books; like most people, she had not yet learned to read.

"What do you want with a library?"

growled her father. "Books are nothing but a pack of lies—not half so good as a pack of cards. You're going to play a rubber, not look at books. That's the way to kill the time!"

"With pleasure, papa," responded lady Joan.

"I don't want to kill the time; I should like to keep it alive for ever," said Cosmo, with a worshipping look at the lovely lady—a summer-bird of heaven strayed into their lonely winter.

"Hold your tongue; you are an idiot," said his lordship angrily. "—Old and young," he went on, unaware of utterance, "the breed is idiotic! 'Tis time their game were played out."

Cosmo's eyes flashed. But the rudesby was too old to be served as he had served the schoolmaster! He was their guest too, and the father of the lady by his side!

Lady Joan's hand stole to his, and patting it gently, said, as plainly as if it had been her mouth, "Don't mind him; he is an old man, and does not know

what he is saying." He looked up in her face, his anger gone.

"Come with me," he said, rising; "I will show you what books we have. There may be one you would like to take to your room with you. We shall be back before the cards come."

"Joan," cried her father, "sit still."

She glanced an appealing excuse to Cosmo, and did not move. He sat down again. A few minutes passed in silence. All stared into the fire. But into three how different worlds the fire stared! The old man rose and went to the window.

"I *must* get away," he said as he went, "if it cost me my life!"

He looked out and shuddered. The world seemed impassable—a dead world on which the foot of the living could take no hold, measure no distance, make no progress. Print of man nor beast was visible. It was like a world not yet discovered of its decreed inhabitants.

"I am tied to the stake; I hear the fire roaring!" he muttered. "My fate

has found me—caught me like a rat, and is going to make an end of me! In my time nobody believed such things! They seem to be coming into fashion again!"

The laird re-entered.

"Well, have you brought the cards?" said lord Mergwain, turning from the window.

"I have, my lord. I am sorry it is such a poor pack, but we never play.—Come, Cosmo; you and I will go and see to the fires in the bedrooms."

"Damn you, laird, not in mine! I'm going to spend the night here, in your company. That was all settled! Come, let's have a rubber!"

"My son does not understand the game."

"I will teach him," said lady Joan. "He must be dummie a few rounds."

"What are the points to be?" said his lordship.

"I will not play for money," said the laird decidedly.

"I don't care what you make them," rejoined lord Mergwain, "—sixpence, if

you like—so long as there is money in the game. No one but a fool cares for victory where nothing is to be got by it."

"I am sorry to disappoint your lordship," persisted the laird, "but play for money I will not. If you would like a game of draughts, or backgammon, I shall be happy to do my best not to be beaten."

"Which will you bet on?"

"On neither, my lord."

"Oh, damn you!"

He turned away and went again to the window.

"This is frightful!" he muttered. "If the day goes on like this, I shall out with everything.—By God, I had better.—How the clodpoles would stare!—And that fellow somewhere about all the time, waiting for the night!—It's horrible. I shall go mad!"

"Papa!" said his daughter sharply: he had grown articulate.

He started, and looked troubled: how much he might not have uttered he could not tell.

"A rubber, then," he said, approaching the fire, "—on any terms, or no terms at all!"

He took up the cards.

"By God, there's blood on them!" he cried, and dashing them on the table, turned once more to the window.

He was like a bird in a cage that knows he cannot get out, and yet keeps trying, as if he dared not admit the impossibility of escape. Twenty times that morning he went to the window, saying, "I must get out of this!" and returned again to his seat.

The laird removed the pack, and his guest said nothing more about cards. Cosmo did his best to please lady Joan, and she tried to respond; the laird did his endeavour with his lordship, but with small success. The morning crept slowly, yet crept away, for at last came Grizzie:

"Sir, an' my lord," she said, "come ye doon the stair. The kail's het, an' the cheirs is set, an' yer denner's waitin' ye there."

It may have been already remarked

that, in her commonest intercourse, Grizzie occasionally rimed—sometimes very oddly. She was unaware of the peculiarity. Sound called upon sound in the caves of her being, far beyond the depth of her consciousness. And the riming that resulted might have passed unperceived by others as well as herself but for the rhythm that accompanied it. There was in Grizzie a strong tendency to poetic utterance, arising from poetic ways of thinking. She possessed indeed, in the hidden rough, every essential to the making of a poetess; yet she knew nothing about poetry, and I hardly doubt that, had any one sought to develop her gift, it would have shrunk yet farther back into her being.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE AFTERNOON.

THE laird rose, and gave his arm to lady Joan. Lord Mergwain grunted, and looked only a little pleased: no mere discomfort, mental or spiritual, could make him indifferent to a meal after which came the bottle, but the claret had not been brought to the drawing-room as he had requested!

When they reached the kitchen, he looked first eagerly, then uneasily round him: no bottle, quart or magnum, was to be seen! A cloud gathered louring and heavy on the face of the toper. The laird saw it: in his anxiety to amuse him he had forgotten his dearest delight! He vanished straightway in the region behind.

Mrs. Warlock, as was her custom, was already seated at the table. She bowed her head to his lordship, and motioned him to a chair on her right hand. He took it with a courteous acknowledgment, of which he would hardly have been capable, had he not guessed on what errand his host was gone.

"I hope your ladyship is well this morning!" he said.

"Ye revive an auld custom, my lord," returned his hostess, not without sign of gratification, "—clean oot o' fashion nooadays, excep' amang the semple. A laird's wife has no richt to be ca'd *my leddy*, 'cep' by auncient custom."

"Oh, if you came to that," returned his lordship, "three fourths of the titles in use are merely of courtesy. Joan there has no more legal right than yourself to be called *my lady*. Neither has my son Borland the smallest right to the title; it is mine, and mine only, as much as Mergwain."

The old lady turned her head a little, and fixed a stolen but searching gaze on

her guest. As long as the meal lasted, she took opportunities of regarding him unobserved. Her son from the other end of the table saw her looks, and guessed her thoughts; noted also that she did not abate her courtesy, but little imagined to what the calmness of her behaviour was owing.

Mrs. Warlock, ready to welcome as supernatural upon the least show of the marvellous, had held with Grizzie much conference concerning what had passed in the night—one accidental result of which was the disappearance of rivalry and offence in the common interest of an awful impending *dénoûment*. She had never heard, or had forgotten, the title to which the lord Borland of old time was heir, but now she knew beyond a doubt the suspected identity of the man. Strain her vision as she might, she could not, through the deformation of years and vice, descry the youthful visage she had known; but she was not for that the less assured that an avenging Providence had sent their guest to Castle

Warlock. It was at the same time, however, equally plain that any movement in consequence other than hospitable on the part of its bodied inhabitants, was forestalled and precluded by the presence in the house of one who had long waited his lordship's coming, and had already commenced reprisal. More would be heard ere the next dawn, she said to herself; and with things in such a train she would not interfere by the smallest show of feud or offence on her own part! The poor wretch had not long to live, and like the malefactor for whom the gallows is going up, he should have what he wanted in as much of this life as was left him, and so far as she could give it him! It was strangely stirring to the blood in her old veins to think that a certain inmate of the house, and in all righteous probability of a worse place as well—whence she hesitated to call him a member of the family—had the permitted power to raise the storm that drove Borland thither, and such storms as might be needful to detain him there!

Already there were signs of a fresh onset of the elements! the wind was rising; it had begun to moan in the wide chimney; and from the quarter whence it now blew, it was certain to bring snow!

The dinner went on. The great magnum before the fire was to lord Mergwain a lovely thing to behold—gathering genial might from the soft insinuation of limpid warmth, renewing as much of its youth as was to be desired in wine, and redeveloping relations in some degree suppressed, with the slackening nerves and parting fibres of an old man's earthly being! But there was not a drop to drink on the table except water, and the toper found it hard without other help to lay solid foundation for the wine that was to follow, and grumbled inwardly. The sight of the bottle before the fire, however, while it roused his impatience, gave him strength to suppress the shows of it. He eyed the magnum, and loved it, and held his peace. He saw the water at his elbow, and hated in the worse that it was within his reach—hated

its cold staring rebuke as he hated virtue —hated it as if its well were in the churchyard where the old captain had been sixty years buried :—God damn him! why wouldn't he lie still? He made some effort to be polite to the old hag, as he called her in that not very secret chamber of his soul, whose door was so ready to fall ajar and allow its evil things to issue; and he searched his lumber-room for tales to amuse his host with, but found it difficult to lay hold on one fit for the ears of the ladies present. He felt very much out of his element, but, like a much-enduring magician awaiting the moment of power, kept eyeing the bottle, and gathering comfort.

Grizzie eyed him from behind, almost as he eyed the bottle. She eyed him as she might the devil caught in the toils of the archangel; and if she did not bring against him a railing accusation, it was more from prudence than politeness. "Ah, my fine fellow," her eyes said, "he is after you! he will be here presently!"

Grizzie afforded an exceptionally perfect instance of a relation which is sometimes one of the loveliest in humanity: her service was absolute, without a shade of servility. She would have died for her master, but even to him she must speak her mind! Her own affairs were nothing to her, and those of her master in import as those of the universe; but she always thought of herself as one of his family, for the toes belong vitally to the head. She was like a poor relation in the house, with few privileges and no end of duties; and she thought ten times more of her duties than her privileges. She would have fed, and sometimes did feed with perfect satisfaction on the poorest remnants; but a doubt of the laird's preference of her porridge to that of any maker in broad Scotland, would have given her a sore heart. She would have wept bitter tears had the honour, grown by long custom a right, of washing the laird's feet been taken from her. If reverence for the human is an essential element of greatness, then greatness was

at least possible to Grizzie. She dealt with no abstractions; she worshipped one living man, and that is the first step towards the love of all men: some will talk glowingly of humanity, and be scornful to the next needy embodiment of it. Such as Grizzie will perhaps prove to be of those last foredoomed to be first. With the tenderness of a ministering angel and mother combined, her eyes waited upon her master. She took her reward beforehand in the assurance that the laird would follow her to the grave, would miss her, and at times think nobody could do this or that so well as Grizzie. And if, like the old captain, she were permitted to creep about the place after nightfall, she desired nothing better than the chance of serving the laird still. The angels might bear him in their hands lest he should dash his foot against a stone; but it would be much the same to him if she got the stone out of the way of his foot!

When dinner was over, the laird asked his guest whether he would take his wine

where he was, or have it carried to the drawing-room. Her son's offer of this alternative the old lady, to use an Elizabethan phrase, took in snuff; for although she now rarely crossed its threshold, it was yet her room; and, ladies having been banished from the dining-room while men drank, what would be left them if next, bottle in hand, the men should invade the drawing-room? But happily their guest chose to remain in the kitchen, and that on the very ground of respect for her ladyship's apartment: the consequence of which was that she nearly forgave him the murder of which she never doubted him guilty, saying to herself that, whatever he might be when disguised, poor man—and we all had our failings, he knew how to behave when sober, and that was more than could be said for everybody. So the old lord sat at the table and drank his wine, and had therein his heart's desire; and the old lady sat by the fire and knitted her stocking, went to sleep, and woke up, and went to sleep again a

score of times, and enjoyed her afternoon. Not a word passed between the two. Lord Mergwain had long ceased talking over his bottle: he gave his mind to it. The laird went and came, unconsciously anxious to be out of the way of his guest, and consciously anxious not to neglect him. The old lady knitted and dozed, and glided down the westward slope of the hill; and his lordship sat and drank, and now and then, holding his glass to the light, mingled the æsthetic with the sensual. And still as he drank the braver he grew, and the more confident that the event of the past night was the foolish consequence of mixing: the many liquors had, from the damnable state of the thermometer, grown cold in his very stomach, and bred hellish fancies!

"With two bottles like this, and nothing else, under my belt," he said to himself, "I would defy the devil! But my presbyterian, red-nightcapped curmudgeon of a host will never fetch me a second! If he had not been so

damned niggardly last night, I should have got through well enough!"

Lady Joan and Cosmo had been all over the house, where the light of the snow shone sad and clear and cold in the faded chambers, and ghastly in the bare stony corners of the building: they were now in the drawing-room, sitting silent in the firelight. Lady Joan did not find Cosmo much of a companion, though she liked to have him beside her, and would have felt the dreariness more penetrating without him; but to Cosmo her presence was as marvellous and lovely as it was strange. He had never save in his dreams felt the radiance of beauty; and never a dream had shone like the reality that now folded him in bliss. For isolating winter stretched miles and miles around the old paradise of his mother's drawing-room, where, in the glowing twilight of a flamy fire, whose shadows flickered at their wild will over all the magic room, he sat at the feet of a lady, with eyes black as night, but alive with a radiance no sun could kindle, with a

hand like warm snow, in garments lovely as the clouds that clothe a sunset, who inhabited an atmosphere of evanescent odours, each a dream from beyond the stars, while the darkness that danced with the firelight played endless variations on the theme of her beauty. Long had he sat lost in the dream-haunted gorgeous silence, when suddenly he bethought himself of his duty towards his heavenly visitant. Strangers and angels must be entertained, nor must the shadow of loneliness fall upon them! To that end he knew but one thing always good, always at hand, and now specially fitting the time.

"Shall I tell you a story, my lady?" he said, looking up from the stool on which he had taken his place at her feet.

"Yes, if you please," she answered, finding herself in a shoal of sad thoughts, and willing to let them drift.

"I will do my best, my lady; but oh I wish I could tell it you as Grizzie told it me! Her old-fashioned way seemed like the life of it! And then I must turn

it into English for your ladyship, and English will go still worse with it!"

In the present era of human utterance, the common speech of every succeeding generation is a falling away from the pith and pathos of the preceding. It gains in scope and precision, but loses in intensity.

"There was once a girl in the Highlands," began Cosmo, "not very far from here, who was so beautiful that every young man in the neighbourhood fell in love with her. She was as good as she was beautiful, and would not let more than one be her lover. She said no to all the rest. If after that they would go on loving her, she could not help it. She was the daughter of a sheep-farmer, who had a great many sheep that fed on the hills. She helped her father to look after them, and was as good and obedient as any lamb of his flock. Her name was Mary. Her other name I do not know.

"Now her father had a young shepherd, a year or two older than Mary, and he of course was in love with her as well

as the rest. But he was better in love with her than any of them, because he was the truest, that is, the most trustworthy lad, in the country-side. He was very strong, and I think Grizzie said very good-looking, which was natural, and a good shepherd. He was out on the hills all day, from morning to night, seeing that the sheep did their duty, and ate the best grass, so as to give plenty of good wool and good mutton: that's the way Grizzie tells the story, my lady, though not so that you would understand her. When any of the lambs were weakly or ill, the shepherds always brought them home to Mary that she might nurse them; and that was how the young shepherd came to know Mary, and Mary to know him. And so it came to pass that they grew very fond of each other, and saw each other as often as they could; and Mary promised, if her father would let her, she would marry Alister—that was the name of the young shepherd. But her father was too rich to show favour to a shepherd-lad; his

heart was so full of money that the blood could not get room in it. If Alister had had sheep he would have given him Mary; but the thought of a poor son-in-law, however good, made him feel poor, and the thought of a rich son-in-law, if nothing but an old miser, made him feel rich. He told Alister, therefore, that he had nothing to say to him, and Mary must have nothing to say to him either. Mary felt obliged to do what her father told her, but in her heart she did not give up Alister, and felt sure Alister would not give up her, for he was a brave and honest youth.

"Alister was always wanting to see Mary, and often saw her when nobody, not even Mary herself, knew it. One day she was out rather late on the hill, for she had to stay with a few lambs till her father who had left her there came back, and something delayed him. When the gloamin came down, she wished in her heart that out of it Alister would come, that she might see him, though she would not speak to him. She was sitting

on a stone, Grizzie says, the gloamin coming down like a gray frost about her. Just as it grew to a black frost, out of it came one running towards her. But, oh dear! it was not Alister; it was one very different—a rich farmer who wanted to marry her. He was a big, strong man, and good-looking — twice Mary's age. Her father was friendly to him, but people said he was a coward.

"Now at that time a terrible story was going about the country, only it had not yet reached the glen, of a beast in the hills that went biting every living thing he could get at, and whatever he bit went raving-mad. He never ate a mouthful of any creature he attacked, never stayed to kill it, but came with a rush, bit it, and was out of sight in a moment. It was only in the twilight any one ever caught a glimpse of him. He appeared—nobody ever saw from where—made his gnash, and was gone. There arose great terror and dismay wherever the story was heard. People would hardly venture across their thresholds after sundown,

for fear the beast should dash out of the borders of the dark upon them, and leave his madness in them. Some said it was a sheep-dog, but some who thought they had seen it, said it was too large for any collie, and was, they believed, a mad wolf; for though there are no wolves in Scotland now, my lady, there were at one time, and this is an old story."

Lady Joan gaped audibly.

"I am wearying you, my lady!" said Cosmo penitently.

"No, no! dear boy," answered lady Joan, sorry, and a little ashamed. "It is only that I am very weary. I think the cold tires one."

"I will tell you the rest another time," rejoined Cosmo cheerily. "You must lie down on the sofa, and I will cover you up warm."

"No, no; please go on. I want to hear the rest of it."

"Well," resumed Cosmo, "the news of this wolf, or whatever it was, had come to the ears of the farmer for the first time that day at a fair, and he was hurry-

ing home with his head and his heart and his heels full of it, when he saw Mary, sitting on a white stone by the track, feeling as safe as if she were in paradise, and as sad as if she were in purgatory.—That's how Grizzie tells it—I suppose because some of her people are catholics.—But, for as much as he wanted to marry her, you could hardly say he was in love with her—could you, lady Joan?—when I tell you that, instead of stopping and taking her and her lambs home, he hurried past her, crying out, 'Go home, Mary. There's a mad beast on the hill. Run, run—all that you can. Never mind your sheep.' His last words came from the distance, for he never stayed a step while he spoke.

"Mary got up at once. But you may be sure, my lady, a girl like that was not going to leave her lambs where she dared not stop herself. She gathered them together, and was just setting out with them for home, when a creature like a huge dog came bounding upon her from the edge of the night. The same instant,

from behind a rock a few yards away, came Alister leaping, and made at the beast with his crook. He was not near enough to get between the beast and Mary, but just as he was upon her, he heaved a great blow at him. But the same instant Mary threw herself towards Alister, and the terrible blow came down upon her. She fell dead in his arms—and away went the wolf, leaping and bounding.

"Alister came staggering up to her father's door with dead Mary in his arms, carried her in, laid her on the bed, and went out again. They found the blow on her head, and when they undressed her, they found also a bite on her body. Then they guessed how it had been, and said it was well she died by Alister's crook—that was better than going mad first. It was kind of Death, they said, to come and snatch her out of the arms of Madness. But the coward farmer, because he hated Alister, and knew that Alister must have seen and heard him as he ran past, gave it out that he was

himself rushing to defend Mary, and that the blow that killed her was meant for him. Nobody, however, believed him.

"What people thought about the affair was, however, of little consequence to Alister, for from that day he never spoke to human being, never slept under a roof. He left his shepherding, and gave himself to the hunting of the wolf. Some said he lived on his hate of the wolf, and never ate. But the people on the hills would set out on their window-ledges at night milk and cakes; and in the morning, sometimes, they would be gone.

"By and by was heard a strange story about the country. A certain old woman with the second sight said that one evening, as she was going home in the gloamin, she saw Alister lying in the heather; and with her other eyes, in which lay the second sight, she saw a woman sitting beside him, and his head was on the woman's lap—and that woman was Mary whom he had killed. He was fast asleep, and whether he knew what pillow he had, she could not tell; but

she saw the woman as plainly as if with her bodily eyes—only with the difference which there always was, she said, and which she did not know how to describe, betwixt the things seen by the one pair of eyes and the things seen by the other. She stood and regarded them for some time, but neither moved. As it grew darker, and she saw Alister less clearly, she saw Mary better. The sight made her heart so glad that she could not leave it till the moon rose, when she saw Alister plainly, but Mary only like a clear shadow. Through the moonlight, three times she heard a little moan, she said.

"Now the people had mostly a horror of Alister, and shunned him—even those who did not believe him to blame for what he had done—because there was blood upon him; but after the old woman's story, they felt differently towards him, and began to look askance upon Mary's father, whose unkindness had kept them asunder. They said now that it had all come through him, and

that God had sent the wolf to fetch Mary, that he might give her and Alister to each other in spite of him—for God had many a way of doing a thing, every one better than another.

"All this time Alister had not found the wolf. But when the winter came, that helped him. For the snow took the trail of the beast and kept it for him to see, that he might follow it. Some said that, although the wolf was mad, he was not mad in any ordinary way, for, if he had been, he must have died long ago. He was a wolf, they said, into which an evil spirit had entered. A domestic animal, thus possessed, would have destroyed himself; but, being a blood-thirsty animal, the demon was too like himself for the wolf to know that he had another with him in the house.

"At last, one morning in the month of December, when the snow lay heavy on the ground, some men came upon a track which they all agreed must be that of the wolf. They got their weapons, and set out in chase. They followed, and fol-

lowed, and better than followed, and the trail led them high into the hills. They came at length to a point where a track of bare human feet joined that of the wolf, nor left it again. Up and up they went—sometimes losing the track of the wolf, from the great springs he had taken, but never that of the bare feet, and spied at last two dark spots in a little hollow. They went on—and there before them was the wolf, dead in a trampled mass of red snow—a huge, gaunt, gray, meagre carcase, with the foam frozen about its jaws, and stabbed in many places. A little farther on lay Alister, with his face to the sky, and a smile upon it. All about his body were the marks of the brute's teeth. His dirk was lying a little way off, as if he had dropped it when the fight was over, and staggered to where he lay.

"The men who found Alister declared that, when they lifted the body to bring it away, they saw, to their amazement, that the impression of it in the snow went no farther than the shoulders:

there was no mark of the head whatever! When the old woman with the second sight heard this, 'Of coorse! of coorse!' she said. 'Gien I had been wi' them I wad hae seen mair!' When pressed to speak more plainly, she only shook her head, and muttered, 'Dull-hertit gowks!' —That's all, my lady."

CHAPTER XX.

THE EVENING.

In the kitchen things were going on even more quietly than in the drawing-room. With the table moved nearer to the fire the English lord still sat over his wine; Mistress Warlock sat in her armchair, knitting and dozing, between her evanescent naps wide awake, and ever and anon sliding her eyes from her stocking to her guest; the laird sat at the other corner of the fire, reading the Journal of George Fox, every now and then laying the book down to think; and Grizzie was going about her work with less noise than she liked, wishing heartily she were free of his lordship, that she might get on with it. Scarcely a word was spoken.

It began to grow dark; the lid of the

night was closing upon them ere half a summer-day would have been over. Grizzie put on the kettle for her mistress's tea. The old lady turned her forty winks into four hundred, and slept outright, curtained in the shadows. His lordship became aware that the day was gone, shifted in his seat, poured out a bumper of claret, drank it off hurriedly, and hitched his chair a little nearer to the fire. His hostess saw with satisfaction: he had appeased her personal indignation, but her soul was not hospitable towards him; it loved talion, and did not wait to be gracious. Her eyes sought Grizzie's.

"Gang to the door, Grizzie," she said, "an' see what the nicht's like. I'm thinkin' by the cry o' the win', it'll be a wull mirk (*a wild darkness*) again. What think ye, laird?"

Her son looked up from his book, through the God-spell in which he had been inwardly beholding a large breadth of gently luminated spiritual sky, and answered, somewhat abstractedly, but

with the sweet politeness he always showed her—

"I should not wonder if it came on to snow again."

Lord Mergwain shifted uneasily. Grizzie returned from her weather-gaging on the doorstep.

"It's black theroot, an' dingin' oot, wi' great thuds o' win'," she said.

"God bless me!" murmured his lordship, "what an abominable country!"

"Had we not better go to the drawing-room, my lord?" said the laird. "Don't let supper be late, Grizzie, if you can help it. The sooner we are in bed in such weather the better.—And, Grizzie," he added, rising, "bring lady Joan a cup of tea to the drawing-room—if you, madam, will excuse her," he concluded, with a glance to his mother.

"An old woman is bare company for a young one, Cosmo," returned Mistress Warlock, who was longing to compare notes with Grizzie, and had no desire for the presence of lady Joan at her tea-table.

His lordship sat as if he did not mean to move.

"Will you not come, lord Mergwain?" said the laird. "We had better go before the night gets worse."

"I will stay where I am."

"Excuse me, my lord: I will carry your wine. You will finish your bottle more at your ease, and will not have to move again."

"The bottle is empty," growled his lordship—as if he would be understood, "The bait is worthless."

"Then——" said the laird, and hesitated.

"—you'll fetch me another!" adjoined his lordship, as if answering an unpropounded and unpropoundable question. The laird standing in some hesitation still however, he added definitively, "I don't stir a peg without it. Get me another bottle—another *magnum*, I mean, or I sit here till doomsday."

Yet a moment the laird reflected. He was not sure it would be right to make himself accessory to the indulgence of

the poor wretch's passion. But he said to himself that the miserable man had not had nearly so much that day as the day before; that he was used to soaking, and a diminution of his customary quantity might be dangerous; and that, anyway, it was not for him to impose a regimen on a passing guest, to whom his first duty was hospitality.

"I will fetch it, my lord," he said, and disappeared in the milk-cellar, from which a steep stair sank to the ancient dungeon, now the wine-cellar.

"The maister's gane wantin' a licht!" muttered Grizzie aloud: "Guid forbid he sud see onything!"

"What the deuce should he see?" snarled lord Mergwain. "He's more likely to feel his own nose on the wall!"

"There's some things, my lord, 'at can easier shaw i' the dark," rejoined Grizzie.

His lordship held his peace, but kept every other moment turning his head towards the door of the milk-cellar—whether solely in anxiety for the appear-

ance of the magnum, may be doubtful. The moment the laird emerged from his dive into darkness, bearing with him the pearl-oyster of its deep, he rose, proud that he could stand steady, and straightened himself up to his height. The laird set the bottle on the table, and proceeded to wrap him in a plaid that he might not get a chill, heedless that, instead of acknowledging his care, he conducted himself like an ill-conditioned child. But he did not resist, he only grumbled. As soon as the process was finished, he caught up the old bottle, in which, notwithstanding his assertion, there was yet a glass or two; the laird resumed the greater burden of the second, and gave him an arm; Grizzie, leaving the door open to cast a little light on their way, followed close behind, to see them safe in; and Mistress Warlock remained, afresh indignant with her guest that he had taken no leave of her, indignant also with Grizzie that she had left the door open.

When they reached the drawing-room,

his lordship out of breath with the "cursed stair," they found lady Joan teaching and Cosmo learning backgammon. They rose immediately, and all did what they could to seat him comfortably. They placed a small table beside him, upon it the old bottle, and the fresh one at his feet before the fire. And now, with the contents of one magnum inside him, and another coming on, he looked more cheerful than since first he entered the house. But a fluctuating trouble was scarcely the less visible in his undignified countenance.

A few attempts at conversation followed, but lord Mergwain's continuous silence was very quenching. Lost in himself, he kept his eyes fixed on the ripening bottle, waiting with heroic self-denial, and without one audible oath, for the sound of its opening to herald the outburst of the fountain of life, laved in whose waters his being would blossom yet again, in spite of age and tempest, and the terror that walked the night. But one thing hard to bear was, that

there were no clean wine-glasses on the table! To use the glass he had himself brought with the old bottle would spoil the fresh one!

Grizzie came, bringing tea for lady Joan. As she set it before her, she remarked, with cunningly devised look of unconsciousness—

"It's a gurly nicht; no a pinch o' licht, an' the win' blawin' like deevils; the Pooer o' the air, he's oot wi' a rair, an' the snaw rins roon upo' sweevils."

"God damn you, woman! what do you mean? Would you drive me mad with your gibberish?" cried his lordship, getting up and going to the window.

"Ow na, my lord!" returned Grizzie as quietly as enigmatically; "mad's mad, but there's waur nor mad."

"Grizzie!" said the laird.

Lurking in Grizzie was the suspicion, a suspicion not quite latent in the mind of any one of the few who remembered the old captain, that he was robbed as well as murdered—though, in truth, nothing was ever missed that had been

known to belong to him except an odd walking-stick he used to carry. Such robbery, if it had taken place, was of course to the loss of the next of kin, namely, Warlock of Glenwarlock, and hence in a large measure Grizzie's indignation with the English lord, whom, without even a passing doubt, she looked upon as the murderer of the old captain. Obedient to the least hint of her master, she left the room in silence, but cast on the old man, as she turned, such a look of inexplicable triumph and inarticulate doom as, in spite of the wine he had drunk and the wine he hoped to drink, seemed to freeze his very vitals.

The next effect of it upon him, however, was to rouse suspicion. What if he was the victim of a conspiracy? What if the frightful event of the night before had been contrived and executed by the people of the house? This horrible old hag doubtless remembered things that had else been forgotten! What if they had drugged his wine? The first half of the bottle he had yesterday was de-

canted!—But the one he had just drunk had not been touched! and this fresh one before the fire should not be carried from his sight! he would not take his eyes off it! He was safe so far as these were concerned! Only if after all—if there should be no difference—if something were to happen again all the same—ah, then indeed!—then it would only be so much the worse!—Better let them decant the bottle, and then he would have the drug to account for the thing!

Simultaneous with the loud bang of Grizzie's closure of the great door, the wind rushed against the house with a tremendous bellow, threatening to drive the windows into the room. An immediate lull followed, through which as instantly came strange sounds, as of a distant staccato thunder. The laird started to his feet and made for the door. He knew what those *douf thuds* meant. Cosmo rose to follow.

"Stop! stop!" shouted lord Mergwain in a voice quavering with terror, yet with terror imperative, and Lady Joan gave

Cosmo a glance of entreaty:—the shout was ineffectual, the glance was not. The laird hastened from the room, taking huge strides with his long thin legs; Cosmo resumed his seat as if nothing were the matter.

But lord Mergwain was trembling visibly; his jaw quivered, and seemed ready to drop.

"Don't be alarmed, my lord," said Cosmo; "it is only one of the horses kicking against his stall."

"Damn the brute! why should he kick like that?" said his lordship; and putting his hand to his chin, he did his best to hide his agitation.

"My father will tell us. He will soon set things right. He knows all about horses. Jolly may have thrown his leg over his halter, and got furious; he's rather an ill-tempered horse."

Lord Mergwain swallowed a bumper—the last glass of the first bottle, and gave a shiver.

"It's deuced cold!" he said.

Their game interrupted, lady Joan for-

got it, and stared into the fire, giving Cosmo's eyes a holiday of loveliness on her beautiful face.

It was some time before the laird returned, bringing the news that one of the strange horses was very ill.

"He looked bad enough this morning," said Cosmo.

"It's not the same horse, my boy," answered his father. "I fancy he has been ailing all day though, and the state of the other has prevented the men from noticing it. He was taken suddenly with violent pain, and now lies groaning. They are doing what they can for him, but I fear, in this cold, he will not recover. The symptoms are those of severe inflammation."

"Hustled into a hole in the dark to die like a rat!" muttered his lordship.

"Don't fancy the old place a trap, my lord," said the laird cheerily. "The moment the roads will permit, I will see that you have horses."

"I don't doubt you'll do your best to get rid of me."

"We shall not, I confess, regret your departure so much, my lord, as if we had been able to make your lordship comfortable," said the laird.

With that came another great howling blast, which raved for a few moments in fierce and fiercer pulsation, then sank to a growling whine. With the first burst of it lord Mergwain started almost to his feet, but sat down instantly, and said with some calmness—

"I should be obliged to you, Mr. Warlock, if you would order a wine-glass or two. I am troublesome, I know, but I like to change my glass; and the wine there will be the worse now every moment it stands. I wish you would drink! We should make a night of it then!"

"I beg your pardon, my lord. What was I thinking of!" cried the laird. "—Cosmo, run and fetch wine-glasses —and the corkscrew."

But ere Cosmo reached the kitchen the battery of iron-shod heels against timber began again, and he ran to the stable. Just as he reached the door, the

horse half reared, and cast himself against the side of the stall. With a great crash it yielded, he fell, and lay motionless. Cosmo, turning away to do his errand, met his father.

"Run, my boy," he said. "The poor old man seems to have a legion of thirsty devils in him."

Cosmo ran for the glasses and cork-screw.

The time he was gone seemed to the toper endless. He rose and moved the bottle back from the fire, rose again and set it on the table, rose a third time and placed it on the centre-spot of the rug.

A third blast, more terrible, frenzied, and imperious than those preceding it, shook the windows as a dog shakes a rat: the house itself it could shake no more than a primeval rock. The next instant Cosmo entered, saying the horse was dead.

"What a beastly country!" growled his lordship.

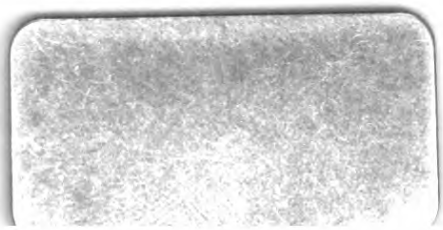
But the *plomp* of the cork's exody, and the gurgle of the wine from the short

neck of the apoplectic magnum, speedily consoled him. He liked this bottle better than the last, and a degree of composure returned to his wine-sodden soul.

The laird returned with a book of old ballads, and offered to read from it. Lord Mergwain gave a contemptuous grunt, but lady Joan and Cosmo welcomed the proposal. For more than an hour, the laird read ballad after ballad—nobody but Cosmo, not even the laird himself, attending to them much, lord Mergwain not at all. His lordship grew sleepy, began to nod, seemed to forget his wine, and at length fell asleep. The laird rose, and with a pillow from the sofa would have settled his head more comfortably, but the moment he came near him, before he touched him, with a yell of defiance he started to his feet wide awake. Coming to himself almost immediately, he tried to laugh, sat down, said that from a child he had been furious when waked suddenly, composed himself in the chair, and again fell asleep.

The night wore on, and supper-time came. His lordship woke, but would have no supper, and applied himself again to his bottle. Lady Joan and Cosmo went to the kitchen, and the laird had his porridge brought to the drawing-room.

At length it was time to go to bed. Lady Joan retired, and Cosmo soon after, for the laird would not allow him to sit up another night. So the lord and the laird were left together, the one again asleep, and dreaming who knows what! and the other wide awake, absorbed in the story of a man whose thoughts, fresh from above, were a mockery to the fools of his generation.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.