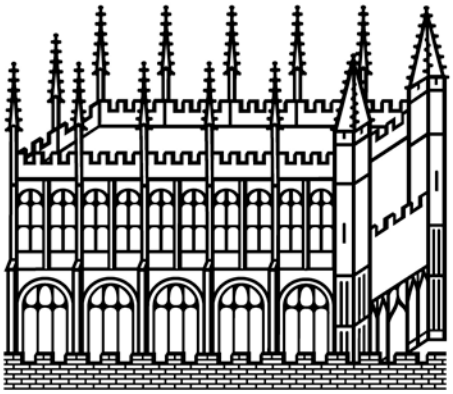

Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

600056800P

600056800P

600056800P

600056800P

600056800P

ROBERT FALCONER.

VOL. II.

ROBERT FALCONER

BY

GEORGE MAC DONALD LL.D.

AUTHOR OF

"ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN,"

"DAVID ELGINBROD,"

&c. &c.

Countrymen,
My heart doth joy that yet, in all my life,
I found no man but he was true to me.
BRUTUS in *Julius Cæsar*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1868.

The right of Translation is reserved.

250. v. 120.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL,
BLENHEIM HOUSE.

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

PART II.—HIS YOUTH.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	ROBERT KNOCKS—AND THE DOOR IS NOT OPENED	1
II.	THE STROKE	16
III.	THE END CROWNS ALL	28
IV.	THE ABERDEEN GARRET	42
V.	THE COMPETITION	53
VI.	DR. ANDERSON AGAIN	60
VII.	ERIC ERICSON	68
VIII.	A HUMAN PROVIDENCE	89
IX.	A HUMAN SOUL	98
X.	A FATHER AND A DAUGHTER	116
XI.	ROBERT'S VOW	127
XII.	THE GRANITE CHURCH	133
XIII.	SHARGAR'S ARM	147
XIV.	MYSIE'S FACE	154
XV.	THE LAST OF THE COALS	176
XVI.	A STRANGE NIGHT	191
XVII.	HOME AGAIN	208

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVIII.	A Grave Opened	218
XIX.	Robert Mediates	224
XX.	Ericson Loses to Win	242
XXI.	Shargar Aspires	249
XXII.	Robert in Action	263
XXIII.	Robert finds a New Instrument	280
XXIV.	Death	286
XXV.	In Memoriam	293

ROBERT FALCONER.

PART II.—HIS YOUTH.

CHAPTER I.

ROBERT KNOCKS—AND THE DOOR IS NOT OPENED.

THE remainder of that winter was dreary indeed. Every time Robert went up the stair to his garret, he passed the door of a tomb. With that gray mortar Mary St. John was walled up, like the nun he had read of in the *Marmion* she had lent him. He might have rung the bell at the street door, and been admitted into the temple of his goddess, but a certain vague terror of his grannie, combined with equally vague qualms of conscience for having deceived her, and the approach in the far distance of a ghastly suspicion that violins, pianos, moonlight, and lovely women were distasteful to the over-ruling Fate, and obnoxious to the venge-

ance stored in the gray cloud of his providence, drove him from the awful entrance of the temple of his Isis.

Nor did Miss St. John dare to make any advances to the dreadful old lady. She would wait. For Mrs. Forsyth, she cared nothing about the whole affair. It only gave her fresh opportunity for smiling condescensions about "poor Mrs. Falconer." So Paradise was over and gone.

But though the loss of Miss St. John and the piano was the last blow, his sorrow did not rest there, but returned to brood over his bonny lady. She was scattered to the winds. Would any of her ashes ever rise in the corn, and moan in the ripening wind of autum? Might not some atoms of the *bonny leddy* creep into the pines on the hill, whose "soft and soul-like sounds" had taught him to play the Flowers of the Forest on those strings which, like the nerves of an amputated limb, yet thrilled through his being? Or might not some particle find its way by winds and waters to sycamore forest of Italy, there creep up through the channels of its life to some finely-rounded curve of noble tree, on the side that ever looks sunwards, and be chosen once again by the violin-hunter, to be wrought into a new and fame-gathering instrument?

Could it be that his bonny lady had learned her wondrous music in those forests, from the shine of the sun, and the sighing of the winds

through the sycamores and pines? For Robert knew that the broad-leaved sycamore, and the sharp, needle-leaved pine, had each its share in the violin. Only as the wild innocence of human nature, uncorrupted by wrong, untaught by suffering, is to that nature struggling out of darkness into light, such and so different is the living wood, with its sweetest tones of obedient impulse, answering only to the wind which bloweth where it listeth, to that wood, chosen, separated, individualized, tortured into strange, almost vital shape, after a law to us nearly unknown, strung with strings from animal organizations, and put into the hands of man to utter the feelings of a soul that has passed through a like history. This Robert could not yet think, and had to grow able to think it by being himself made an instrument of God's music.

What he could think was that the glorious mystery of his bonny leddy was gone for ever —and alas! she had no soul. Here was an eternal sorrow. He could never meet her again. His affections, which must live for ever, were set upon that which had passed away. But the child that weeps because his mutilated doll will not rise from the dead, shall yet find relief from his sorrow, a true relief, both human and divine. He shall know that that which in the doll made him love the doll, has not passed away. And Robert must yet be comforted for the loss of his

bonny leddy. If she had had a soul, nothing but her own self could ever satisfy him. As she had no soul, another body might take her place, nor accasion reproach of inconstancy.

But, in the meantime, the shears of Fate having cut the string of the sky-soaring kite of his imagination, had left him with the stick in his hand. And thus the rest of that winter was dreary enough. The glow was out of his heart; the glow was out of the world. The bleak, kindless wind was hissing through those pines that clothed the hill above Bodyfauld, and over the dead garden, where in the summer time the rose had looked down so lovingly on the heartsease. If he had stood once more at gloaming in that barley-stubble, not even the wail of Flodden-field would have found him there, but a keen sense of personal misery and hopeless cold. Was the summer a lie?

Not so. The winter restrains, that the summer may have the needful time to do its work well; for the winter is but the sleep of summer.

Now in the winter of his discontent, and in Nature finding no help, Robert was driven inwards—into his garret, into his soul. There, the door of his paradise being walled up, he began, vaguely, blindly, to knock against other doors —sometimes against stone-walls and rocks, taking them for doors—as travel-worn, and hence brain-sick men have done in a desert of moun-

tains. A door, out or in, he must find, or perish.

It fell, too, that Miss St. John went to visit some friends who lived in a coast town twenty miles off; and a season of heavy snow followed by frost setting in, she was absent for six weeks, during which time, without a single care to trouble him from without, Robert was in the very desert of desolation. His spirits sank fearfully. He would pass his old music-master in the street with scarce a recognition, as if the bond of their relation had been utterly broken, had vanished in the smoke of the martyred violin, and all their affection had gone into the dust-heap of the past.

Dooble Sanny's character did not improve. He took more and more whisky, his bouts of drinking alternating as before with fits of hopeless repentance. His work was more neglected than ever, and his wife having no money to spend even upon necessaries, applied in desperation to her husband's bottle for comfort. This comfort, to do him justice, he never grudged her; and sometimes before midday they would both be drunk—a condition expedited by the lack of food. When they began to recover, they would quarrel fiercely; and at last they became a nuisance to the whole street. Little did the whisky-hating old lady know to what god she had really offered up that violin—if the consequences of the holocaust can be admitted

as indicating the power which had accepted it.

But now began to appear in Robert the first signs of a practical outcome of such truth as his grandmother had taught him, operating upon the necessities of a simple and earnest nature. Reality, however lapt in vanity, or even in falsehood, cannot lose its power. It *is*—the other is not. She had taught him to look up—that there was a God. He would put it to the test. Not that he doubted it yet: he only doubted whether there was a hearing God. But was not that worse? It was, I think. For it is of far more consequence what kind of a God, than whether a God or no. Let not my reader suppose I think it possible there could be other than a perfect God—perfect—even to the vision of his creatures, the faith that supplies the lack of vision being yet faithful to that vision. I speak from Robert's point of outlook. But, indeed, whether better or worse is no great matter, so long as he would see it or what there was. He had no comfort, and, without reasoning about it, he felt that life ought to have comfort—from which point he began to conclude that the only thing left was to try whether the God in whom his grandmother believed might not help him. If the God would but hear him, it was all he had yet learned to require of his Godhood. And that must ever be the first thing to require.

More demands would come, and greater answers he would find. But now—if God would but hear him! If he spoke to him but one kind word, it would be the very soul of comfort; he could no more be lonely. A fountain of glad imaginations gushed up in his heart at the thought. What if from the cold winter of his life, he had but to open the door of his garret-room, and, kneeling by the bare bedstead, enter into the summer of God's presence! What if God spoke to him face to face! He had so spoken to Moses. He sought him from no fear of the future, but from present desolation; and if God came near to him, it would not be with storm and tempest, but with the voice of a friend. And surely, if there was a God at all, that is, not a power greater than man, but a power by whose power man was, he must hear the voice of the creature whom he had made, a voice that came crying out of the very need which he had created. Younger people than Robert are capable of such divine metaphysics. Hence he continued to disappear from his grandmother's parlour at much the same hour as before. In the cold, desolate garret, he knelt and cried out into that which lay beyond the thought that cried, the unknowable infinite, after the God that may be known as surely as a little child knows his mysterious mother. And from behind him, the pale-blue, star-crowded sky shone

upon his head, through the window that looked upwards only.

Mrs. Falconer saw that he still went away as he had been wont, and instituted observations, the result of which was the knowledge that he went to his own room. Her heart smote her, and she saw that the boy looked sad and troubled. There was scarce room in her heart for increase of love, but much for increase of kindness, and she did increase it. In truth, he needed the smallest crumb of comfort that might drop from the table of God's "feastful friends."

Night after night he returned to the parlour cold to the very heart. God was not to be found, he said then. He said afterwards that even then "God was with him though he knew it not."

For the very first night, the moment that he knelt and cried, "O Father in heaven, hear me, and let thy face shine upon me"—like a flash of burning fire the words shot from the door of his heart: "I dinna care for him to love me, gin he doesna love ilka body;" and no more prayer went from the desolate boy that night, although he knelt an hour of agony in the freezing dark. Loyal to what he had been taught, he struggled hard to reduce his rebellious will to what he supposed to be the will of God. It was all in vain. Ever a voice within him—surely the voice of that God

who he thought was not hearing—told him that what he wanted was the love belonging to his human nature, his human needs—not the preference of a court-favourite. He had a dim consciousness that he would be a traitor to his race if he accepted a love, even from God, given him as an exception from his kind. But he did not care to have such a love. It was not what his heart yearned for. It was not *love*. He could not love such a love. Yet he strove against it all—fought for religion against right as he could; struggled to reduce his rebellious feelings, to love that which was unlovely, to choose that which was abhorrent, until nature almost gave way under the effort. Often would he sink moaning on the floor, or stretch himself like a corpse, save that it was face downwards, on the boards of the bedstead. Night after night he returned to the battle, but with no permanent *success*. What a success that would have been! Night after night he came pale and worn from the conflict, found his grandmother and Shargar composed, and in the quietness of despair, sat down beside them to his Latin version.

He little thought, that every night, at the moment when he stirred to leave the upper room, a pale-faced, red-eyed figure rose from its seat on the top of the stair by the door, and sped with long-legged noiselessness to resume its seat by

the grandmother before he should enter. Shargar saw that Robert was unhappy, and the nearest he could come to the sharing of his unhappiness was to take his place outside the door within which he had retreated. Little, too, did Shargar on his part, think that Robert, without knowing it, was pleading for him inside—pleading for him and for all his race in the weeping that would not be comforted.

Robert had not the vaguest fancy that God was with him—the spirit of the Father groaning with the spirit of the boy in intercession that could not be uttered. If God had come to him then and comforted him with the assurance of individual favour—but the very supposition is a taking of his name in vain—Had Robert found comfort in the fancied assurance that God was his friend in especial, that some private favour was granted to his prayers, that, indeed, would have been to be left to his own inventions, to bring forth not fruits meet for repentance, but fruits for which repentance alone is meet. But God *was* with him, and was indeed victorious in the boy when he rose from his knees, for the last time, as he thought, saying, "I cannot yield—I will pray no more."—With a burst of bitter tears he sat down on the bedside till the loudest of the storm was over, then dried his dull eyes, in which the old outlook had withered away, and trod unknowingly in the

silent footsteps of Shargar, who was ever one corner in advance of him, down to the dreary lessons and unheeded prayers; but, thank God, not to the sleepless night, for some griefs bring sleep the sooner.

My reader must not mistake my use of the words *especial* and *private*, or suppose that I do not believe in an *individual* relation between every man and God, yes, a *peculiar* relation, differing from the relation between every other man and God! But this very individuality and peculiarity can only be founded on the broadest truths of the Godhood and the manhood.

Mrs. Falconer, ere she went to sleep, gave thanks that the boys had been at their prayers together. And so, in a very deep sense, they had.

And well they might have been; for Shargar was nearly as desolate as Robert, and would certainly, had his mother claimed him now, have gone on the tramp with her again. Wherein could this civilized life show itself to him better than that to which he had been born? For clothing he cared little, and he had always managed to kill his hunger or thirst, if at longer intervals, then with greater satisfaction. Wherein is the life of that man who merely does his eating and drinking and clothing after a civilized fashion better than that of the gipsy or tramp? If the civilized man is honest to boot,

and gives good work in return for the bread or turtle on which he dines, and the gipsy, on the other hand, steals his dinner, I recognize the importance of the difference; but if the rich man plunders the community by exorbitant profits, or speculation with other people's money, while the gipsy adds a fowl or two to the produce of his tinkering; or, once again, if the gipsy is as honest as the honest citizen, which is not so rare a case by any means as people imagine, I return to my question: Wherein, I say, is the warm house, the windows hung with purple, and the table covered with fine linen, more divine than the tent or the blue sky, and the dipping in the dish? Why should not Shargar prefer a life with the mother God had given him to a life with Mrs. Falconer? Why should he prefer geography to rambling, or Latin to Romany? His purposelessness and his love for Robert alone kept him where he was.

The next evening, having given up his praying, Robert sat with his Sallust before him. But the fount of tears began to swell, and the more he tried to keep it down, the more it went on swelling till his throat was filled with a lump of pain. He rose and left the room. But he could not go near the garret. That door too was closed. He opened the house door instead, and went out into the street. There, nothing was to be seen but faint blue air full of moon-

light, solid houses, and shining snow. Bare-headed he wandered round the corner of the house to the window whence first he had heard the sweet sounds of the piano-forte. The fire within lighted up the crimson curtains, but no voice of music came forth. The window was as dumb as the pale, faintly befogged moon overhead, itself seeming but a skylight through which shone the sickly light of the passionless world of the dead. Not a form was in the street. The eyes of the houses gleamed here and there upon the snow. He leaned his elbow on the window-sill behind which stood that sealed fountain of lovely sound, looked up at the moon, careless of her or of aught else in heaven or on earth, and sunk into a reverie, in which nothing was consciously present but a stream of fog-smoke that flowed slowly, listlessly across the face of the moon, like the ghost of a dead cataract. All at once a wailful sound arose in his head. He did not think for some time whether it was born in his brain, or entered it from without. At length he recognized the Flowers of the Forest, played as only the soutar could play it. But alas! the cry responsive to his bow came only from the auld wife—no more from the bonny leddy! Then he remembered that there had been a humble wedding that morning on the opposite side of the way; in the street department of the jollity

of which Shargar had taken a small share by firing a brass cannon, subsequently confiscated by Mrs. Falconer. But this was a strange tune to play at a wedding! The soutar half way to his goal of drunkenness, had begun to repent for the fiftieth time that year, had with his repentance mingled the memory of the bonny leddy ruthlessly tortured to death for his wrong, and had glided from a strathspey into that sorrowful moaning. The lament interpreted itself to his disconsolate pupil as he had never understood it before, not even in the stubble-field; for it now spoke his own feelings of waste misery, forsaken loneliness. Indeed Robert learned more of music in those few minutes of the foggy winter night and open street, shut out of all doors, with the tones of an ancient grief and lamentation floating through the blotted moonlight over his ever present sorrow, than he could have learned from many lessons even of Miss St. John. He was cold to the heart, yet went in a little comforted.

Things had gone ill with him. Outside of Paradise, deserted of his angel, in the frost and the snow, the voice of the despised violin once more the source of a sad comfort! But there is no better discipline than an occasional descent from what we count well being, to a former despised or less happy condition. One of the results of this taste of damnation in Robert was,

that when he was in bed that night, his heart began to turn gently towards his old master. How much did he not owe him, after all! Had he not acted ill and ungratefully in deserting him? His own vessel filled to the brim with grief, had he not let the waters of its bitterness overflow into the heart of the soutar? The wail of that violin echoed now in Robert's heart, not for Flodden, not for himself, but for the debased nature that drew forth the plaint. Comrades in misery, why should they part? What right had he to forsake an old friend and benefactor because he himself was unhappy? He would go and see him the very next night. And he would make friends once more with the much "suffering instrument" he had so wrongfully despised.

CHAPTER II.

THE STROKE.

THE following night, he left his books on the table, and the house itself behind him, and sped like a grayhound to Dooble Sanny's shop, lifted the latch, and entered.

By the light of a single dip set on a chair, he saw the shoemaker seated on his stool, one hand lying on the lap of his leathern apron, his other hand hanging down by his side, and the fiddle on the ground at his feet. His wife stood behind him, wiping her eyes with her blue apron. Through all its accumulated dirt, the face of the soutar looked ghastly, and they were eyes of despair that he lifted to the face of the youth as he stood holding the latch in his hand. Mrs. Alexander moved towards Robert, drew him in, and gently closed the door behind him, resuming her station like a sculptured mourner behind her motionless husband.

"What on airth's the maitter wi' ye, Sandy?" said Robert.

"Eh, Robert!" returned the shoemaker, and a tone of affection tinged the mournfulness with which he uttered the strange words—"eh, Robert! the Almichty *will* gang his ain gait, and I'm in his grup noo."

"He 's had a stroke," said his wife, without removing her apron from her eyes.

"I hae gotten my pecks (*blows*)," resumed the soutar, in a despairing voice, which gave yet more effect to the fantastic eccentricity of conscience which from the midst of so many grave faults chose such a one as especially bringing the divine displeasure upon him: "I hae gotten my pecks for cryin' doon my ain auld wife to set up your bonny leddy. The tane 's gane a' to aise an' stew (*ashes and dust*), an' frae the tither," he went on, looking down on the violin at his feet as if it had been something dead in its youth—"an' frae the tither I canna draw a cheep, for my richt han' has forgotten her cunnin'. Man, Robert, I canna lift it frae my side."

"Ye maun gang to yer bed," said Robert, greatly concerned.

"Ow, ay, I maun gang to my bed, and syne to the kirkyaird, and syne to hell, I ken that weel eneuch. Robert, I lea' my fiddle to you. Be guid to the auld wife, man—better nor I hae been. An auld wife 's better nor nae fiddle."

He stooped, lifted the violin with his left hand, gave it to Robert, rose, and made for the door. They helped him up the creaking stair, got him half-undressed, and laid him in his bed. Robert put the violin on the top of a press within sight of the sufferer, left him groaning, and ran for the doctor. Having seen him set out for the patient's dwelling, he ran home to his grandmother.

Now while Robert was absent, occasion had arisen to look for him: unusual occurrence, a visitor had appeared, no less a person than Mr. Innes, the schoolmaster. Shargar had been banished in consequence from the parlour, and had seated himself outside Robert's room, never doubting that Robert was inside. Presently he heard the bell ring, and then Betty came up the stair, and said Robert was wanted. Thereupon Shargar knocked at the door, and as there was neither voice nor hearing, opened it, and found, with a well-known horror, that he had been watching an empty room. He made no haste to communicate the fact. Robert might return in a moment, and his absence from the house not be discovered. He sat down on the bedstead and waited. But Betty came up again, and before Shargar could prevent her, walked into the room with her candle in her hand. In vain did Shargar intreat her to go and say that Robert was coming. Betty would not risk the danger

of discovery in connivance, and descended to open afresh the fountain of the old lady's anxiety. She did not, however, betray her disquietude to Mr. Innes.

She had asked the schoolmaster to visit her, in order that she might consult him about Robert's future. Mr. Innes expressed a high opinion of the boy's faculties and attainments, and strongly urged that he should be sent to college. Mrs. Falconer inwardly shuddered at the temptations to which this course would expose him; but he must leave home or be apprentice to some trade. She would have chosen the latter, I believe, but for religion towards the boy's parents, who would never have thought of other than a profession for him. While the schoolmaster was dwelling on the argument that he was pretty sure to gain a good *bursary*, and she would thus be relieved for four years, probably for ever, from further expense on his account, Robert entered.

"Whaur hae ye been, Robert?" asked Mrs. Falconer.

"At Dooble Sanny's," answered the boy.

"What hae ye been at there?"

"Helpin' him till's bed."

"What's come ower him?"

"A stroke."

"That's what comes o' playin' the fiddle."

"I never heard o' a stroke comin' frae a fid-

dle, grannie. It comes oot o' a clood whiles. Gin he had hauden till 's fiddle, he wad hae been playin' her the nicht, in place o' 's airm lyin' at 's side like a lang lingel *(ligneul—shoemaker's thread)*."

"Hm!" said his grandmother, concealing her indignation at this freedom of speech, "ye dinna believe in God's judgments!"

"Nae upo' fiddles," returned Robert.

Mr. Innes sat and said nothing, with difficulty concealing his amusement at this passage of arms.

It was but within the last few days that Robert had become capable of speaking thus. His nature had at length arrived at the point of so far casting off the incubus of his grandmother's authority as to assert some measure of freedom and act openly. His very hopelessness of a hearing in heaven had made him indifferent to things on earth, and therefore bolder. Thus, strange as it may seem, the blessing of God descended on him in the despair which enabled him to speak out and free his soul from the weight of concealment. But it was not despair alone that gave him strength. On his way home from the shoemaker's, he had been thinking what he could do for him; and had resolved, come of it what might, that he would visit him every evening, and try whether he could not comfort him a little by playing upon his violin.

So that it was loving kindness towards man, as well as despair towards God, that gave him strength to resolve that between him and his grandmother all should be above-board from henceforth.

"Nae upo' fiddles," Robert had said.

"But upo' them 'at plays them," returned his grandmother.

"Na; nor upo' them 'at burns them," retorted Robert—impudently it must be confessed; for every man is open to commit the fault of which he is least capable.

But Mrs. Falconer had too much regard to her own dignity to indulge her feelings. Possibly too her sense of justice, which Falconer always said was stronger than that of any other woman he had ever known, as well as some movement of her conscience interfered. She was silent, and Robert rushed into the breach which his last discharge had effected.

"An' I want to tell ye, grannie, that I mean to gang an' play the fiddle to puir Sanny ilka nicht for the best pairt o' an hoor; an' excep' ye lock the door an' hide the key, I *will* gang. The puir sinner sanna be desertit by God an' man baith."

He scarcely knew what he was saying before it was out of his mouth; and as if to cover it up, he hurried on.

"An' there's mair in 't.—Dr. Anderson gae

Shargar an' me a sovereign the piece. An' Dooble Sanny s' hae them, to haud him ohn deid o' hunger an' cauld."

"What for didna ye tell me 'at Dr. Anderson had gien ye sic a sicht o' siller? It was ill-faured o' ye—an' him as weel."

"'Cause ye wad hae sent it back till 'im; an' Shargar and me we thocht we wad raither keep it."

"Considerin' 'at I'm at sae muckle expense wi' ye baith, it wadna hae been ill-contrived to hae brocht the siller to me, an' latten me du wi' 't as I thocht fit.—Gang na awa', laddie," she added, as she saw Robert about to leave the room.

"I'll be back in a minute, grannie," returned Robert.

"He's a fine lad, that!" said Mr. Innes; "an' guid 'll come o' 'm, and that 'll be heard tell o'."

"Gin he had but the grace o' God, there wadna be muckle to compleen o'," acquiesced his grandmother.

"There's time eneuch for that, Mrs. Faukner. Ye canna get auld heids upo' young shoothers, ye ken."

"'Deed for that maitter, ye may get mony an auld heid upo' auld shoothers, and nae a spark o' grace in 't to lat it see hoo to lay itsel' doon i' the grave."

Robert returned before Mr. Innes had made up his mind as to whether the old lady intended a personal rebuke.

"Hae, grannie," he said, going up to her, and putting the two sovereigns in her white palm.

He had found some difficulty in making Shargar give up his, else he would have returned sooner.

"What's this o' 't, laddie?" said Mrs. Falconer. "Hoots! I'm nae gaein' to tak yer siller. Lat the puir soutar-craturs hae 't. But dinna gie them mair nor a shillin' or twa at ance—jist to haud them in life. They deserve nae mair. But they maunna sterve. And jist ye tell them, laddie, at gin they spen' ae saxpence o' 't upo' whusky, they s' get nae mair."

"Ay, ay, grannie," responded Robert, with a glimmer of gladness in his heart. "And what aboot the fiddlin', grannie?" he added, half playfully, hoping for some kind concession therein as well.

But he had gone too far. She vouchsafed no reply, and her face grew stern with offence. It was one thing to give bread to eat, another to give music and gladness. No music but that which sprung from effectual calling and the perseverance of the saints could be lawful in a world that was under the wrath and curse

of God. Robert waited in vain for a reply.

"Gang yer wa's," she said at length. "Mr. Innes and me has some business to mak an en' o', an' we want nae assistance."

Robert rejoined Shargar, who was still bemoaning the loss of his sovereign. His face brightened when he saw its well-known yellow shine once more, but darkened again as soon as Robert told him to what service it was now devoted.

"It's my ain," he said, with a suppressed expostulatory growl.

Robert threw the coin on the floor.

"Tak yer filthy lucre!" he exclaimed with contempt, and turned to leave Shargar alone in the garret with his sovereign.

"Bob!" Shargar almost screamed, "tak it, or I'll cut my throat."

This was his constant threat when he was thoroughly in earnest.

"Cut it, an' hae dune wi' 't," said Robert, cruelly.

Shargar burst out crying.

"Len' me yer knife, than, Bob," he sobbed, holding out his hand.

Robert burst into a roar of laughter, caught up the sovereign from the floor, sped with it to the baker's, who refused to change it because he had no knowledge of anything representing the sum of twenty shillings except a pound-

note, succeeded in getting silver for it at the bank, and then ran to the soutar's.

After he left the parlour, the discussion of his fate was resumed and finally settled between his grandmother and the schoolmaster. The former, in regard of the boy's determination to befriend the shoemaker in the matter of music as well as of money, would now have sent him at once to the grammar-school in Old Aberdeen, to prepare for the *competition* in the month of November; but the latter persuaded her that if the boy gave his whole attention to Latin till the next summer, and then went to the grammar-school for three months or so, he would have an excellent chance of success. As to the violin, the schoolmaster said, wisely enough:—

"He that *will* to Cupar *maun* to Cupar; and gin ye kep *(intercept)* him upo' the shore-road, he'll tak to the hill-road; an' I s' warran' a braw lad like Robert 'll get mony a ane in Eberdeen 'll be ready eneuch to gie him a lift wi' the fiddle, and maybe tak him into waur company nor the puir bed-ridden soutar; an' wi' you an' me to hing on to the tail o' 'im like, he canna gang ower the scar *(cliff)* afore he learns wit."

"Hm!" was the old lady's comprehensive response.

It was further arranged that Robert should be informed of their conclusion, and so roused

to effort in anticipation of the trial upon which his course in life must depend.

Nothing could have been better for Robert than the prospect of a college education. But his first thought at the news was not of the delights of learning nor of the honourable course that would ensue, but of Eric Ericson, the poverty-stricken, friendless descendant of yarls and sea-rovers. He would see *him*—the only man that understood him! Not until the passion of this thought had abated, did he begin to perceive the other advantages before him. But so practical and thorough was he in all his proposals and means, that ere half an hour was gone, he had begun to go over his Rudiments again. He now wrote a version, or translation from English into Latin, five times a week, and read Cæsar, Virgil, or Tacitus, every day. He gained permission from his grandmother to remove his bed to his own garret, and there, from the bedstead at which he no longer kneeled, he would often rise at four in the morning, even when the snow lay a foot thick on the skylight, kindle his lamp by means of a tinder-box and a splinter of wood dipped in sulphur, and sitting down in the keen cold, turn half a page of Addison into something as near Ciceronian Latin as he could effect. This would take him from an hour and a half to two hours, when he would tumble again into bed, blue and stiff, and sleep

till it was time to get up and go to the morning school before breakfast. His health was excellent, else it could never have stood such treatment.

CHAPTER III.

"THE END CROWNS ALL."

HIS sole relaxation almost lay in the visit he paid every evening to the soutar and his wife. Their home was a wretched place; but notwithstanding the poverty in which they were now sunk, Robert soon began to see a change, like the dawning of light, an *alba*, as the Italians call the dawn, in the appearance of something white here and there about the room. Robert's visits had set the poor woman trying to make the place look decent. It soon became at least clean, and there is a very real sense in which cleanliness is next to godliness. If the people who want to do good among the poor would give up patronizing them, would cease from trying to convert them before they have gained the smallest personal influence with them, would visit them as those who have just as good a right to be here as they have, it would be all the better for both, perhaps chiefly for themselves.

For the first week or so, Alexander, unable either to work or play, and deprived of his usual consolation of drink, was very testy and unmanageable. If Robert, who strove to do his best, in the hope of alleviating the poor fellow's sufferings—chiefly those of the mind—happened to mistake the time or to draw a false note from the violin, Sandy would swear as if he had been the Grand Turk and Robert one of his slaves. But Robert was too vexed with himself, when he gave occasion to such an outburst, to mind the outburst itself. And invariably when such had taken place, the shoemaker would ask forgiveness before he went. Holding out his left hand, from which nothing could efface the stains of rosin and lamp-black and heel-ball, save the sweet cleansing of mother-earth, he would say:

"Robert, ye'll jist pit the sweirin' doon wi' the lave (*rest*), an' score 't oot a'thegither. I'm an ill-tongued vratch, an' I'm beginnin' to see 't. But, man, ye 're jist behavin' to me like God himsel', an' gin it warna for you, I wad jist lie here roarin' an' greitin' an' damnin' frae mornin' to nicht.—Ye *will* be in the morn's night—willna ye?" he would always end by asking with some anxiety.

"Of coorsc I will," Robert would answer.

"Gude nicht, than, gude nicht.—I'll try and get a sicht o' my sins ance mair," he added, one evening. "Gin I could only be a wee bit sorry

for them, I reckon He wad forgie me. Dinna ye think he wad, Robert?"

"Nae doobt, nae doobt," answered Robert, hurriedly. "They a' say 'at gin a man repents the richt gait, he'll forgie him."

He could not say more than "They say," for his own horizon was all dark, and even in saying this much he felt like a hypocrite. A terrible waste, heaped thick with the potsherds of hope, lay outside that door of prayer which he had, as he thought, nailed up for ever.

"An' what *is* the richt gait?" asked the soutar.

"'Deed, that's mair nor I ken, Sandy," answered Robert mournfully.

"Weel, gin *ye* dinna ken, what's to come o' *me*?" said Alexander anxiously.

"Ye maun speir at Himsel'," returned Robert, "an' jist tell him 'at ye dinna ken, but ye'll do onything 'at he likes."

With these words he took his leave hurriedly, somewhat amazed to find that he had given the soutar the strange advice to try just what he had tried so unavailingly himself. And stranger still, he found himself, before he reached home, praying once more in his heart—both for Dooble Sanny and for himself. From that hour a faint hope was within him that some day he might try again, though he dared not yet encounter such effort and agony.

All this time he had never doubted that there was God; nor had he ventured to say within himself that perhaps God was not good; he had simply come to the conclusion that for him there was no approach to the fountain of his being.

In the course of a fortnight or so, when his system had covered over its craving after whisky, the irritability of the shoemaker almost vanished. It might have been feared that his conscience would then likewise relax its activity; but it was not so: it grew yet more tender. He now began to give Robert some praise, and make allowances for his faults, and Robert dared more in consequence, and played with more spirit. I do not say that his style could have grown fine under such a master, but at least he learned the difference between slovenliness and accuracy, and between accuracy and expression, which last is all of original that the best mere performer can claim.

One evening he was scraping away at Tullochgorum when Mr. Maccleary walked in. Robert ceased. The minister gave him one searching glance, and sat down by the bedside. Robert would have left the room.

"Dinna gang, Robert," said Sandy, and Robert remained.

The clergyman talked very faithfully as far as the shoemaker was concerned; though whether he was equally faithful towards God might be

questioned. He was one of those prudent men, who are afraid of dealing out the truth freely lest it should fall on thorns or stony places. Hence of course the good ground came in for a scanty share too. Believing that a certain precise condition of mind was necessary for its proper reception, he would endeavour to bring about that condition first. He did not know that the truth makes its own nest in the ready heart, and that the heart may be ready for it before the priest can perceive the fact, seeing that the imposition of hands confers, now-a-days at least, neither love nor common sense. He therefore dwelt upon the sins of the soutar, magnifying them and making them hideous, in the idea that thus he magnified the law, and made it honourable, while of the special tenderness of God to the sinner he said not a word. Robert was offended, he scarcely knew why, with the minister's mode of treating his friend; and after Mr. Maccleary had taken a far kinder leave of them than God could approve, if he resembled his representation, Robert sat still, oppressed with darkness.

"It's a' true," said the soutar; "but, man Robert, dinna ye think the minister was some sair upo' me?"

"I duv think it," answered Robert.

"Something beirs 't in upo' me 'at He wadna be sae sair upo' me himsel'. There's something

i' the New Testament, some gait, 'at's pitten 't into my heid; though, faith, I dinna ken whaur to luik for 't. Canna ye help me oot wi' 't, man?"

Robert could think of nothing but the parable of the prodigal son. Mrs. Alexander got him the New Testament and he read it. She sat at the foot of the bed listening.

"There!" cried the soutar, triumphantly, "I telled ye sae! Not ae word aboot the puir lad's sins! It was a' a hurry an' a scurry to get the new shune upo' 'im, an' win at the calfie an' the fiddlin' an' the dancin'.—O Lord," he broke out, "I'm comin' hame as fest 's I can; but my sins are jist like muckle bauchles *(shoes down at heel)* upo' my feet and winna lat me. I expec' nae ring and nae robe, but I wad fain hae a fiddle i' my grup when the neist prodigal comes hame; an' gin I dinna fiddle weel, it s' no be my wyte. —Eh, man! but that is what I ca' gude, an' a' the minister said—honest man—'s jist blether till 't.—O Lord, I sweir gin ever I win up again, I'll put in ilka steek *(stitch)* as gin the shune war for the feet o' the prodigal himsel'. It sall be gude wark, O Lord. An' I'll never lat taste o' whusky intil my mou'—nor smell o' whusky intil my nose, gin sae be 'at I can help it—I sweir 't, O Lord. An' gin I binna raised up again——"

Here his voice trembled and ceased, and

silence endured for a short minute. Then he called his wife.

"Come here, Bell. Gie me a kiss, my bonny lass. I hae been an ill man to you."

"Na, na, Sandy. Ye hae aye been gude to me—better nor I deserved. Ye hae been nae-body's enemy but yer ain."

"Haud yer tongue. Ye 're speykin' waur blethers nor the minister, honest man! I tell ye I hae been a damned scoon'rel to ye. I haena even hauden my han's aff o' ye. And eh! ye war a bonny lass whan I merried ye. I hae blaudit (*spoiled*) ye a'thegither. But gin I war up, see gin I wadna gie ye a new goon, an' that wad be something to make ye like yersel' again. I'm affrontet wi' mysel' 'at I had been sic a brute o' a man to ye. But ye maun forgie me noo, for I do believe i' my hert 'at the Lord's forgien me. Gie me anither kiss, lass. God be praised, and mony thanks to *you!* Ye micht hae run awa' frae me lang or noo, an' a'body wad hae said ye did richt.—Robert, play a spring."

Absorbed in his own thoughts, Robert began to play The Ewie wi' the Crookit Horn.

"Hoots! hoots!" cried Sandy angrily. "What are ye aboot. Nae mair o' that. I hae dune wi' that. What's i' the heid o' ye, man?"

"What 'll I play than, Sandy?" asked Robert meekly.

"Play The Lan' o' the Leal, or My Nannie's

awa', or something o' that kin'. I'll be leal to ye noo, Bell. An' we winna pree o' the whusky nae mair, lass."

"I canna bide the smell o' 't," cried Bell, sobbing.

Robert struck in with The Lan' o' the Leal. When he had played it over two or three times, he laid the fiddle in its place, and departed—able just to see, by the light of the neglected candle, that Bell sat on the bedside stroking the *rosiny* hand of her husband, the rhinoceros-hide of which was yet delicate enough to let the love through to his heart.

After this the soutar never called his fiddle his *auld wife*.

Robert walked home with his head sunk on his breast. Dooble Sanny, the drinking, ranting, swearing soutar, was inside the wicket-gate; and he was left outside for all his prayers, with the arrows from the castle of Beelzebub sticking in his back. He would have another try some day—but not yet—he dared not yet.

Henceforth Robert had more to do in reading the New Testament than in playing the fiddle to the soutar, though they never parted without an air or two. Sandy continued hopeful and generally cheerful, with alternations which the reading generally fixed on the right side for the night. Robert never attempted any comments, but left him to take from the word what

nourishment he could. There was no return of strength to the helpless arm, and his constitution was gradually yielding.

The rumour got abroad that he was a "changed character,"—how is not far to seek, for Mr. Maccleary fancied himself the honoured instrument of his conversion, whereas paralysis and the New Testament were the chief agents, and even the violin had more share in it than the minister. For the spirit of God lies all about the spirit of man like a mighty sea, ready to rush in at the smallest chink in the walls that shut him out from his own—walls which even the tone of a violin afloat on the wind of that spirit is sometimes enough to rend from battlement to base, as the blast of the rams' horns rent the walls of Jericho. And now to the day of his death, the shoemaker had need of nothing. Food, wine, and delicacies were sent him by many who, while they considered him outside of the kingdom, would have troubled themselves in no way about him. What with visits of condolence and flattery, inquiries into his experience, and long prayers by his bedside, they now did their best to send him back among the swine. The soutar's humour, however, aided by his violin, was a strong antidote against these evil influences.

"I doobt I'm gaein' to dee, Robert," he said at length one evening as the lad sat by his bedside.

"Weel, that winna do ye nae ill," answered Robert, adding with just a touch of bitterness—"ye needna care aboot that."

"I do *not* care aboot the deein' o' 't. But I jist want to live lang eneuch to lat the Lord ken 'at I'm in doonricht earnest aboot it. I hae nae chance o' drinkin' as lang 's I'm lyin' here."

"Never ye fash yer heid aboot that. Ye can lippen (*trust*) that to him, for it's his ain business. He'll see 'at ye 're a' richt. Dinna ye think 'at he 'll lat ye aff."

"The Lord forbid," responded the soutar, earnestly. "It maun be a' pitten richt. It wad be dreidfu' to be latten aff. I wadna hae him content wi' cobbler's wark.—I hae 't," he resumed, after a few minutes' pause: "the Lord's easy pleased, but ill to saitisfee. I'm sair pleased wi' your playin', Robert, but it's naething like the richt thing yet. It does me gude to hear ye, though, for a' that."

The very next night he found him evidently sinking fast. Robert took the violin, and was about to play, but the soutar stretched out his one left hand, and took it from him, laid it across his chest and his arm over it, for a few moments, as if he were bidding it farewell, then held it out to Robert, saying,

"Hae, Robert. She's yours.—Death's a sair divorce.—Maybe they 'll hae an orra* fiddle

* Extra—over all—ower a'—orra—one more than is wanted.

whaur I'm gaein', though. Think o' a Rothieden soutar playin' afore his grace!"

Robert saw that his mind was wandering, and mingled the paltry honours of earth with the grand simplicities of heaven. He began to play the Land o' the Leal. For a little while Sandy seemed to follow and comprehend the tones, but by slow degrees the light departed from his face. At length his jaw fell, and with a sigh, the body parted from Dooble Sanny, and he went to God.

His wife closed mouth and eyes without a word, laid the two arms, equally powerless now, straight by his sides, then seating herself on the edge of the bed, said,

"Dinna bide, Robert. It's a' ower noo. He's gane hame. Gin I war only wi' 'im wharever he is!"

She burst into tears, but dried her eyes a moment after, and seeing that Robert still lingered, said,

"Gang, Robert, an' sen' Mistress Downie to me. Dinna greit—there's a gude lad; but tak yer fiddle an' gang. Ye can be no more use."

Robert obeyed. With his violin in his hand, he went home; and, with his violin still in his hand, walked into his grandmother's parlour.

"Hoo daur ye bring sic a thing into my hoose?" she said, roused by the apparent defi-

ance of her grandson. "Hoo daur ye, efter what's come an' gane?"

"'Cause Dooble Sanny's come and gane, grannie, and left naething but this ahint him. And this ane's mine, whase ever the ither micht be. His wife's left wi'oot a plack, an' I s' warran' the gude fowk o' Rothieden winna mak sae muckle o' her noo 'at her man's awa'; for she never was sic a randy as he was, an' the triumph o' grace in her 's but sma', therefore. Sae I maun mak the best 'at I can o' the fiddle for her. An' ye maunna touch this ane, grannie; for though ye may think it richt to burn fiddles, ither fowk disna; and this has to do wi' ither fowk, grannie; it's no atween you an' me, ye ken," Robert went on, fearful lest she might consider herself divinely commissioned to extirpate the whole race of stringed instruments,—"for I maun sell 't for her."

"Tak it oot o' my sicht," said Mrs. Falconer, and said no more.

He carried the instrument up to his room, laid it on his bed, locked his door, put the key in his pocket, and descended to the parlour.

"He's deid, is he?" said his grandmother, as he re-entered.

"Ay is he, grannie," answered Robert. "He deid a repentant man."

"An' a believin'?" asked Mrs. Falconer.

"Weel, grannie, I canna say 'at he believed a'

thing 'at ever was, for a body michtna ken a' thing."

"Toots, laddie! Was 't savin' faith?"

"I dinna richtly ken what ye mean by that; but I'm thinkin' it was muckle the same kin' o' faith 'at the prodigal had; for they baith rase an' gaed hame."

"'Deed, maybe ye 're richt, laddie," returned Mrs. Falconer, after a moment's thought. "We'll houp the best."

All the remainder of the evening she sat motionless, with her eyes fixed on the rug before her, thinking, no doubt, of the repentance and salvation of the fiddler, and what hope there might yet be for her own lost son.

The next day being Saturday, Robert set out for Bodyfauld, taking the violin with him. He went alone, for he was in no mood for Shargar's company. It was a fine spring day, the woods were budding, and the fragrance of the larches floated across his way. There was a lovely sadness in the sky, and in the motions of the air, and in the scent of the earth—as if they all knew that fine things were at hand which never could be so beautiful as those that had gone away. And Robert wondered how it was that everything should look so different. Even Bodyfauld seemed to have lost its enchantment, though his friends were as kind as ever. Mr. Lammie went into a rage at the story of the

lost violin, and Miss Lammie cried from sympathy with Robert's distress at the fate of his bonny leddy. Then he came to the occasion of his visit, which was to beg Mr. Lammie, when next he went to Aberdeen, to take the soutar's fiddle, and get what he could for it, to help his widow.

"Poor Sanny!" said Robert, "it never cam' intil 's heid to sell her, nae mair nor gin she had been the auld wife 'at he ca'd her."

Mr. Lammie undertook the commission; and the next time he saw Robert, handed him ten pounds as the result of the negotiation. It was all Robert could do, however, to get the poor woman to take the money. She looked at it with repugnance, almost as if it had been the price of blood. But Robert having succeeded in overcoming her scruples, she did take it, and therewith provide a store of *sweeties*, and reels of cotton, and tobacco, for sale in Sandy's workshop. She certainly did not make money by her merchandise, for her anxiety to be honest rose to the absurd; but she contrived to live without being reduced to prey upon her own gingerbread and rock.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABERDEEN GARRET.

MISS ST. JOHN had long since returned from her visit, but having heard how much Robert was taken up with his dying friend, she judged it better to leave her intended proposal of renewing her lessons alone for the present. Meeting him, however, soon after Alexander's death, she introduced the subject, and Robert was enraptured at the prospect of the re-opening of the gates of his paradise. If he did not inform his grandmother of the fact, neither did he attempt to conceal it; but she took no notice, thinking probably that the whole affair would be effectually disposed of by his departure. Till that period arrived, he had a lesson almost every evening, and Miss St. John was surprised to find how the boy had grown since the door was built up. Robert's gratitude grew into a kind of worship.

The evening before his departure for Bodyfauld—whence his grandmother had arranged

that he should start for Aberdeen, in order that he might have the company of Mr. Lammie, whom business drew thither about the same time—as he was having his last lesson, Mrs. Forsyth left the room. Thereupon Robert, who had been dejected all day at the thought of the separation from Miss St. John, found his heart beating so violently that he could hardly breathe. Probably she saw his emotion, for she put her hand on the keys, as if to cover it by showing him how some movement was to be better effected. He seized her hand and lifted it to his lips. But when he found that instead of snatching it away, she yielded it, nay gently pressed it to his face, he burst into tears, and dropped on his knees, as if before a goddess.

"Hush, Robert! Don't be foolish," she said, quietly and tenderly. "Here is my aunt coming."

The same moment he was at the piano again, playing My Bonny Lady Ann, so as to astonish Miss St. John, and himself as well. Then he rose, bade her a hasty good night, and hurried away.

A strange conflict arose in his mind at the prospect of leaving the old place, on every house of whose streets, on every swell of whose surrounding hills he left the clinging shadows of thought and feeling. A faintly purpled mist arose, and enwrapped all the past, changing

even his grayest troubles into tales of fairyland, and his deepest griefs into songs of a sad music. Then he thought of Shargar, and what was to become of him after he was gone. The lad was paler and his eyes were redder than ever, for he had been weeping in secret. He went to his grandmother and begged that Shargar might accompany him to Bodyfauld.

"He maun bide at hame an' min' his beuks," she answered; "for he winna hae them that muckle langer. He maun be doin' something for himsel'."

So the next morning the boys parted—Shargar to school, and Robert to Bodyfauld—Shargar left behind with his desolation, his sun gone down in a west that was not even stormy, only gray and hopeless, and Robert moving towards an east which reflected, like a faint prophecy, the west behind him tinged with love, death, and music, but mingled the colours with its own saffron of coming dawn.

When he reached Bodyfauld he marvelled to find that all its glory had returned. He found Miss Lammie busy among the rich yellow pools in her dairy, and went out into the garden, now in the height of its summer. Great cabbage roses hung heavy-headed splendours towards purple-black heartseases, and thin-filmed silvery pods of honesty; tall white lilies mingled with the blossoms of currant bushes, and at their

feet the narcissi of old classic legend pressed their warm-hearted paleness into the plebeian thicket of the many-striped gardener's garters. It was a lovely type of a commonwealth indeed, of the garden and kingdom of God. His whole mind was flooded with a sense of sunny wealth. The farmer's neglected garden blossomed into higher glory in his soul. The bloom and the richness and the use were all there; but instead of each flower was a delicate ethereal sense or feeling about that flower. Of these how gladly would he have gathered a posy to offer Miss St. John! but, alas! he was no poet; or rather he had but the half of the poet's inheritance—he could see: he could not say. But even if he had been full of poetic speech, he would yet have found that the half of his posy remained ungathered, for although we have speech enough now to be "cousin to the deed," as Chaucer says it must always be, we have not yet enough speech to cousin the tenth part of our feelings. Let him who doubts recall one of his own vain attempts to convey that which made the oddest of dreams entrancing in loveliness—to convey that aroma of thought, the conscious absence of which made him a fool in his own eyes when he spoke such silly words as alone presented themselves for the service. I can no more describe the emotion aroused in my mind by a gray cloud parting over a gray stone, by the smell of a sweet-

pea, by the sight of one of those long upright pennons of striped grass with the homely name, than I can tell what the glory of God is who made these things. The man whose poetry is like nature in this, that it produces individual, incommunicable moods and conditions of mind, —a sense of elevated, tender, marvellous, and evanescent existence, must be a poet indeed. Every dawn of such a feeling is a light-brushed bubble rendering visible for a moment the dark unknown sea of our being which lies beyond the lights of our consciousness, and is the stuff and the region of our eternal growth. But think what language must become before it will tell dreams!—before it will convey the delicate shades of fancy that come and go in the brain of a child!—before it will let a man know wherein one face differeth from another face in glory! I suspect, however, that for such purposes it is rather music than articulation that is needful—that, with a hope of these finer results, the language must rather be turned into music than logically extended.

The next morning he awoke at early dawn, hearing the birds at his window. He rose and went out. The air was clear and fresh as a new-made soul. Bars of mottled cloud were bent across the eastern quarter of the sky, which lay like a great ethereal ocean ready for the launch of the ship of glory that was now gliding to-

wards its edge. Everything was waiting to conduct him across the far horizon to the south, where lay the stored-up wonder of his coming life. The lark sang of something greater than he could tell; the wind got up, whispered at it, and lay down to sleep again; the sun was at hand to bathe the world in the light and gladness alone fit to typify the radiance of Robert's thoughts. The clouds that formed the shore of the upper sea were already burning from saffron into gold. A moment more and the first insupportable sting of light would shoot from behind the edge of that low blue hill, and the first day of his new life would be begun. He watched, and it came. The well-spring of day, fresh and exuberant as if now first from the holy will of the Father of Lights, gushed into the basin of the world, and the world was more glad than tongue or pen can tell. The supernal light alone, dawning upon the human heart, can exceed the marvel of such a sunrise.

And shall life itself be less beautiful than one of its days? Do not believe it, young brother. Men call the shadow, thrown upon the universe where their own dusky souls come between it and the eternal sun, life, and then mourn that it should be less bright than the hopes of their childhood. Keep thou thy soul translucent, that thou mayest never see its shadow; at least never abuse thyself with the philosophy which

calls that shadow life. Or, rather would I say, become thou pure in heart, and thou shalt see God, whose vision alone is life.

Just as the sun rushed across the horizon he heard the tramp of a heavy horse in the yard, passing from the stable to the cart that was to carry his trunk to the turnpike road, three miles off, where the coach would pass. Then Miss Lammie came and called him to breakfast, and there sat the farmer in his Sunday suit of black, already busy. Robert was almost too happy to eat; yet he had not swallowed two mouthfuls before the sun rose unheeded, the lark sang unheeded, and the roses sparkled with the dew that bowed yet lower their heavy heads, all unheeded. By the time they had finished, Mr. Lammie's gig was at the door, and they mounted and followed the cart. Not even the recurring doubt and fear that hollowness was at the heart of it all, for that God could not mean such reinless gladness, prevented the truth of the present joy from sinking deep into the lad's heart. In his mind he saw a boat moored to a rock, with no one on board, heaving on the waters of a rising tide, and waiting to bear him out on the sea of the unknown. The picture arose of itself: there was no paradise of the west in his imagination, as in that of a boy of the sixteenth century, to authorize its appearance. It rose again and again; the dew glittered as if the light were its

own; the sun shone as he had never seen him shine before; the very mare that sped them along held up her head and stepped out as if she felt it the finest of mornings. Had she also a future, poor old mare? Might there not be a paradise somewhere? and if in the furthest star instead of next-door America, why, so much the more might the Atlantis of the nineteenth century surpass Manoa the golden of the seventeenth!

The gig and the cart reached the road together. One of the men who had accompanied the cart took the gig; and they were left on the road-side with Robert's trunk and box—the latter a present from Miss Lammie.

Their places had been secured, and the guard knew where he had to take them up. Long before the coach appeared, the notes of his horn, as like the colour of his red coat as the blindest of men could imagine, came echoing from the side of the heathery, stony hill under which they stood, so that Robert turned wondering, as if the chariot of his desires had been coming over the top of Drumsnaig, to carry him into a heaven where all labour was delight. But round the corner in front came the four-in-hand red mail instead. *She* pulled up gallantly; the wheelers lay on their hind quarters, and the leaders parted theirs from the pole; the boxes were hoisted up; Mr. Lammie climbed, and Robert

scrambled to his seat; the horn blew; the coachman spake oracularly; the horses obeyed; and away went the gorgeous symbol of sovereignty careering through the submissive region. Nor did Robert's delight abate during the journey—certainly not when he saw the blue line of the sea in the distance, a marvel and yet a fact.

Mrs. Falconer had consulted the Misses Napier, who had many acquaintances in Aberdeen, as to a place proper for Robert, and suitable to her means. Upon this point Miss Letty, not without a certain touch of design, as may appear in the course of my story, had been able to satisfy her. In a small house of two floors and a garret, in the old town, Mr. Lammie took leave of Robert.

It was from a garret window still, but a storm-window now, that Robert looked—eastward across fields and sand-hills, to the blue expanse of waters—not blue like southern seas, but slaty blue, like the eyes of northmen. It was rather dreary; the sun was shining from overhead now, casting short shadows and much heat; the dew was gone up, and the lark had come down; he was alone; the end of his journey was come, and was not anything very remarkable. His landlady interrupted his gaze to know what he would have for dinner, but he declined to use any discretion in the matter. When she left

the room he did not return to the window, but sat down upon his box. His eye fell upon the other, a big wooden cube. Of its contents he knew nothing. He would amuse himself by making inquisition. It was nailed up. He borrowed a screw-driver and opened it. At the top lay a linen bag full of oatmeal; underneath that was a thick layer of oat cake; underneath that two cheeses, a pound of butter, and six pots of jam, which ought to have tasted of roses, for it came from the old garden where the roses lived in such sweet companionship with the currant bushes; underneath that, &c.; and underneath &c., a box which strangely recalled Shargar's garret, and one of the closets therein. With beating heart he opened it, and lo, to his marvel, and the restoration of all the fair day, there was the violin which Dooble Sanny had left him when he forsook her for—some one or other of the queer instruments of Fra Angelico's angels?

In a flutter of delight he sat down on his trunk again and played the most mournful of tunes. Two white pigeons, which had been talking to each other in the heat on the roof, came one on each side of the window and peeped into the room; and out between them, as he played, Robert saw the sea, and the blue sky above it. Is it any wonder that, instead of turning to the lying pages and contorted sentences of the Livy which he had already unpacked from his box, he

forgot all about school, and college, and bursary, and went on playing till his landlady brought up his dinner, which he swallowed hastily that he might return to the spells of his enchantress!

CHAPTER V.

THE COMPETITION.

I COULD linger with gladness even over this part of my hero's history. If the school work was dry it was thorough. If that academy had no sweetly shadowing trees; if it did stand within a parallellogram of low stone walls, containing a roughly-gravelled court; if all the region about suggested hot stones and sand—beyond still was the sea and the sky; and that court, morning and afternoon, was filled with the shouts of eager boys, kicking the football with mad rushings to and fro, and sometimes with wounds and faintings—fit symbol of the equally resultless ambition with which many of them would follow the game of life in the years to come. Shock-headed Highland colts, and rough Lowland steers as many of them were, out of that group, out of the roughest of them, would emerge in time a few gentlemen—not of the type of your trim, self-contained, clerical exquisite—but large-hearted, courteous gentle-

men, for whom a man may thank God. And if the master was stern and hard, he was true; if the pupils feared him, they yet cared to please him; if there might be found not a few more widely-read scholars than he, it would be hard to find a better teacher.

Robert leaned to the collar and laboured, not greatly moved by ambition, but much by the hope of the bursary and the college life in the near distance. Not unfrequently he would rush into the thick of the football game, fight like a maniac for one short burst, and then retire and look on. He oftener regarded than mingled. He seldom joined his fellows after school hours, for his work lay both upon his conscience and his hopes; but if he formed no very deep friendships amongst them, at least he made no enemies, for he was not selfish, and in virtue of the Celtic blood in him was invariably courteous. His habits were in some things altogether irregular. He never went out for a walk; but sometimes, looking up from his Virgil or his Latin version, and seeing the blue expanse in the distance breaking into white under the viewless wing of the summer wind, he would fling down his dictionary or his pen, rush from his garret, and fly in a straight line, like a sea-gull weary of lake and river, down to the waste shore of the great deep. This was all that stood for the Arabian Nights of moon-blossomed

marvel; all the rest was Aberdeen days of Latin and labour.

Slowly the hours went, and yet the dreaded, hoped-for day came quickly. The quadrangle of the stone-crowned college grew more awful in its silence and emptiness every time Robert passed it; and the professors' houses looked like the sentry-boxes of the angels of learning, soon to come forth and judge the feeble mortals who dared present a claim to their recognition. October faded softly by, with its keen fresh mornings, and cold memorial green-horisoned evenings, whose stars fell like the stray blossoms of a more heavenly world, from some ghostly wind of space that had caught them up on its awful shoreless sweep. November came, "chill and drear," with its heartless, hopeless nothingness; but as if to mock the poor competitors, rose, after three days of Scotch mist, in a lovely "halcyon day" of "St. Martin's summer," through whose long shadows anxious young faces gathered in the quadrangle, or under the arcade, each with his Ainsworth's Dictionary, the sole book allowed, under his arm. But when the sacrist appeared and unlocked the public school, and the black-gowned professors walked into the room, and the door was left open for the candidates to follow, then indeed a great awe fell upon the assembly, and the lads crept into their seats as if to a trial for life before a

bench of the incorruptible. They took their places; a portion of Robertson's *History of Scotland* was given them to turn into Latin; and soon there was nothing to be heard in the assembly but the turning of the leaves of dictionaries, and the scratching of pens constructing the first rough copy of the Latinized theme.

It was done. Four weary hours, nearly five, one or two of which passed like minutes, the others as if each minute had been an hour, went by, and Robert in a kind of desperation, after a final reading of the Latin, gave in his paper, and left the room. When he got home, he asked his landlady to get him some tea. Till it was ready he would take his violin. But even the violin had grown dull, and would not speak freely. He returned to the torture—took out his first copy, and went over it once more. Horror of horrors! a *maxie!*—that is a *maximus error*. Mary Queen of Scots had been left so far behind in the beginning of the paper, that she forgot the rights of her sex in the middle of it, and in the accusative of a future participle passive—I do not know if more modern grammarians have a different name for the growth—had submitted to be *dum*, and her rightful *dam* was henceforth and for ever debarred.

He rose, rushed out of the house, down through the garden, across two fields and a wide road, across the links, and so to the moan-

ing lip of the sea—for it was moaning that night. From the last bulwark of the sandhills he dropt upon the wet sands, and there he paced up and down—how long, God only, who was watching him, knew—with the low limitless form of the murmuring lip lying out and out into the sinking sky like the life that lay low and hopeless before him, for the want at most of twenty pounds a year (that was the highest bursary then) to lift him into a region of possible well-being. Suddenly a strange phenomenon appeared within him. The subject hitherto became the object to a new birth of consciousness. He began to look at himself. "There's a sair bit in there," he said, as if his own bosom had been that of another mortal. "What's to be dune wi' 't? I doobt it maun bide it. Weel, the crater had better bide it quaietly, and no cry oot. Lie doon, an' haud yer tongue. *Soror tua haud meretrix est*, ye brute!" He burst out laughing, after a doubtful and ululant fashion, I daresay; but he went home, took up his *auld wife*, and played "Tullochgorum" some fifty times over, with extemporized variations.

The next day he had to translate a passage from Tacitus; after executing which somewhat heartlessly, he did not open a Latin book for a whole week. The very sight of one was disgusting to him. He wandered about the New Town, along Union Street, and up and down

the stairs that led to the lower parts, haunted the quay, watched the vessels, learned their forms, their parts and capacities, made friends with a certain Dutch captain whom he heard playing the violin in his cabin, and on the whole, notwithstanding the wretched prospect before him, contrived to spend the week with considerable enjoyment. Nor does an occasional episode of lounging hurt a life with any true claims to the epic form.

The day of decision at length arrived. Again the black-robed powers assembled, and again the hoping, fearing lads—some of them not lads, men, and mere boys—gathered to hear their fate. Name after name was called out;—a twenty pound bursary to the first, one of seventeen to the next, three or four of fifteen and fourteen, and so on, for about twenty, and still no Robert Falconer. At last, lagging wearily in the rear, he heard his name, went up listlessly, and was awarded five pounds. He crept home, wrote to his grandmother, and awaited her reply. It was not long in coming; for although the carrier was generally the medium of communication, Miss Letty had contrived to send the answer by coach. It was to the effect that his grandmother was sorry that he had not been more successful, but that Mr. Innes thought it would be quite worth while to try again, and he must therefore come home for another year.

This was mortifying enough, though not so bad as it might have been. Robert began to pack his box. But before he had finished it he shut the lid and sat upon it. To meet Miss St. John thus disgraced, was more than he could bear. If he remained, he had a chance of winning prizes at the end of the session, and that would more than repair his honour. The five pound bursars were privileged in paying half fees; and if he could only get some teaching, he could manage. But who would employ a *bejan* when a *magistrand* might be had for next to nothing? Besides, who would recommend him? The thought of Dr. Anderson flashed into his mind, and he rushed from the house without even knowing where he lived.

CHAPTER VI.

DR. ANDERSON AGAIN.

AT the Post Office he procured the desired information at once. Dr. Anderson lived in Union Street, towards the western end of it.

Away went Robert to find the house. That was easy. What a grand house of smooth granite and wide approach it was! The great door was opened by a man-servant, who looked at the country boy from head to foot.

"Is the doctor in?" asked Robert.

"Yes."

"I wad like to see him."

"Wha will I say wants him?"

"Say the laddie he saw at Bodyfauld."

The man left Robert in the hall, which was spread with tiger and leopard skins, and had a bright fire burning in a large stove. Returning presently, he led him through noiseless swing-doors covered with cloth into a large library. Never had Robert conceived such luxury. What with Turkey carpet, crimson curtains,

easy chairs, grandly-bound books and morocco-covered writing-table, it seemed the very ideal of comfort. But Robert liked the grandeur too much to be abashed by it.

"Sit ye doon there," said the servant, "and the doctor 'ill be wi' ye in ae minute."

He was hardly out of the room before a door opened in the middle of the books, and the doctor appeared in a long dressing-gown. He looked inquiringly at Robert for one moment, then made two long strides like a pair of eager compasses, holding out his hand.

"I'm Robert Faukner," said the boy. "Ye'll min', maybe, Doctor, 'at ye war verra kin' to me ance, and tellt me lots o' stories—at Bodyfauld, ye ken."

"I'm very glad to see you, Robert," said Dr. Anderson. "Of course I remember you perfectly; but my servant did not bring your name, and I did not know but it might be the other boy—I forget his name."

"Ye mean Shargar, sir. It's no him."

"I can see that," said the doctor laughing, "although you are altered. You have grown quite a man! I am very glad to see you," he repeated, shaking hands with him again. "When did you come to town?"

"I hae been at the grammer school i' the auld toon for the last three months," said Robert.

"Three months!" exclaimed Dr. Anderson. "And never came to see me till now! That was too bad of you, Robert."

"Weel, ye see, sir, I didna ken better. An' I had a heap to do, an' a' for naething, efter a'. But gin I had kent 'at ye wad like to see me, I wad hae likit weel to come to ye."

"I have been away most of the summer," said the doctor; "but I have been at home for the last month. You haven't had your dinner, have you?"

"Weel, I dinna exackly ken what to say, sir. Ye see, I wasna that sharp-set the day, sae I had jist a mou'fu' o' breid and cheese. I'm turnin' hungry, noo, I maun confess."

The doctor rang the bell.

"You must stop and dine with me.—Johnston," he continued as his servant entered, "tell the cook that I have a gentleman to dinner with me to-day, and she must be liberal."

"Guidsake, sir!" said Robert, "dinna set the woman agen me."

He had no intention of saying anything humorous, but Dr. Anderson laughed heartily.

"Come into my room till dinner-time," he said, opening the door by which he had entered.

To Robert's astonishment, he found himself in a room bare as that of the poorest cottage. A small square window, small as the window in

John Hewson's, looked out upon a garden neatly kept, but now "having no adorning but cleanliness." The place was just the *benn end* of a cottage. The walls were whitewashed, the ceiling was of bare boards, and the floor was sprinkled with a little white sand. The table and chairs were of common deal, white and clean, save that the former was spotted with ink. A greater contrast to the soft, large, richly-coloured room they had left could hardly be imagined. A few bookshelves on the wall were filled with old books. A fire blazed cheerily in the little grate. A bed with snow-white coverlet stood in a recess.

"This is the nicest room in the house, Robert," said the doctor. "When I was a student like you——"

Robert shook his head.

"I'm nae student yet," he said; but the doctor went on:

"I had the benn end of my father's cottage to study in, for he treated me like a stranger-gentleman when I came home from college. The father respected the son for whose advantage he was working like a slave from morning till night. My heart is sometimes sore with the gratitude I feel to him. Though he's been dead for thirty years—would you believe it, Robert? —well, I can't talk more about him now. I made this room as like my father's benn end as

I could, and I am happier here than anywhere in the world."

By this time Robert was perfectly at home. Before the dinner was ready he had not only told Dr. Anderson his present difficulty, but his whole story as far back as he could remember. The good man listened eagerly, gazed at the boy with more and more of interest, which deepened till his eyes glistened as he gazed, and when a ludicrous passage intervened, welcomed the laughter as an excuse for wiping them. When dinner was announced, he rose without a word and led the way to the dining-room. Robert followed, and they sat down to a meal simple enough for such a house, but which to Robert seemed a feast followed by a banquet. For after they had done eating, on the doctor's part a very meagre performance—they retired to his room again, and then Robert found the table covered with a snowy cloth, and wine and fruits arranged upon it.

It was far into the night before he rose to go home. As he passed through a thick rain of pin-point drops, he felt that although those cold granite houses, with glimmering dead face, stood like rows of sepulchres, he was in reality walking through an avenue of homes. Wet to the skin long before he reached Mrs. Fyvie's in the *auld toon*, he was notwithstanding as warm as the under side of a bird's wing. For he had

to sit down and write to his grandmother informing her that Dr. Anderson had employed him to copy for the printers a book of his upon the Medical Boards of India, and that as he was going to pay him for that and other work at a rate which would secure him ten shillings a week, it would be a pity to lose a year for the chance of getting a bursary next winter.

The doctor did want the manuscript copied; and he knew that the only chance of getting Mrs. Falconer's consent to Robert's receiving any assistance from him, was to make some business arrangement of the sort. He wrote to her the same night, and after mentioning the unexpected pleasure of Robert's visit, not only explained the advantage to himself of the arrangement he had proposed, but set forth the greater advantage to Robert, inasmuch as he would thus be able in some measure to keep a hold of him. He judged that although Mrs. Falconer had no great opinion of his religion, she would yet consider his influence rather on the side of good than otherwise in the case of a boy else abandoned to his own resources.

The end of it all was that his grandmother yielded, and Robert was straightway a Bejan, or Yellow-beak.

Three days had he been clothed in the red gown of the Aberdeen student, and had attended the Humanity and Greek class-rooms. On

the evening of the third day he was seated at his table preparing his Virgil for the next, when he found himself growing very weary, and no wonder, for, except the walk of a few hundred yards to and from the college, he had had no open air for those three days. It was raining in a persistent November fashion, and he thought of the sea, away through the dark and the rain, tossing uneasily. Should he pay it a visit? He sat for a moment,

This way and that dividing the swift mind,*

when his eye fell on his violin. He had been so full of his new position and its requirements, that he had not touched it since the session opened. Now it was just what he wanted. He caught it up eagerly, and began to play. The power of the music seized upon him, and he went on playing, forgetful of everything else, till a string broke. It was all too short for further use. Regardless of the rain or the depth of darkness to be traversed before he could find a music-shop, he caught up his cap, and went to rush from the house.

His door opened immediately on the top step of the stair, without any landing. There was a door opposite, to which likewise a few steps led

* Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur*.

Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc.

Æneid: IV. 285.

immediately up. The stairs from the two doors united a little below. So near were the doors that one might stride across the fork. The opposite door was open, and in it stood Eric Ericson.

CHAPTER VII.

ERIC ERICSON.

ROBERT sprang across the dividing chasm, clasped Ericson's hand in both of his, looked up into his face, and stood speechless. Ericson returned the salute with a still kindness —tender and still. His face was like a gray morning sky of summer from whose level cloud-fields rain will fall before noon.

"So it was you," he said, "playing the violin so well?"

"I was doin' my best," answered Robert. "But eh! Mr. Ericson, I wad hae dune better gin I had kent ye was hearkenin'."

"You couldn't do better than your best," returned Eric, smiling.

"Ay, but yer best micht aye grow better, ye ken," persisted Robert.

"Come into my room," said Ericson. "This is Friday night, and there is nothing but chapel to-morrow. So we'll have talk instead of work."

In another moment they were seated by a

tiny coal fire in a room one side of which was the slope of the roof, with a large, low skylight in it looking seawards. The sound of the distant waves, unheard in Robert's room, beat upon the drum of the skylight, through all the world of mist that lay between it and them—dimly, vaguely—but ever and again with a swell of gathered force, that made the distant tumult doubtful no more.

"I am sorry I have nothing to offer you," said Ericson.

"You remind me of Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate of the temple," returned Robert, attempting to speak English like the Northerner, but breaking down as his heart got the better of him. "Eh! Mr. Ericson, gin ye kent what it is to me to see the face o' ye, ye wadna speyk like that. Jist lat me sit an' leuk at ye. I want nae mair."

A smile broke up the cold, sad, gray light of the young eagle-face. Stern at once and gentle when in repose, its smile was as the summer of some lovely land where neither the heat nor the sun shall smite them. The youth laid his hand upon the boy's head, then withdrew it hastily, and the smile vanished like the sun behind a cloud. Robert saw it, and as if he had been David before Saul, rose instinctively and said,

"I'll gang for my fiddle.—Hoots! I hae broken ane o' the strings. We maun bide till the morn.

But I want nae fiddle mysel' whan I hear the great water oot there."

"You're young yet, my boy, or you might hear voices in that water—! I've lived in the sound of it all my days. When I can't rest at night, I hear a moaning and crying in the dark, and I lie and listen till I can't tell whether I'm a man or some God-forsaken sea in the sunless north."

"Sometimes I believe in naething but my fiddle," answered Robert.

"Yes, yes. But when it comes *into* you, my boy! You won't hear much music in the cry of the sea after that. As long as you've got it at arm's length, it's all very well. It's interesting then, and you can talk to your fiddle about it, and make poetry about it," said Ericson, with a smile of self-contempt. "But as soon as the real earnest comes that is all over. The sea-moan is the cry of a tortured world then. Its hollow bed is the cup of the world's pain, ever rolling from side to side and dashing over its lip. Of all that might be, ought to be, nothing to be had!—I could get music out of it once. Look here. I could trifle like that once."

He half rose, then dropped on his chair. But Robert's believing eyes justified confidence, and Ericson had never had any one to talk to. He rose again, opened a cupboard at his side, took out some papers, threw them on the table,

and, taking his hat, walked towards the door.

"Which of your strings is broken?" he asked.

"The third," answered Robert.

"I will get you one," said Ericson; and before Robert could reply he was down the stair. Robert heard him cough, then the door shut, and he was gone in the rain and fog.

Bewildered, unhappy, ready to fly after him, yet irresolute, Robert almost mechanically turned over the papers upon the little deal table. He was soon arrested by the following verses, headed

A NOONDAY MELODY.

Everything goes to its rest;
The hills are asleep in the noon;
And life is as still in its nest
As the moon when she looks on a moon
In the depths of a calm river's breast
As it steals through a midnight in June.

The streams have forgotten the sea
In the dream of their musical sound;
The sunlight is thick on the tree,
And the shadows lie warm on the ground—
So still, you may watch them and see
Every breath that awakens around.

The churchyard lies still in the heat,
With its handful of mouldering bone;
As still as the long stalk of wheat
In the shadow that sits by the stone,
As still as the grass at my feet
When I walk in the meadows alone.

The waves are asleep on the main,
And the ships are asleep on the wave;
And the thoughts are as still in my brain
As the echo that sleeps in the cave;
All rest from their labour and pain—
Then why should not I in my grave?

His heart ready to burst with a sorrow, admiration, and devotion, which no criticism interfered to qualify, Robert rushed out into the darkness, and sped, fleet-footed, along the only path which Ericson could have taken. He could not bear to be left in the house while his friend was out in the rain.

He was sure of joining him before he reached the new town, for he was fleet-footed, and there was a path only on one side of the way, so that there was no danger of passing him in the dark. As he ran he heard the moaning of the sea. There must be a storm somewhere, away in the deep spaces of its dark bosom, and its lips muttered of its far unrest. When the sun rose it would be seen misty and gray, tossing about under the one rain cloud that like a thinner ocean overspread the heavens—tossing like an animal that would fain lie down and be at peace but could not compose its unwieldy strength.

Suddenly Robert slackened his speed, ceased running, stood, gazed through the darkness at a figure a few yards before him.

An old wall, bowed out with age and the weight

behind it, flanked the road in this part. Doors in this wall, with a few steps in front of them and more behind, led up into gardens upon a slope, at the top of which stood the houses to which they belonged. Against one of these doors the figure stood with its head bowed upon its hands. When Robert was within a few feet, it descended and went on.

"Mr. Ericson!" exclaimed Robert. "Ye'll get yer deith gin ye stan' that gait i' the weet."

"Amen," said Ericson, turning with a smile that glimmered wan through the misty night. Then changing his tone, he went on: "What are you after, Robert?"

"You," answered Robert. "I cudna bide to be left my lane whan I micht be wi' ye a' the time—gin ye wad lat me. Ye war oot o' the hoose afore I weel kent what ye was aboot. It's no a fit nicht for ye to be oot at a', mair by token 'at ye're no the ablest to stan' cauld an' weet."

"I've stood a great deal of both in my time," returned Ericson; "but come along. We'll go and get that fiddle-string."

"Dinna ye think it wad be fully better to gang hame?" Robert ventured to suggest.

"What would be the use? I'm in no mood for Plato to-night," he answered, trying hard to keep from shivering.

"Ye hae an ill cauld upo' ye," persisted Robert; "an' ye maun be as weet 's a dishcloot."

Ericson laughed—a strange, hollow laugh.

"Come along," he said. "A walk will do me good. We'll get the string, and then you shall play to me. That will do me more good yet."

Robert ceased opposing him, and they walked together to the new town. Robert bought the string, and they set out, as he thought, to return.

But not yet did Ericson seem inclined to go home. He took the lead, and they emerged upon the quay.

There were not many vessels. One of them was the Antwerp tub, already known to Robert. He recognized her even in the dull light of the quay lamps. Her captain being a prudent and well-to-do Dutchman, never slept on shore; he preferred saving his money; and therefore, as the friends passed, Robert caught sight of him walking his own deck and smoking a long clay pipe before turning in.

"A fine nicht, capt'n," said Robert.

"It does rain," returned the captain. "Will you come on board and have one schnapps before you turn in?"

"I hae a frien' wi' me here," said Robert, feeling his way.

"Let him come and be welcomed."

Ericson making no objection, they went on board, and down into the neat little cabin, which was all the roomier for the straightness of the

vessel's quarter. The captain got out a square, coffin-shouldered bottle, and having respect to the condition of their garments, neither of the young men refused his hospitality, though Robert did feel a little compunction at the thought of the horror it would have caused his grandmother. Then the Dutchman got out his violin and asked Robert to play a Scotch air. But in the middle of it his eyes fell on Ericson, and he stopped at once. Ericson was sitting on a locker, leaning back against the side of the vessel: his eyes were open and fixed, and he seemed quite unconscious of what was passing. Robert fancied at first that the hollands he had taken had gone to his head, but he saw at the same moment, from his glass, that he had scarcely tasted the spirit. In great alarm they tried to rouse him, and at length succeeded. He closed his eyes, opened them again, rose up, and was going away.

"What's the maitter wi' ye, Mr. Ericson?" said Robert, in distress.

"Nothing, nothing," answered Ericson, in a strange voice. "I fell asleep I believe. It was very bad manners, captain. I beg your pardon. I believe I am overtired."

The Dutchman was as kind as possible, and begged Ericson to stay the night and occupy his berth. But he insisted on going home, although he was clearly unfit for such a walk.

They bade the skipper good-night, went on shore, and set out, Ericson leaning rather heavily upon Robert's arm. Robert led him up Marischal Street.

The steep ascent was too much for Ericson. He stood still upon the bridge and leaned over the wall of it. Robert stood beside, almost in despair about getting him home.

"Have patience with me, Robert," said Ericson, in his natural voice. "I shall be better presently. I don't know what's come to me. If I had been a Celt now, I should have said I had a touch of the second sight. But I am, as far as I know, pure Northman."

"What did you see?" asked Robert, with a strange feeling that miles of the spirit world, if one may be allowed such a contradiction in words, lay between him and his friend.

Ericson returned no answer. Robert feared he was going to have a relapse; but in a moment more he lifted himself up and bent again to the *brae.*

They got on pretty well till they were about the middle of the Gallowgate.

"I can't," said Ericson feebly, and half leaned half fell against the wall of a house.

"Come into this shop," said Robert. "I ken the man. He'll lat ye sit doon."

He managed to get him in. He was as pale as death. The bookseller got a chair, and he

sank into it. Robert was almost at his wit's end. There was no such thing as a cab in Aberdeen for years and years after the date of my story. He was holding a glass of water to Ericson's lips, —when he heard his name, in a low earnest whisper, from the door. There, round the door-cheek, peered the white face and red head of Shargar.

"Robert! Robert!" said Shargar.

"I hear ye," returned Robert coolly: he was too anxious to be surprised at anything. "Haud yer tongue. I'll come to ye in a minute."

Ericson recovered a little, refused the whisky offered by the bookseller, rose, and staggered out.

"If I were only home!" he said. "But where is home?"

"We'll try to mak ane," returned Robert. "Tak a haud o' me. Lay yer weicht upo' me. —Gin it warna for yer len'th, I cud cairry ye weel eneuch. Whaur 's that Shargar?" he muttered to himself, looking up and down the gloomy street.

But no Shargar was to be seen. Robert peered in vain into every dark court they crept past, till at length he all but came to the conclusion that Shargar was only "fantastical."

When they had reached the hollow, and were crossing the canal-bridge by Mount Hooly, Ericson's strength again failed him, and again

he leaned upon the bridge. Not had he leaned long before Robert found that he had fainted. In desperation he began to hoist the tall form upon his back, when he heard the quick step of a runner behind him and the words—

"Gie 'im to me, Robert; gie 'im to me. I can cairry 'im fine."

"Haud awa' wi' ye," returned Robert; and again Shargar fell behind.

For a few hundred yards he trudged along manfully; but his strength, more from the nature of his burden than its weight, soon gave way. He stood still to recover. The same moment Shargar was by his side again.

"Noo, Robert," he said, pleadingly.

Robert yielded, and the burden was shifted to Shargar's back.

How they managed it they hardly knew themselves; but after many changes they at last got Ericson home, and up to his own room. He had revived several times, but gone off again. In one of his faints, Robert undressed him and got him into bed. He had so little to cover him, that Robert could not help crying with misery. He himself was well provided, and would gladly have shared with Ericson, but that was hopeless. He could, however, make him warm in bed. Then leaving Shargar in charge, he sped back to the new town to Dr. Anderson. The doctor had his carriage out at once, wrapped

Robert in a plaid and brought him home with him.

Ericson came to himself, and seeing Shargar by his bedside, tried to sit up, asking feebly,

"Where am I?"

"In yer ain bed, Mr. Ericson," answered Shargar.

"And who are you?" asked Ericson again, bewildered.

Shargar's pale face no doubt looked strange under his crown of red hair.

"Ow! I'm naebody."

"You must be somebody, or else my brain's in a bad state," returned Ericson.

"Na, na, I'm naebody. Naething ava *(at all)*. Robert 'll be hame in ae meenit.—I'm Robert's tyke (*dog*)," concluded Shargar, with a sudden inspiration.

This answer seemed to satisfy Ericson, for he closed his eyes and lay still; nor did he speak again till Robert arrived with the doctor.

Poor food, scanty clothing, undue exertion in travelling to and from the university, hard mental effort against weakness, disquietude of mind, all borne with an endurance unconscious of itself, had reduced Eric Ericson to his present condition. Strength had given way at last, and he was now lying in the low border wash of a dead sea of fever.

The last of an ancient race of poor men, he

had no relative but a second cousin, and no means except the little he advanced him, chiefly in kind, to be paid for when Eric had a profession. This cousin was in the herring trade, and the chief assistance he gave him was to send him by sea, from Wick to Aberdeen, a small barrel of his fish every session. One herring, with two or three potatoes, formed his dinner as long as the barrel lasted. But at Aberdeen or elsewhere no one carried his head more erect than Eric Ericson—not from pride, but from simplicity and inborn dignity; and there was not a man during his curriculum more respected than he. An excellent classical scholar—as scholarship went in those days—he was almost the only man at the university who made his knowledge of Latin serve towards an acquaintance with the Romance languages. He had gained a small bursary, and gave lessons when he could.

But having no level channel for the outgoing of the waters of one of the tenderest hearts that ever lived, those waters had sought to break a passage upwards. Herein his experience corresponded in a considerable degree to that of Robert; only Eric's more fastidious and more instructed nature bred a thousand difficulties which he would meet one by one, whereas Robert, less delicate and more robust, would break through all the oppositions of theological science falsely

so called, and take the kingdom of heaven by force. But indeed the ruins of the ever falling temple of theology had accumulated far more heavily over Robert's well of life, than over that of Ericson: the obstructions to his faith were those that rolled from the disintegrating mountains of humanity, rather than the rubbish heaped upon it by the careless masons who take the quarry whence they hew the stones for the temple—built without hands eternal in the heavens.

When Dr. Anderson entered, Ericson opened his eyes wide. The doctor approached, and taking his hand began to feel his pulse. Then first Ericson comprehended his visit.

"I can't," he said, withdrawing his hand. "I am not so ill as to need a doctor."

"My dear sir," said Dr. Anderson, courteously, "there will be no occasion to put you to any pain."

"Sir," said Eric, "I have no money."

The doctor laughed.

"And I have more than I know how to make a good use of."

"I would rather be left alone," persisted Ericson, turning his face away.

"Now, my dear sir," said the doctor, with gentle decision, "that is very wrong. With what face can you offer a kindness when your turn comes, if you won't accept one yourself?"

Ericson held out his wrist. Dr. Anderson questioned, prescribed, and, having given directions, went home, to call again in the morning.

And now Robert was somewhat in the position of the old woman who "had so many children she didn't know what to do." Dr. Anderson ordered nourishment for Ericson, and here was Shargar upon his hands as well! Shargar and he could share, to be sure, and exist: but for Ericson—?

Not a word did Robert exchange with Shargar till he had gone to the druggist's and got the medicine for Ericson, who, after taking it, fell into a troubled sleep. Then, leaving the two doors open, Robert joined Sharger in his own room. There he made up a good fire, and they sat and dried themselves.

"Noo, Shargar," said Robert at length, "hoo cam *ye* here?"

His question was too like one of his grandmother's to be pleasant to Shargar.

"Dinna speyk to me that gait, Robert, or I'll cut my throat," he returned.

"Hoots! I maun ken a' aboot it," insisted Robert, but with much modified and partly convicted tone.

"Weel, I never said I wadna tell ye a' aboot it. The fac' 's this—an' I'm no' up to the leein' as I used to be, Robert: I hae tried it ower an' ower, but a lee comes rouch throw my thrap-

ple *(windpipe)* noo. Faith! I cud hae leed ance wi' onybody, barrin' the de'il. I winna lee. I'm nae leein'. The fac' 's jist this: I cudna bide ahin' ye ony langer."

"But what, the muckle lang-tailed deevil! am I to do wi' ye?" returned Robert, in real perplexity, though only pretended displeasure.

"Gie me something to ate, an' I'll tell ye what to do wi' me," answered Shargar. "I dinna care a scart *(scratch)* what it is."

Robert rang the bell and ordered some porridge, and while it was preparing, Shargar told his story—how having heard a rumour of apprenticeship to a tailor, he had the same night dropped from the gable window to the ground, and with three halfpence in his pocket had wandered and begged his way to Aberdeen, arriving with one halfpenny left.

"But what am I to do wi' ye?" said Robert once more, in as much perplexity as ever.

"Bide till I hae tellt ye, as I said I wad," answered Shargar. "Dinna ye think I'm the haveless (*careless and therefore helpless*) crater I used to be. I hae been in Aberdeen three days! Ay, an' I hae seen you ilka day in yer reid goon, an' richt braw it is. Luik ye here!"

He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out what amounted to two or three shillings, chiefly in coppers, which he exposed with triumph on the table.

"Whaur got ye a' that siller, man?" asked Robert.

"Here and there, I kenna whaur; but I hae gien the weicht o' 't for 't a' the same—rinnin' here an' rinnin' there, cairryin' boxes till an' frae the smacks, an' doin' a'thing whether they bade me or no. Yesterday mornin' I got thrippence by hingin' aboot the Royal afore the coches startit. I luikit a' up and doon the street till I saw somebody hine awa wi' a porkmanty. Till 'im I ran, an' he was an auld man, an' maist at the last gasp wi' the weicht o' 't, an' gae me 't to carry. An' wha duv ye think gae me a shillin' the verra first nicht?—Wha but my brither Sandy?"

"Lord Rothie?"

"Ay, faith. I kent him weel eneuch, but little he kent me. There he was upo' Black Geordie. He's turnin' auld noo."

"Yer brither?"

"Na. He's young eneuch for ony mischeef; but Black Geordie. What on earth gars him gang stravaguin' aboot upo' that deevil? I doobt he's a kelpie, or a hell-horse, or something no canny o' that kin'; for faith! brither Sandy's no ower canny himsel', I'm thinkin'. But Geordie—the aulder the waur set (*inclined*). An' sae I'm thinkin' wi' his maister."

"Did ye ever see yer father, Shargar?"

"Na. Nor I dinna want to see 'im. I'm

upo' my mither's side. But that's naething to the pint. A' that I want o' you 's to lat me come hame at nicht, an' lie upo' the flure here. I sweir I'll lie i' the street gin ye dinna lat me. I'll sleep as soun' 's Peter MacInnes whan Maccleary's preachin'. An' I winna ate muckle—I hae a dreidfu' pooer o' aitin'—an' a' 'at I gether I'll fess hame to you, to du wi' 't as ye like.—Man, I cairriet a heap o' things the day till the skipper o' that boat 'at ye gaed intil wi' Maister Ericson the nicht. He's a fine chiel' that skipper!"

Robert was astonished at the change that had passed upon Shargar. His departure had cast him upon his own resources, and allowed the individuality repressed by every event of his history, even by his worship of Robert, to begin to develop itself. Miserable for a few weeks, he had revived in the fancy that to work hard at school would give him some chance of rejoining Robert. Thence, too, he had watched to please Mrs. Falconer, and had indeed begun to buy golden opinions from all sorts of people. He had a hope in prospect. But into the midst fell the whisper of the apprenticeship like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. He fled at once.

"Weel, ye can hae my bed the nicht," said Robert, "for I maun sit up wi' Mr. Ericson."

"'Deed I'll hae naething o' the kin'. I'll sleep upo' the flure, or else upo' the door-stane.

Man, I'm no clean eneuch efter what I've come throu sin' I drappit frae the window-sill i' the ga'le-room. But jist len' me yer plaid, an' I'll sleep upo' the rug here as gin I war i' Paradees. An' faith, sae I am, Robert. Ye maun gang to yer bed some time the nicht forby (*besides*), or ye winna be fit for yer wark the morn. Ye can jist gie me a kick, an' I'll be up afore ye can gie me anither."

Their supper arrived from below, and, each on one side of the fire, they ate the porridge, conversing all the while about old times—for the youngest life has its old times, its golden age—and old adventures,—Dooble Sanny, Betty, &c. &c. There were but two subjects which Robert avoided—Miss St. John and the Bonnie Leddy. Shargar was at length deposited upon the little bit of hearthrug which adorned rather than enriched the room, with Robert's plaid of shepherd tartan around him, and an Ainsworth's dictionary under his head for a pillow.

"Man, I fin' mysel' jist like a muckle colley" (*sheep-dog*), he said. "Whan I close my een, I'm no sure 'at I'm no i' the inside o' yer auld luckie-daiddie's kilt. The Lord preserve me frae ever sic a fricht again as yer grannie an' Betty gae me the nicht they fand me in 't! I dinna believe it's in natur' to hae sic a fricht twise in ae lifetime. Sae I'll fa' asleep at ance, an' say nae mair—but as muckle o' my prayers as I

can min' upo' noo 'at grannie's no at my lug."

"Haud yer impidence, an' yer tongue thegither," said Robert. "Min' 'at my granny's been the best frien' ye ever had."

"'Cep' my ain mither," returned Shargar, with a sleepy doggedness in his tone.

During their conference, Ericson had been slumbering. Robert had visited him from time to time, but he had not awaked. As soon as Shargar was disposed of, he took his candle and sat down by him. He grew more uneasy. Robert guessed that the candle was the cause, and put it out. Ericson was quieter. So Robert sat in the dark.

But the rain had now ceased. Some upper wind had swept the clouds from the sky, and the whole world of stars was radiant over the earth and its griefs.

"O God, where art thou?" he said in his heart, and went to his own room to look out.

There was no curtain, and the blind had not been drawn down, therefore the earth looked in at the storm-window. The sea neither glimmered nor shone. It lay across the horizon like a low level cloud, out of which came a moaning. Was this moaning all of the earth, or was there trouble in the starry places too? thought Robert, as if already he had begun to suspect the truth from afar—that save in the secret place of the Most High, and in the heart that is hid with

the Son of Man in the bosom of the Father, there is trouble—a sacred unrest—everywhere —the moaning of a tide setting homewards, even towards the bosom of that Father.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HUMAN PROVIDENCE.

ROBERT kept himself thoroughly awake the whole night, and it was well that he had not to attend classes in the morning. As the gray of the world's reviving consciousness melted in at the window, the things around and within him looked and felt ghastly. Nothing is liker the gray dawn than the soul of one who has been watching by a sick bed all the long hours of the dark, except, indeed, it be the first glimmerings of truth on the mind lost in the dark of a godless life.

Ericson had waked often, and Robert had administered his medicine carefully. But he had been mostly between sleeping and waking, and had murmured strange words, whose passing shadows rather than glimmers roused the imagination of the youth as with messages from regions unknown.

As the light came he found his senses going,

and went to his own room again to get a book that he might keep himself awake by reading at the window. To his surprise Shargar was gone, and for a moment he doubted whether he had not been dreaming all that had passed between them the night before. His plaid was folded up and laid upon a chair, as if it had been there all night, and his Ainsworth was on the table. But beside it was the money Shargar had drawn from his pockets.

About nine o'clock Dr. Anderson arrived, found Ericson not so much worse as he had expected, comforted Robert, and told him he must go to bed.

"But I cannot leave Mr. Ericson," said Robert.

"Let your friend—what's his odd name?—watch him during the day."

"Shargar, you mean, sir. But that's his nickname. His rale name they say his mither says, is George Moray—wi' an *o* an' no a *u-r*.—Do you see, sir?" concluded Robert significantly.

"No, I don't," answered the doctor.

"They say he's a son o' the auld Markis's, that's it. His mither's a randy wife 'at gangs aboot the country—a gipsy they say. There's nae doobt aboot *her*. An' by a' accoonts the father's likly eneuch."

"And how on earth did you come to have such a questionable companion?"

"Shargar's as fine a crater as ever God made," said Robert warmly. "Ye'll alloo 'at God made him, doctor; though his father an' mither thochtna muckle aboot him or God either whan they got him atween them? An' Shargar couldna help it. It micht ha' been you or me for that maitter, doctor."

"I beg your pardon, Robert," said Dr. Anderson quietly, although delighted with the fervour of his young kinsman: "I only wanted to know how he came to be your companion."

"I beg *your* pardon, doctor—but I thoucht ye was some scunnert at it; an' I canna bide Shargar to be luikit doon upo'. Luik here," he continued, going to his box, and bringing out Shargar's little heap of coppers, in which two sixpences obscurely shone, "he brocht a' that hame last nicht, an' syne sleepit upo' the rug i' my room there. We'll want a' 'at he can mak an' me too afore we get Mr. Ericson up again."

"But ye haena tellt me yet," said the doctor, so pleased with the lad that he relapsed into the dialect of his youth, "hoo ye cam to forgather wi' 'im."

"I tellt ye a' aboot it, doctor. It was a' my granny's doin', God bless her—for weel he may, an' muckle she needs 't."

"Oh! yes; I remember now all your grandmother's part in the story," returned the doctor. "But I still want to know how he came here."

"She was gaein' to mak a taylor o' 'm; an' he jist ran awa', an' cam to me."

"It was too bad of him that—after all she had done for him."

"Ow, 'deed no, doctor. Even whan ye boucht a man an' paid for him, accordin' to the Jewish law, ye cudna mak a slave o' 'im for a'thegither, ohn him seekin' 't himsel'.—Eh! gin she could only get my father hame!" sighed Robert, after a pause.

"What should she want him home for?" asked Dr. Anderson, still making conversation.

"I didna mean hame to Rothieden. I believe she cud bide never seein' 'im again, gin only he wasna i' the ill place. She has awfu' notions aboot burnin' ill sowls for ever an' ever. But it's no hersel'. It's the wyte o' the ministers. Doctor, I do believe she wad gang an' be brunt hersel' wi' a great thanksgivin', gin it wad lat ony puir crater oot o' 't—no to say my father. An' I sair misdoobt gin mony o' them 'at pat it in her heid wad do as muckle. I'm some feared they're like Paul afore he was convertit: he wadna lift a stane himsel', but he likit weel to stan' oot by an' luik on."

A deep sigh, almost a groan, from the bed, reminded them that they were talking too much and too loud for a sick room. It was followed by the words, muttered, but articulate,

"What's the good when you don't know whether there's a God at all?"

"'Deed, that's verra true, Mr. Ericson," returned Robert. "I wish ye wad fin' oot an' tell me. I wad be blithe to hear what ye had to say anent it—gin it was *ay*, ye ken."

Ericson went on murmuring, but inarticulately now.

"This won't do at all, Robert, my boy," said Dr. Anderson. "You must not talk about such things with him, or indeed about anything. You must keep him as quiet as ever you can."

"I thocht he was comin' till himsel'," returned Robert. "But I will tak care, I assure ye, doctor. Only I'm feared I may fa' asleep the nicht, for I was dooms sleepy this mornin'."

"I will send Johnston as soon as I get home, and you must go to bed when he comes."

"'Deed, doctor, that winna do at a'. It wad be ower mony strange faces a'thegither. We'll get Mistress Fyvie to luik till 'im the day, an' Shargar canna work the morn, bein' Sunday. An' I'll gang to my bed for fear o' doin' waur, though I doobt I winna sleep i' the daylicht."

Dr. Anderson was satisfied, and went home—cogitating much. This boy, this cousin of his, made a vortex of good about him into which whoever came near it was drawn. He seemed at the same time quite unaware of anything worthy in his conduct. The good he did

sprung from some inward necessity, with just enough in it of the salt of choice to keep it from losing its savour. To these cogitations of Dr. Anderson, I add that there was no conscious exercise of religion in it—for there his mind was all at sea. Of course I believe notwithstanding that religion had much, I ought to say everything, to do with it. Robert had not yet found in God a reason for being true to his fellows; but, if God was leading him to be the man he became, how could any good results of this leading be other than religion? All good is of God. Robert began where he could. The first table was too high for him; he began with the second. If a man love his brother whom he hath seen, the love of God whom he hath not seen, is not very far off. These results in Robert were the first outcome of divine facts and influences—they were the buds of the fruit hereafter to be gathered in perfect devotion. God be praised by those who know religion to be the truth of humanity—its own truth that sets it free—not binds, and lops, and mutilates it! who see God to be the father of every human soul—the ideal Father, not an inventor of schemes, or the upholder of a court etiquette for whose use he has chosen to desecrate the name of *justice!*

To return to Dr. Anderson. I have had little opportunity of knowing his history in India.

He returned from it half-way down the hill of ife, sad, gentle, kind, and rich. Whence his sadness came, we need not inquire. Some woman out in that fervid land may have darkened his story—darkened it wronglessly, it may be, with coldness, or only with death. But to return home without wife to accompany him or child to meet him,—to sit by his riches like a man over a fire of straws in a Siberian frost; to know that old faces were gone, and old hearts changed, that the pattern of things in the heavens had melted away from the face of the earth, that the chill evenings of autumn were settling down into longer and longer nights, and that no hope lay any more beyond the mountains—surely this was enough to make a gentle-minded man sad, even if the individual sorrows of his history had gathered into gold and purple in the west. I say *west* advisedly. For we are journeying, like our globe, ever towards the east. Death and the west are behind us—ever behind us, and settling into the unchangeable.

It was natural that he should be interested in the fine promise of Robert, in whom he saw revived the hopes of his own youth, but in a nature at once more robust and more ideal. Where the doctor was refined, Robert was strong; where the doctor was firm with a firmness he had cultivated, Robert was imperious

with an imperiousness time would mellow; where the doctor was generous and careful at once, Robert gave his mite and forgot it. He was rugged in the simplicity of his truthfulness, and his speech bewrayed him as altogether of the people; but the doctor knew the hole of the pit whence he had been himself digged. All that would fall away as the spiky shell from the polished chestnut, and be reabsorbed in the growth of the grand cone-flowering tree, to stand up in the sun and wind of the years a very altar of incense. It is no wonder, I repeat, that he loved the boy, and longed to further his plans. But he was too wise to overwhelm him with a cataract of fortune instead of blessing him with the merciful dew of progress.

"The fellow will bring me in for no end of expense," he said, smiling to himself, as he drove home in his chariot. "The less he means it the more unconscionable he will be. There's that Ericson—but that isn't worth thinking of. I must do something for that queer protégé of his, though—that Shargar. The fellow is as good as a dog, and that's saying not a little for him. I wonder if he can learn—or if he takes after his father the marquis, who never could spell. Well, it is a comfort to have something to do worth doing. I did think of endowing a hospital; but I'm not sure that it isn't better to endow a good man than a hospital. I'll think

about it. I won't say anything about Shargar either, till I see how he goes on. I might give him a job, though, now and then. But where to fall in with him—prowling about after jobs?"

He threw himself back in his seat, and laughed with a delight he had rarely felt. He was a providence watching over the boys, who expected nothing of him beyond advice for Ericson! Might there not be a Providence that equally transcended the vision of men, shaping to nobler ends the blocked-out designs of their rough-hewn marbles?

His thoughts wandered back to his friend the Brahmin, who died longing for that absorption into deity which had been the dream of his life: might not the Brahmin find the grand idea shaped to yet finer issues than his aspiration had dared contemplate?—might he not inherit in the purification of his will such an absorption as should intensify his personality?

CHAPTER IX.

A HUMAN SOUL.

ERICSON lay for several weeks, during which time Robert and Shargar were his only nurses. They contrived, by abridging both rest and labour, to give him constant attendance. Shargar went to bed early and got up early, so as to let Robert have a few hours' sleep before his classes began. Robert again slept in the evening, after Shargar came home, and made up for the time by reading while he sat by his friend. Mrs. Fyvie's attendance was in requisition only for the hours when he had to be at lectures. By the greatest economy of means, consisting of what Shargar brought in by jobbing about the quay and the coach-offices, and what Robert had from Dr. Anderson for copying his manuscript, they contrived to procure for Ericson all that he wanted. The shopping of the two boys, in their utter ignorance of such delicacies as the doctor told them to get for him, the blunders they made as to the

shops at which they were to be bought, and the consultations they held, especially about the preparing of the prescribed nutriment, afforded them many an amusing retrospect in after years. For the house was so full of lodgers, that Robert begged Mrs. Fyvie to give herself no trouble in the matter. Her conscience, however, was uneasy, and she spoke to Dr. Anderson; but he assured her that she might trust the boys. What cooking they could not manage, she undertook cheerfully, and refused to add anything to the rent on Shargar's account.

Dr. Anderson watched everything, the two boys as much as his patient. He allowed them to work on, sending only the wine that was necessary from his own cellar. The moment the supplies should begin to fail, or the boys to look troubled, he was ready to do more. About Robert's perseverance he had no doubt: Shargar's faithfulness he wanted to prove.

Robert wrote to his grandmother to tell her that Shargar was with him, working hard. Her reply was somewhat cold and offended, but was inclosed in a parcel containing all Shargar's garments, and ended with the assurance that as long as he did well she was ready to do what she could.

Few English readers will like Mrs. Falconer; but her grandchild considered her one of the noblest women ever God made; and I, from

his account, am of the same mind. Her care was fixed

> To fill her odorous lamp with *deeds* of light,
> And hope that reaps not shame.

And if one must choose between the *how* and the *what*, let me have the *what*, come of the *how* what may. I know of a man so sensitive, that he shuts his ears to his sister's griefs, because it spoils his digestion to think of them.

One evening Robert was sitting by the table in Ericson's room. Dr. Anderson had not called that day, and he did not expect to see him now, for he had never come so late. He was quite at his ease, therefore, and busy with two things at once, when the doctor opened the door and walked in. I think it is possible that he came up quietly with some design of surprising him. He found him with a stocking on one hand, a darning needle in the other, and a Greek book open before him. Taking no apparent notice of him, he walked up to the bedside, and Robert put away his work. After his interview with his patient was over, the doctor signed to him to follow him to the next room. There Shargar lay on the rug already snoring. It was a cold night in December, but he lay in his under-clothing, with a single blanket round him.

"Good training for a soldier," said the doc-

tor; "and so was your work a minute ago, Robert."

"Ay," answered Robert, colouring a little; "I was readin' a bit o' the Anabasis."

The doctor smiled a far-off sly smile.

"I think it was rather the Katabasis, if one might venture to judge from the direction of your labours."

"Weel," answered Robert, "what wad ye hae me do? Wad ye hae me lat Mr. Ericson gang wi' holes i' the heels o' 's hose, whan I can mak them a' snod, an' learn my Greek at the same time? Hoots, doctor! dinna lauch at me. I was doin' nae ill. A body may please themsel's —whiles surely, ohn sinned."

"But it's such waste of time! Why don't you buy him new ones?"

"'Deed that's easier said than dune. I hae eneuch ado wi' my siller as 'tis; an' gin it warna for you, doctor, I *do* not ken what wad come o' 's; for ye see I hae no richt to come upo' my grannie for ither fowk. There wad be nae en' to that."

"But I could lend you the money to buy him some stockings."

"An' whan wad I be able to pay ye, do ye think, doctor? In anither warl' maybe, whaur the currency micht be sae different there wad be no possibility o' reckonin' the rate o' exchange. Na, na."

"But I will give you the money if you like."

"Na, na. You hae dune eneuch already, an' mony thanks. Siller's no sae easy come by to be wastit, as lang's a darn 'll do. Forbye, gin ye began wi' *his* claes, ye wadna ken whaur to haud; for it wad jist be the new claith upo' the auld garment: ye micht as weel new cleed him at ance."

"And why not if I choose, Mr. Falconer?"

"Speir ye that at *him*, an' see what ye'll get—a luik 'at wad fess a corbie (*carrion crow*) frae the lift *(sky)*. I wadna hae ye try that. Some fowk's poverty maun be han'let jist like a sair place, doctor. He canna weel compleen o' a bit darnin'. —He canna tak that ill," repeated Robert, in a tone that showed he yet felt some anxiety on the subject; "but new anes! I wadna like to be by whan he fand that oot. Maybe he micht tak them frae a wuman; but frae a man body! —na, na; I maun jist darn awa'. But I'll mak them dacent eneuch afore I hae dune wi' them. A fiddler has fingers."

The doctor smiled a pleased smile; but when he got into his carriage, again he laughed heartily.

The evening deepened into night. Robert thought Ericson was asleep. But he spoke.

"Who is that at the street door?" he said.

They were at the top of the house, and there was no window to the street. But Ericson's

senses were preternaturally acute, as is often the case in such illnesses.

"I dinna hear onybody," answered Robert.

"There was somebody," returned Ericson.

From that moment he began to be restless, and was more feverish than usual throughout the night.

Up to this time he had spoken little, was depressed with a suffering to which he could give no name—not pain, he said—but such that he could rouse no mental effort to meet it: his endurance was passive altogether. This night his brain was more affected. He did not rave, but often wandered; never spoke nonsense, but many words that would have seemed nonsense to ordinary people: to Robert they seemed inspired. His imagination, which was greater than any other of his fine faculties, was so roused that he talked in verse—probably verse composed before and now recalled. He would even pray sometimes in measured lines, and go on murmuring petitions, till the words of the murmur became undistinguishable, and he fell asleep. But even in his sleep he would speak; and Robert would listen in awe; for such words, falling from such a man, were to him as dim breaks of coloured light from the rainbow walls of the heavenly city.

"If God were *thinking* me," said Ericson, "ah! But if he be only *dreaming* me, I shall go mad."

Ericson's outside was like his own northern

clime—dark, gentle, and clear, with gray-blue seas, and a sun that seems to shine out of the past, and know nothing of the future. But within glowed a volcanic angel of aspiration, fluttering his half grown wings, and ever reaching towards the heights whence all things are visible, and where all passions are safe because true, that is divine. Iceland herself has her Hecla.

Robert listened with keenest ear. A mist of great meaning hung about the words his friend had spoken. He might speak more. For some minutes he listened in vain, and was turning at last towards his book in hopelessness, when he did speak yet again: Robert's ear soon detected the rhythmic motion of his speech.

"Come in the glory of thine excellence;
Rive the dense gloom with wedges of clear light;
And let the shimmer of thy chariot wheels
Burn through the cracks of night.—So slowly, Lord,
To lift myself to thee with hands of toil,
Climbing the slippery cliff of unheard prayer!
Lift up a hand among my idle days—
One beckoning finger. I will cast aside
The clogs of earthly circumstance, and run
Up the broad highways where the countless worlds
Sit ripening in the summer of thy love."

Breathless for fear of losing a word, Robert yet remembered that he had seen something like these words in the papers Ericson had given him

to read on the night when his illness began. When he had fallen asleep and silent, he searched and found the poem from which I give the following extracts. He had not looked at the papers since that night.

A PRAYER.

O Lord, my God, how long
Shall my poor heart pant for a boundless joy?
How long, O mighty Spirit, shall I hear
The murmur of Truth's crystal waters slide
From the deep caverns of their endless being,
But my lips taste not, and the grosser air
Choke each pure inspiration of thy will?

. . . . . .

I would be a wind,
Whose smallest atom is a viewless wing,
All busy with the pulsing life that throbs
To do thy bidding; yea, or the meanest thing
That has relation to a changeless truth,
Could I but be instinct with thee—each thought
The lightning of a pure intelligence,
And every act as the loud thunder-clap
Of currents warring for a vacuum.

. . . . . .

Lord, clothe me with thy truth as with a robe.
Purge me with sorrow. I will bend my head,
And let the nations of thy waves pass over,
Bathing me in thy consecrated strength.
And let the many-voiced and silver winds
Pass through my frame with their clear influence.
O save me—I am blind; lo! thwarting shapes
Wall up the void before, and thrusting out

Lean arms of unshaped expectation, beckon
Down to the night of all unholy thoughts.

. . . . . .

I have seen
Unholy shapes lop off my shining thoughts,
Which I had thought nursed in thine emerald light;
And they have lent me leathern wings of fear,
Of baffled pride and harrowing distrust;
And Godhead with its crown of many stars,
Its pinnacles of flaming holiness,
And voice of leaves in the green summer-time,
Has seemed the shadowed image of a self.
Then my soul blackened; and I rose to find
And grasp my doom, and cleave the arching deeps
Of desolation.

. . . . . .

O Lord, my soul is a forgotten well;
Clad round with its own rank luxuriance;
A fountain a kind sunbeam searches for,
Sinking the lustre of its arrowy finger
Through the long grass its own strange virtue *
Hath blinded up its crystal eye withal:
Make me a broad strong river coming down
With shouts from its high hills, whose rocky hearts
Throb forth the joy of their stability
In watery pulses from their inmost deeps,
And I shall be a vein upon thy world,
Circling perpetual from the parent deep.
O First and Last, O glorious all in all,
In vain my faltering human tongue would seek

* This line is one of many instances in which my reader will see both the carelessness of Ericson, and my religion towards his remains.

To shape the vesture of the boundless thought,
Summing all causes in one burning word;
Give me the spirit's living tongue of fire,
Whose only voice is in an attitude
Of keenest tension, bent back on itself
With a strong upward force; even as thy bow
Of bended colour stands against the north,
And, in an attitude to spring to heaven,
Lays hold of the kindled hills.

Most mighty One,
Confirm and multiply my thoughts of good;
Help me to wall each sacred treasure round
With the firm battlements of special action.
Alas my holy, happy thoughts of thee
Make not perpetual nest within my soul,
But like strange birds of dazzling colours stoop
The trailing glories of their sunward speed,
For one glad moment filling my blasted boughs
With the sunshine of their wings.

Make me a forest
Of gladdest life, wherein perpetual spring
Lifts up her leafy tresses in the wind.

Lo! now I see
Thy trembling starlight sit among my pines,
And thy young moon slide down my arching boughs
With a soft sound of restless eloquence.
And I can feel a joy as when thy hosts
Of trampling winds, gathering in maddened bands,
Roar upward through the blue and flashing day
Round my still depths of uncleft solitude.

Hear me, O Lord,
When the black night draws down upon my soul,
And voices of temptation darken down

The misty wind, slamming thy starry doors,
With bitter jests. "Thou fool!" they seem to say,
"Thou hast no seed of goodness in thee; all
Thy nature hath been stung right through and through.
Thy sin hath blasted thee, and made thee old.
Thou hadst a will, but thou hast killed it—dead—
And with the fulsome garniture of life
Built out the loathsome corpse. Thou art a child
Of night and death, even lower than a worm.
Gather the skirts up of thy shadowy self,
And with what resolution thou hast left,
Fall on the damned spikes of doom."

O take me like a child,
If thou hast made me for thyself, my God,
And lead me up thy hills: I shall not fear
So thou wilt make me pure, and beat back sin
With the terrors of thine eye.

. . . . . .

Lord, hast thou sent
Thy moons to mock us with perpetual hope?
Lighted within our breasts the love of love,
To make us ripen for despair, my God?
Oh, dost thou hold each individual soul
Strung clear upon thy flaming rods of purpose?
Or does thine inextinguishable will
Stand on the steeps of night with lifted hand,
Filling the yawning wells of monstrous space
With mixing thought—drinking up single life
As in a cup? and from the rending folds
Of glimmering purpose, do all thy navied stars
Slide through the gloom with mystic melody,
Like wishes on a brow? Oh, is my soul,
Hung like a dew-drop in thy grassy ways,
Drawn up again into the rack of change,

Even through the lustre which created it?
O mighty one, thou wilt not smite me through
With scorching wrath, because my spirit stands
Bewildered in thy circling mysteries.

. . . . . .

Here came the passage Robert had heard him repeat, and then the following paragraph:

Lord, thy strange mysteries come thickening down
Upon my head like snow-flakes, shutting out
The happy upper fields with chilly vapour.
Shall I content my soul with a weak sense
Of safety? or feed my ravenous hunger with
Sore-purged hopes, that are not hopes, but fears
Clad in white raiment?
I know not but some thin and vaporous fog,
Fed with the rank excesses of the soul,
Mocks the devouring hunger of my life
With satisfaction: lo! the noxious gas
Feeds the lank ribs of gaunt and ghastly death
With double emptiness, like a balloon,
Borne by its lightness o'er the shining lands,
A wonder and a laughter.
The creeds lie in the hollow of men's hearts
Like festering pools glassing their own corruption;
The slimy eyes stare up with dull approval,
And answer not when thy bright starry feet
Move on the watery floors.

. . . . . .

O wilt thou hear me when I cry to thee?
I am a child lost in a mighty forest;
The air is thick with voices, and strange hands
Reach through the dusk and pluck me by the skirts.
There is a voice which sounds like words from home,

But, as I stumble on to reach it, seems
To leap from rock to rock. Oh! if it is
Willing obliquity of sense, descend,
Heal all my wanderings, take me by the hand,
And lead me homeward through the shadows.
Let me not by my wilful acts of pride
Block up the windows of thy truth, and grow
A wasted, withered thing, that stumbles on
Down to the grave with folded hands of sloth
And leaden confidence.

. . . . . .

There was more of it, as my type indicates. Full of faults, I have given so much to my reader, just as it stood upon Ericson's blotted papers, the utterance of a true soul "crying for the light." But I give also another of his poems, which Robert read at the same time, revealing another of his moods when some one of the clouds of holy doubt and questioning love which so often darkened his sky, did at length

Turn forth her silver lining on the night:

SONG.

They are blind and they are dead:
We will wake them as we go;
There are words have not been said;
There are sounds they do not know.
We will pipe and we will sing—
With the music and the spring,
Set their hearts a wondering.

They are tired of what is old:
We will give it voices new;
For the half hath not been told
Of the Beautiful and True.
Drowsy eyelids shut and sleeping!
Heavy eyes oppressed with weeping!
Flashes through the lashes leaping!

Ye that have a pleasant voice,
Hither come without delay;
Ye will never have a choice
Like to that ye have to-day:
Round the wide world we will go,
Singing through the frost and snow,
Till the daisies are in blow.

Ye that cannot pipe or sing,
Ye must also come with speed;
Ye must come and with you bring
Weighty words and weightier deed:
Helping hands and loving eyes,
These will make them truly wise—
Then will be our Paradise.

As Robert read, the sweetness of the rhythm seized upon him, and, almost unconsciously, he read the last stanza aloud. Looking up from the paper with a sigh of wonder and delight—there was the pale face of Ericson gazing at him from the bed! He had risen on one arm, looking like a dead man called to life against his will, who found the world he had left already stranger to him than the one into which he had but peeped.

"Yes," he murmured; "I could say that once. It's all gone now. Our world is but our moods."

He fell back on his pillow. After a little, he murmured again:

"I might fool myself with faith again. So it is better not. I would not be fooled. To believe the false and be happy is the very belly of misery. To believe the true and be miserable, is to be true—and miserable. If there is no God, let me know it. I will not be fooled. I will not believe in a God that does not exist. Better be miserable because I *am*, and cannot help it.—O God!"

Yet in his misery, he cried upon God.

These words came upon Robert with such a shock of sympathy, that they destroyed his consciousness for the moment, and when he *thought* about them, he almost doubted if he had heard them. He rose and approached the bed. Ericson lay with his eyes closed, and his face contorted as by inward pain. Robert put a spoonful of wine to his lips. He swallowed it, opened his eyes, gazed at the boy as if he did not know him, closed them again, and lay still.

Some people take comfort from the true eyes of a dog—and a precious thing to the loving heart is the love of even a dumb animal.* What

* Why should Sir Walter Scott, who felt the death of

comfort then must not such a boy as Robert have been to such a man as Ericson? Often and often when he was lying asleep as Robert thought, he was watching the face of his watcher. When the human soul is not yet able to receive the vision of the God-Man, God sometimes—might I not say always?—reveals himself, or at least gives himself, in some human being whose face, whose hands are the ministering angels of his unacknowledged presence, to keep alive the fire of love on the altar of the heart, until God hath provided the sacrifice—that is, until the soul is strong enough to draw it from the concealing thicket. Here were two, each thinking that God had forsaken him, or was not to be found by him, and each the very love of God, commissioned to tend the other's heart. In each was he present to the other. The one thought himself the happiest of mortals in waiting upon his big brother, whose least smile was joy enough for one day; the other wondered at the unconscious goodness of the boy, and while he gazed at his ruddy-brown face, believed in God.

Camp, his bull-terrier, so much that he declined a dinner engagement in consequence, say on the death of his next favourite, a grayhound bitch—"Rest her body, since I dare not say soul!"? Where did he get that *dare not?* Is it well that the daring of genius should be circumscribed by an unbelief so common-place as to be capable only of subscription?

For some time after Ericson was taken ill, he was too depressed and miserable to ask how he was cared for. But by slow degrees it dawned upon him that a heart deep and gracious, like that of a woman, watched over him. True, Robert was uncouth, but his uncouthness was that of a half-fledged angel. The heart of the man and the heart of the boy were drawn close together. Long before Ericson was well he loved Robert enough to be willing to be indebted to him, and would lie pondering—not how to repay him, but how to return his kindness.

How much Robert's ambition to stand well in the eyes of Miss St John contributed to his progress I can only imagine; but certainly his ministrations to Ericson did not interfere with his Latin and Greek. I venture to think that they advanced them, for difficulty adds to result, as the ramming of the powder sends the bullet the further. I have heard, indeed, that when a carrier wants to help his horse up hill, he sets a boy on his back.

Ericson made little direct acknowledgment to Robert: his tones, his gestures, his looks, all thanked him; but he shrunk from words, with the maidenly shamefacedness that belongs to true feeling. He would even assume the authoritative, and send him away to his studies, but Robert knew how to hold his own. The relation

of elder brother and younger was already established between them. Shargar likewise took his share in the love and the fellowship, worshipping in that he believed.

CHAPTER X.

A FATHER AND A DAUGHTER.

THE presence at the street door of which Ericson's over-acute sense had been aware on a past evening, was that of Mr. Lindsay, walking home with bowed back and bowed head from the college library, where he was privileged to sit after hours as long as he pleased over books too big to be comfortably carried home to his cottage. He had called to inquire after Ericson, whose acquaintance he had made in the library, and cultivated until almost any Friday evening Ericson was to be found seated by Mr. Lindsay's parlour-fire.

As he entered the room that same evening, a young girl raised herself from a low seat by the fire to meet him. There was a faint rosy flush on her cheek, and she held a volume in her hand as she approached her father. They did not kiss: kisses were not a legal tender in Scotland then: possibly there has been a depreciation in the value of them since they were.

"I've been to ask after Mr. Ericson," said Mr. Lindsay.

"And how is he?" asked the girl.

"Very poorly indeed," answered her father.

"I am sorry. You'll miss him, papa."

"Yes, my dear. Tell Jenny to bring my lamp."

"Won't you have your tea first, papa?"

"Oh yes, if it's ready."

"The kettle has been boiling for a long time, but I wouldn't make the tea till you came in."

Mr. Lindsay was an hour later than usual, but Mysie was quite unaware of that: she had been absorbed in her book, too much absorbed even to ring for better light than the fire afforded. When her father went to put off his long, bifurcated greatcoat, she returned to her seat by the fire, and forgot to make the tea. It was a warm, snug room, full of dark, old-fashioned, spider-legged furniture; low-pitched, with a bay-window, open like an ear to the cries of the German Ocean at night, and like an eye during the day to look out upon its wide expanse. This ear or eye was now curtained with dark crimson, and the room, in the firelight, with the young girl for a soul to it, affected one like an ancient book in which he reads his own latest thought.

Mysie was nothing over the middle height—delicately fashioned, at once slender and round,

with extremities neat as buds. Her complexion was fair, and her face pale, except when a flush, like that of a white rose, overspread it. Her cheek was lovelily curved, and her face rather short. But at first one could see nothing for her eyes. They were the largest eyes; and their motion reminded one of those of Sordello in the Purgatorio:

E nel muover degli occhi onesta e tarda:

they seemed too large to move otherwise than with a slow turning like that of the heavens. At first they looked black, but if one ventured inquiry, which was as dangerous as to gaze from the battlements of Elsinore, he found them a not very dark brown. In her face, however, especially when flushed, they had all the effect of what Milton describes as

Quel sereno fulgor d'amabil nero.

A wise observer would have been a little troubled in regarding her mouth. The sadness of a morbid sensibility hovered about it—the sign of an imagination wrought upon from the centre of self. Her lips were neither thin nor compressed—they closed lightly, and were richly curved; but there was a mobility almost tremulous about the upper lip that gave sign of the possibility of such an oscillation of feeling as might cause the whole fabric of her nature to rock dangerously.

The moment her father re-entered, she started from her stool on the rug, and proceeded to make the tea. Her father took no notice of her neglect, but drew a chair to the table, helped himself to a piece of oat-cake, hastily loaded it with as much butter as it could well carry, and while eating it forgot it and everything else in the absorption of a volume he had brought in with him from his study, in which he was tracing out some genealogical thread of which he fancied he had got a hold. Mysie was very active now, and lost the expression of *far-off-ness* which had hitherto characterized her countenance; till, having poured out the tea, she too plunged at once into her novel, and, like her father, forgot everything and everybody near her.

Mr. Lindsay was a mild, gentle man, whose face and hair seemed to have grown gray together. He was very tall, and stooped much. He had a mouth of much sensibility, and clear blue eyes, whose light was rarely shed upon any one within reach except his daughter—they were so constantly bent downwards, either on the road as he walked, or on his book as he sat. He had been educated for the church, but had never risen above the position of a parish schoolmaster. He had little or no impulse to utterance, was shy, genial, and, save in reading, indolent. Ten years before this point of my history he had been taken up by an active lawyer

in Edinburgh, from information accidentally supplied by Mr. Lindsay himself, as the next heir to a property to which claim was laid by the head of a county family of wealth. Probabilities were altogether in his favour, when he gave up the contest upon the offer of a comfortable annuity from the disputant. To leave his schooling and his possible estate together, and sit down comfortably by his own fireside, with the means of buying books, and within reach of a good old library—that of King's College by preference—was to him the sum of all that was desirable. The income offered him was such that he had no fear of laying aside enough for his only child, Mysie; but both were so ill-fitted for saving, he from looking into the past, she from looking into—what shall I call it? I can only think of negatives—what was neither past, present, nor future, neither material nor eternal, neither imaginative in any true sense, nor actual in any sense, that up to the present hour there was nothing in the bank, and only the money for impending needs in the house. He could not be called a man of learning; he was only a great bookworm; for his reading lay all in the nebulous regions of history. Old family records, wherever he could lay hold upon them, were his favourite dishes; old, musty books, that looked as if they knew something everybody else had forgotten, made his eyes gleam, and

his white taper-fingered hand tremble with eagerness. With such a book in his grasp he saw something ever beckoning him on, a dimly precious discovery, a wonderful fact just the shape of some missing fragment in the mosaic of one of his pictures of the past. To tell the truth, however, his discoveries seldom rounded themselves into pictures, though many fragments of the minutely dissected map would find their places, whereupon he rejoiced like a mild giant refreshed with soda-water. But I have already said more about him than his place justifies; therefore, although I could gladly linger over the portrait, I will leave it. He had taught his daughter next to nothing. Being his child, he had the vague feeling that she inherited his wisdom, and that what he knew she knew. So she sat reading novels, generally trashy ones, while he knew no more of what was passing in her mind than of what the Admirable Crichton might, at the moment, be disputing with the angels.

I would not have my reader suppose that Mysie's mind was corrupted. It was so simple and childlike, leaning to what was pure, and looking up to what was noble, that anything directly bad in the books she happened—for it was all hap-hazard—to read, glided over her as a black cloud may glide over a landscape, leaving it sunny as before.

I cannot therefore say, however, that she was nothing the worse. If the darkening of the sun keep the fruits of the earth from growing, the earth is surely the worse, though it be blackened by no deposit of smoke. And where good things do not grow, the wild and possibly noxious will grow more freely. There may be no harm in the yellow tanzie—there is much beauty in the red poppy; but they are not good for food. The result in Mysie's case would be this—not that she would call evil good and good evil, but that she would take the beautiful for the true and the outer shows of goodness for goodness itself—not the worst result, but bad enough, and involving an awful amount of suffering and possibly of defilement. He who thinks to climb the hill of happiness thus, will find himself floundering in the blackest bog that lies at the foot of its precipices. I say *he*, not *she*, advisedly. All will acknowledge it of the woman: it is as true of the man, though he may get out easier. Will he? I say, checking myself. I doubt it much. In the world's eye, yes; but in God's? Let the question remain unanswered.

When he had eaten his toast, and drunk his tea, apparently without any enjoyment, Mr. Lindsay rose with his book in his hand, and withdrew to his study.

He had not long left the room when Mysie

was startled by a loud knock at the back door, which opened on a lane, leading along the top of the hill. But she had almost forgotten it again, when the door of the room opened, and a gentleman entered without any announcement—for Jennie had never heard of the custom. When she saw him, Mysie started from her seat, and stood in visible embarrassment. The colour went and came on her lovely face, and her eyelids grew very heavy. She had never seen the visitor before: whether he had ever seen her before, I cannot certainly say. She felt herself trembling in his presence, while he advanced with perfect composure. He was a man no longer young, but in the full strength and show of manhood—the Baron of Rothie. Since the time of my first description of him, he had grown a moustache, which improved his countenance greatly, by concealing his upper lip with its tusky curves. On a girl like Mysie, with an imagination so cultivated, and with no opportunity of comparing its fancies with reality, such a man would make an instant impression.

"I beg your pardon, Miss—Lindsay, I presume?—for intruding upon you so abruptly. I expected to see your father—not one of the graces."

She blushed all the colour of her blood now. The baron was quite enough like the hero of

whom she had just been reading to admit of her imagination jumbling the two. Her book fell. He lifted it and laid it on the table. She could not speak even to thank him. Poor Mysie was scarcely more than sixteen.

"May I wait here till your father is informed of my visit?" he asked.

Her only answer was to drop again upon her low stool.

Now Jenny had left it to Mysie to acquaint her father with the fact of the baron's presence; but before she had time to think of the necessity of doing something, he had managed to draw her into conversation. He was as great a hypocrite as ever walked the earth, although he flattered himself that he was none, because he never pretended to cultivate that which he despised—namely, religion. But he was a hypocrite nevertheless; for the falser he knew himself, the more honour he judged it to persuade women of his truth.

It is unnecessary to record the slight, graceful, marrowless talk into which he drew Mysie, and by which he both bewildered and bewitched her. But at length she rose, admonished by her inborn divinity, to seek her father. As she passed him, the baron took her hand and kissed it. She might well tremble. Even such contact was terrible. Why? Because there was no love in it. When the sense of beauty

which God had given him that he might worship, awoke in Lord Rothie, he did not worship, but devoured, that he might, as he thought, possess! The poison of asps was under those lips. His kiss was as a kiss from the grave's mouth, for his throat was an open sepulchre. This was all in the past, reader. Baron Rothie was a foam-flake of the court of the Prince Regent. There are no such men now-a-days! It is a shame to speak of such, *and therefore they are not!* Decency has gone so far to abolish virtue. Would to God that a writer could be decent *and honest!* St. Paul counted it a shame to speak of some things, and yet he did speak of them—because those to whom he spoke *did* them.

Lord Rothie had, in five minutes, so deeply interested Mr. Lindsay in a question of genealogy, that he begged his lordship to call again in a few days, when he hoped to have some result of research to communicate.

One of the antiquarian's weaknesses, cause and result both of his favourite pursuits, was an excessive reverence for rank. Had its claims been founded on mediated revelation, he could not have honoured it more. Hence when he communicated to his daughter the name of their visitor, it was "with bated breath and whispering humbleness," which deepened greatly the impression made upon her by the presence and

conversation of the baron. Mysie was in danger.

Shargar was late that evening, for he had a job that detained him. As he handed over his money to Robert, he said,

"I saw Black Geordie the nicht again, stan'in' at a back door, an' Jock Mitchell, upo' Reid Rorie, haudin' him."

"Wha's Jock Mitchell?" asked Robert.

"My brither Sandy's ill-faured groom," answered Shargar. "Whatever mischeef Sandy's up till, Jock comes in i' the heid or tail o' 't."

"I wonner what he's up till noo."

"Faith! nae guid. But I aye like waur to meet Sandy by himsel' upo' that reekit deevil o' his. Man, it's awfu' whan Black Geordie turns the white o' 's ee, an' the white o' 's teeth upo' ye. It's a' the white 'at there is about 'im."

"Wasna yer brither i' the airmy, Shargar?"

"Ow, 'deed ay. They tell me he was at Watterloo. He's a cornel, or something like that."

"Wha tellt ye a' that?"

"My mither whiles," answered Shargar.

CHAPTER XI.

ROBERT'S VOW.

ERICSON was recovering slowly. He could sit up in bed the greater part of the day, and talk about getting out of it. He was able to give Robert an occasional help with his Greek, and to listen with pleasure to his violin. The night-watching grew less needful, and Ericson would have dispensed with it willingly, but Robert would not yet consent.

But Ericson had seasons of great depression, during which he could not away with music, or listen to the words of the New Testament. During one of these Robert had begun to read a chapter to him, in the faint hope that he might draw some comfort from it.

"Shut the book," he said. "If it were the word of God to men, it would have brought its own proof with it."

"Are ye sure it hasna?" asked Robert.

"No," answered Ericson. "But why should a fellow that would give his life—that's not

much, but it's all *I've* got—to believe in God, not be able? Only I confess *that* God in the New Testament wouldn't satisfy me. There's no help. I must just die, and go and see.—She'll be left without anybody. What does it matter? She would not mind a word I said. And the God they talk about will just let her take her own way. He always does."

He had closed his eyes and forgotten that Robert heard him. He opened them now, and fixed them on him with an expression that seemed to ask, "Have I been saying anything I ought not?"

Robert knelt by the bedside, and said, slowly, with strongly repressed emotion.

"Mr. Ericson, I sweir by God, gin there *be* ane, that gin ye dee, I'll tak up what ye lea' ahin' ye. Gin there be onybody ye want luikit efter, I'll luik efter her. I'll do what I can for her to the best o' my abeelity, sae help me God—aye savin' what I maun do for my ain father, gin he be in life, to fess *(bring)* him back to the richt gait, gin there be a richt gait. Sae ye can think aboot whether there's onything ye wad like to lippen till me."

A something grew in Ericson's eyes as Robert spoke. Before he had finished, they beamed on the boy.

"I think there must be a God somewhere after all," he said, half soliloquizing. "I should be

sorry you hadn't a God, Robert. Why should I wish it for your sake? How could I want one for myself if there never was one? If a God had nothing to do with my making, why should I feel that nobody but God can set things right? Ah! but he must be such a God as I could imagine—altogether, absolutely true and good. If we came out of nothing, we could not invent the idea of a God—could we, Robert? Nothing would be our God. If we come from God, nothing is more natural, nothing *so* natural, as to want him, and when we haven't got him, to try to find him.—What if he should be in us after all, and working in us this way? just this very way of crying out after him?"

"Mr. Ericson," cried Robert, "dinna say ony mair 'at ye dinna believe in God. Ye *duv* believe in 'im—mair, I'm thinkin', nor onybody 'at I ken, 'cep', maybe, my grannie—only hers is a some queer kin' o' a God to believe in. I dinna think I cud ever manage to believe in *him* mysel'."

Ericson sighed and was silent. Robert remained kneeling by his bedside, happier, clearer-headed, and more hopeful than he had ever been. What if all was right at the heart of things—right, even as a man, if he could understand, would say was right; right, so that a man who understood in part could believe it to be ten times more right than he did understand!

Vaguely, dimly, yet joyfully, Robert saw something like this in the possibility of things. His heart was full, and the tears filled his eyes. Ericson spoke again.

"I have felt like that often for a few moments," he said; "but always something would come and blow it away. I remember one spring morning—but if you will bring me that bundle of papers, I will show you what, if I can find it, will let you understand—"

Robert rose, went to the cupboard, and brought the pile of loose leaves. Ericson turned them over, and, Robert was glad to see, now and then sorted them a little. At length he drew out a sheet, carelessly written, carelessly corrected, and hard to read.

"It is not finished, or likely to be," he said, as he put the paper in Robert's hand.

"Won't you read it to me yourself, Mr. Ericson?" suggested Robert.

"I would sooner put it in the fire," he answered—"it's fate, anyhow. I don't know why I haven't burnt them all long ago.—Rubbish, and diseased rubbish! Read it yourself, or leave it."

Eagerly Robert took it, and read. The following was the best he could make of it:

Oh that a wind would call
From the depths of the leafless wood!
Oh that a voice would fall
On the ear of my solitude!

Far away is the sea,
With its sound and its spirit-tone:
Over it white clouds flee,
But I am alone, alone.

Straight and steady and tall
The trees stand on their feet;
Fast by the old stone wall
The moss grows green and sweet;
But my heart is full of fears,
For the sun shines far away;
And they look in my face through tears,
And the light of a dying day.

My heart was glad last night,
As I pressed it with my palm;
Its throb was airy and light
As it sang some spirit-psalm;
But it died away in my breast
As I wandered forth to-day—
As a bird sat dead on its nest,
While others sang on the spray.

O weary heart of mine,
Is there ever a truth for thee?
Will ever a sun outshine
But the sun that shines on me?
Away, away through the air
The clouds and the leaves are blown;
And my heart hath need of prayer,
For it sitteth alone, alone.

And Robert looked with sad reverence at Ericson,—nor ever thought that there was one who, in the face of the fact, and in recognition of it, had dared say, "Not a sparrow shall fall on the

ground without your Father." The sparrow does fall—but he who sees it is yet the Father.

And we know only the fall, and not the sparrow.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GRANITE CHURCH.

THE next day was Sunday. Robert sat, after breakfast, by his friend's bed.

"You haven't been to church for a long time, Robert: wouldn't you like to go to-day?" said Ericson.

"I dinna want to lea' you, Mr. Ericson; I can bide wi' ye a' day the day, an' that's better nor goin' to a' the kirks in Aberdeen."

"I should like you to go to-day, though; and see if, after all, there may not be a message for us. If the church be the house of God, as they call it, there should be, now and then at least, some sign of a pillar of fire about it, some indication of the presence of God whose house it is. I wish you would go and see. I haven't been to church for a long time, except to the college-chapel, and I never saw anything more than a fog there."

"Michtna the fog be the torn-edge like, o' the cloody pillar?" suggested Robert.

"Very likely," assented Ericson; "for, whatever truth there may be in christianity, I'm pretty sure the mass of our clergy have never got beyond Judaism. They hang on about the skirts of that cloud for ever."

"Ye see, they think as lang 's they see the fog, they hae a grup o' something. But they canna get a grup o' the glory that excelleth, for *it*'s not to luik at, but to lat ye see a' thing."

Ericson regarded him with some surprise. Robert hastened to be honest.

"It's no that I ken onything aboot it, Mr. Ericson. I was only bletherin' (*talking nonsense*) —rizzonin' frae the twa symbols o' the cloud an' the fire—kennin' nothing aboot the thing itsel'. I'll awa' to the kirk, an' see what it's like. Will I gie ye a buik afore I gang?"

"No, thank you. I'll just lie quiet till you come back—if I can."

Robert instructed Shargar to watch for the slightest sound from the sick-room, and went to church.

As he approached the granite cathedral, the only one in the world, I presume, its stern solidity, so like the country and its men, laid hold of his imagination for the first time. No doubt the necessity imposed by the unyielding material had its share, and that a large one, in the character of the building: whence else that simplest of west windows, six lofty, narrow

slits of light, parted by granite shafts of equal width, filling the space between the corner buttresses of the nave, and reaching from door to roof? whence else the absence of tracery in the windows—except the severely gracious curves into which the mullions divide?—But this cause could not have determined those towers, so strong that they might have borne their granite weight soaring aloft, yet content with the depth of their foundation, and aspiring not. The whole aspect of the building is an outcome, an absolute blossom of the northern nature.

There is but the nave of the church remaining. About 1680, more than a century after the Reformation, the great tower fell, destroying the choir, chancel, and transept, which have never been rebuilt. May the reviving faith of the nation in its own history, and God at the heart of it, lead to the restoration of this grand old monument of the belief of their fathers. Deformed as the interior then was with galleries, and with Gavin Dunbar's flat ceiling, an awe fell upon Robert as he entered it. When in after years he looked down from between the pillars of the gallery, that creeps round the church through the thickness of the wall, like an artery, and recalled the service of this Sunday morning, he felt more strongly than ever that such a faith had not reared that cathedral. The service was like the church only as a dead body is like a

man. There was no fervour in it, no aspiration. The great central tower was gone.

That morning prayers and sermon were philosophically dull, and respectable as any after-dinner speech. Nor could it well be otherwise: one of the favourite sayings of its minister was, that a clergyman is nothing but a moral policeman. As such, however, he more resembled one of Dogberry's watch. He could not even preach hell with any vigour; for as a gentleman he recoiled from the vulgarity of the doctrine, yielding only a few feeble words on the subject as a sop to the Cerberus that watches over the dues of the Bible—quite unaware that his notion of the doctrine had been drawn from the Æneid, and not from the Bible.

"Well, have you got anything, Robert?" asked Ericson, as he entered his room.

"Nothing," answered Robert.

"What was the sermon about?"

"It was all to prove that God is a benevolent being."

"Not a devil, that is," answered Ericson. "Small consolation that."

"Sma' eneuch," responded Robert. "I cudna help thinkin' I kent mony a tyke *(dog)* that God had made wi' mair o' what I wad ca' the divine natur' in him nor a' that Dr. Soulis made oot to be in God himsel'. He had no ill intentions wi' us—it amuntit to that. He wasna ill-willy, as

the bairns say. But the doctor had some sair wark, I thoucht, to mak that oot, seein' we war a' the children o' wrath, accordin' to him, born in sin, and inheritin' the guilt o' Adam's first trespass. I dinna think Dr. Soulis cud say that God had dune the best he cud for 's. But he never tried to say onything like that. He jist made oot that he was a verra respectable kin' o' a God, though maybe no a'thing we micht wuss. We oucht to be thankfu' that he gae's a wee blink o' a chance o' no bein' brunt to a' eternity, wi' nae chance ava. I dinna say that he *said* that, but that's what it a' seemed to me to come till. He said a hantle aboot the care o' Providence, but a' the gude that he did seemed to me to be but a haudin' aff o' something ill that he had made as weel. Ye wad hae thocht the deevil had made the warl', and syne God had pitten us intil 't, and jist gied a bit wag o' 's han' whiles to haud the deevil aff o' 's whan he was like to destroy the breed a'thegither. For the grace that he spak aboot, that was less nor the nature an' the providence. I cud see unco little o' grace intil 't."

Here Ericson broke in—fearful, apparently, lest his boy-friend should be actually about to deny the God in whom he did not himself believe.

"Robert," he said solemnly, "one thing is certain: if there be a God at all, he is not like

that. If there be a God at all, we shall know him by his perfection—his grand perfect truth, fairness, love—a love to make life an absolute good—not a mere accommodation of difficulties, not a mere preponderance of the balance on the side of well-being. Love only could have been able to create. But they don't seem jealous for the glory of God, those men. They don't mind a speck, or even a blot, here and there upon him. The world doesn't make them miserable. They can get over the misery of their fellow-men without being troubled about them, or about the God that could let such things be.* They represent a God who does wonderfully well, on the whole, after a middling fashion.

* Amongst Ericson's papers I find the following sonnets, which belong to the mood here embodied :

Oft, as I rest in quiet peace, am I
Thrust out at sudden doors, and madly driven
Through desert solitudes, and thunder-riven
Black passages which have not any sky.
The scourge is on me now, with all the cry
Of ancient life that hath with murder striven.
How many an anguish hath gone up to heaven!
How many a hand in prayer been lifted high
When the black fate came onward with the rush
Of whirlwind, avalanche, or fiery spume!
Even at my feet is cleft a shivering tomb
Beneath the waves; or else with solemn hush
The graveyard opens, and I feel a crush
As if we were all huddled in one doom.

I want a God who loves perfectly. He may kill; he may torture even; but if it be for love's sake, Lord, here am I. Do with me as thou wilt."

Had Ericson forgotten that he had no proof of such a God? The next moment the intellectual demon was awake.

"But what's the good of it all?" he said. "I don't even know that there *is* anything outside of me."

"Ye ken that I'm here, Mr. Ericson," suggested Robert.

"I know nothing of the sort. You may be another phantom—only clearer."

"Ye speik to me as gin ye thocht me somebody."

"So does the man to his phantoms, and you call him mad. It is but a yielding to the pres-

> Comes there, O Earth, no breathing time for thee?
> No pause upon thy many-chequered lands?
> Now resting on my bed with listless hands,
> I mourn thee resting not. Continually
> Hear I the plashing borders of the sea
> Answer each other from the rocks and sands.
> Troop all the rivers seawards; nothing stands,
> But with strange noises hasteth terribly.
> Loam-eared hyenas go a moaning by.
> Howls to each other all the bloody crew
> Of Afric's tigers. But, O men, from you
> Comes this perpetual sound more loud and high
> Than aught that vexes air. I hear the cry
> Of infant generations rising too.

sure of constant suggestion. I do not know —I cannot know if there is anything outside of me."

"But gin there warna, there wad be naebody for ye to love, Mr. Ericson."

"Of course not."

"Nor naebody to love you, Mr. Ericson."

"Of course not."

"Syne ye wad be yer ain God, Mr. Ericson."

"Yes. That would follow."

"I canna imagine a waur hell—closed in amo' naething—wi' naething a' aboot ye, luikin' something a' the time—kennin' 'at it 's a' a lee, and nae able to win clear o' 't."

"It is hell, my boy, or anything worse you can call it."

"What for suld ye believe that, than, Mr. Ericson? I wadna believe sic an ill thing as that. I dinna think I cud believe 't, gin ye war to pruv 't to me."

"I don't believe it. Nobody could prove that either, even if it were so. I am only miserable that I can't prove the contrary."

"Suppose there war a God, Mr. Ericson, do ye think ye bude (*behoved*) to be able to pruv that? Do ye think God cud stan' to be pruved as gin he war something sma' eneuch to be turned roon' and roon', and luikit at upo' ilka side? Gin there war a God, wadna it jist be sae—that we cudna prove him to be, I mean?"

"Perhaps. That is something. I have often thought of that. But then you can't prove *anything* about it."

"I canna help thinkin o' what Mr. Innes said to me ance. I was but a laddie, but I never forgot it. I plaguit him sair wi' wantin' to unnerstan' ilka thing afore I wad gang on wi' my questons (*sums*). Says he, ae day, 'Robert, my man, gin ye *will* aye unnerstan' afore ye du as ye're tellt, ye'll never unnerstan' onything. But gin ye du the thing I tell ye, ye'll be i' the mids o' 't afore ye ken 'at ye're gaein' intil 't.' I jist thocht I wad try him. It was at lang division that I boglet maist. Weel, I gaed on, and I cud du the thing weel eneuch, ohn made ae mistak. And aye I thocht the maister was wrang, for I never kent the rizzon o' a' that beginnin' at the wrang en', an' takin' doon an' substrackin', an' a' that. Ye wad hardly believe me, Mr. Ericson: it was only this verra day, as I was sittin' i' the kirk—it was a lang psalm they war singin'—that ane wi' the foxes i' the tail o' 't—lang division came into my heid again; and first aye bit glimmerin' o' licht cam in, and syne anither, an' afore the psalm was dune I saw throu' the haill process o' 't. But ye see, gin I hadna dune as I was tauld, and learnt a' aboot hoo it was dune aforehan', I wad hae had naething to gang rizzonin' aboot, an' wad hae fun' oot naething."

"That's good, Robert. But when a man is dying for food, he can't wait."

"He micht try to get up and luik, though. He needna bide in 's bed till somebody comes an' sweirs till him 'at he saw a haddie *(haddock)* i' the press."

"I have been looking, Robert—for years."

"Maybe, like me, only for the *rizzon* o' 't, Mr. Ericson—gin ye'll forgie my impidence."

"But what's to be done in this case, Robert? Where's the work that you can do in order to understand? Where's your long division, man?"

"Ye're ayont me noo. I canna tell that, Mr. Ericson. It canna be gaein' to the kirk, surely. Maybe it micht be sayin' yer prayers and readin' yer Bible."

Ericson did not reply, and the conversation dropped. Is it strange that neither of these disciples should have thought of turning to the story of Jesus, finding some word that he had spoken, and beginning to do that as a first step towards a knowledge of the doctrine that Jesus was the incarnate God, come to visit his people —a very unlikely thing to man's wisdom, yet an idea that has notwithstanding ascended above man's horizon, and shown itself the grandest idea in his firmament?

In the evening Ericson asked again for his papers, from which he handed Robert the following poem:—

WORDS IN THE NIGHT.

I woke at midnight, and my heart,
My beating heart said this to me:
Thou seest the moon how calm and bright,
The world is fair by day and night,
But what is that to thee?
One touch to me—down dips the light
Over the land and sea.
All is mine, all is my own!
Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone;
I am alive, I, only I!

One little touch and all is dark;
The winter with its sparkling moons,
The spring with all her violets,
The crimson dawns and rich sunsets,
The autumn's yellowing noons.
I only toss my purple jets,
And thou art one that swoons
Upon a night of gust and roar,
Shipwrecked among the waves, and seems
Across the purple hills to roam;
Sweet odours touch him from the foam,
And downward sinking still he dreams
He walks the clover field at home,
And hears the rattling teams.
All is mine; all is my own!
Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone;
I am alive, I, only I!

Thou hast beheld a throated fountain spout
Full in the air, and in the downward spray
A hovering Iris span the marble tank,

Which as the wind came, ever rose and sank
Violet and red; so my continual play
Makes beauty for the Gods with many a prank
Of human excellence, while they,
Weary of all the noon, in shadows sweet
Supine and heavy-eyed rest in the boundless heat:
Let the world's fountain play!
Beauty is pleasant in the eyes of Jove;
Betwixt the wavering shadows where he lies
He marks the dancing column with his eyes
Celestial, and amid his inmost grove
Upgathers all his limbs, serenely blest,
Lulled by the mellow noise of the great world's unrest.

One heart beats in all nature, differing
But in the work it works; its doubts and clamours
Are but the waste and brunt of instruments
Wherewith a work is done; or as the hammers
On forge Cyclopean plied beneath the rents
Of lowest Etna, conquering into shape
The hard and scattered ore:
Choose thou narcotics, and the dizzy grape
Outworking passion, lest with horrid crash
Thy life go from thee in a night of pain.
So tutoring thy vision, shall the flash
Of dove white-breasted be to thee no more
Than a white stone heavy upon the plain.

Hark the cock crows loud!
And without, all ghastly and ill,
Like a man uplift in his shroud,
The white white morn is propped on the hill;
And adown from the eaves, pointed and chill,
The icicles 'gin to glitter;
And the birds with a warble short and shrill,
Pass by the chamber-window still—

With a quick uneasy twitter.
Let me pump warm blood, for the cold is bitter;
And wearily, wearily, one by one,
Men awake with the weary sun.
Life is a phantom shut in thee;
I am the master and keep the key;
So let me toss thee the days of old,
Crimson and orange and green and gold;
So let me fill thee yet again
With a rush of dreams from my spout amain;
For all is mine; all is my own;
Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone;
And I am alive, I, only I.

Robert having read, sat and wept in silence. Ericson saw him, and said tenderly,

"Robert, my boy, I'm not always so bad as that. Read this one—though I never feel like it now. Perhaps it may come again some day, though. I may once more deceive myself and be happy."

"Dinna say that, Mr. Ericson. That's waur than despair. That's flat unbelief. Ye no more ken that ye're deceivin' yersel' than ye ken that ye're no doin' 't."

Ericson did not reply; and Robert read the following sonnet aloud, feeling his way delicately through its mazes:—

Lie down upon the ground, thou hopeless one!
Press thy face in the grass, and do not speak.
Dost feel the green globe whirl? Seven times a week

Climbeth she out of darkness to the sun,
Which is her god; seven times she doth not shun
Awful eclipse, laying her patient cheek
Upon a pillow ghost-beset with shriek
Of voices utterless which rave and run
Through all the star-penumbra, craving light
And tidings of the dawn from East and West.
Calmly she sleepeth, and her sleep is blest
With heavenly visions, and the joy of Night
Treading aloft with moons. Nor hath she fright
Though cloudy tempests beat upon her breast.

Ericson turned his face to the wall, and Robert withdrew to his own chamber.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHARGAR'S ARM.

NOT many weeks passed before Shargar knew Aberdeen better than most Aberdonians. From the Pier-head to the Rubislaw Road, he knew, if not every court, yet every thoroughfare and short cut. And Aberdeen began to know him. He was very soon recognized as trustworthy, and had pretty nearly as much to do as he could manage. Shargar, therefore, was all over the city like a cracker, and could have told at almost any hour where Dr. Anderson was to be found—generally in the lower parts of it, for the good man visited much among the poor, giving them almost exclusively the benefit of his large experience. Shargar delighted in keeping an eye upon the doctor, carefully avoiding to show himself.

One day as he was hurrying through the Green (*a non virendo*) on a mission from the Rothieden carrier, he came upon the doctor's chariot standing in one of the narrowest streets, and,

as usual, paused to contemplate the equipage and get a peep of the owner. The morning was very sharp. There was no snow, but a cold fog, like vaporized hoar-frost, filled the air. It was weather in which the East Indian could not venture out on foot, else he could have reached the place by a stair from Union Street far sooner than he could drive thither. His horses apparently liked the cold as little as himself. They had been moving about restlessly for some time before the doctor made his appearance. The moment he got in and shut the door, one of them reared, while the other began to haul on his traces, eager for a gallop. Something about the chain gave way, the pole swerved round under the rearing horse, and great confusion and danger would have ensued, had not Shargar rushed from his coign of vantage, sprung at the bit of the rearing horse, and dragged him off the pole, over which he was just casting his near leg. As soon as his feet touched the ground he too pulled, and away went the chariot and down went Shargar. But in a moment more several men had laid hold of the horses' heads, and stopped them.

"Oh Lord!" cried Shargar, as he rose with his arm dangling by his side, "what will Donal' Joss say? I'm like to swarf (*faint*). Haud awa' frae that basket, ye wuddyfous (*withy-fowls, gallows-birds*)," he cried, darting towards

the hamper he had left in the entry of a court, round which a few ragged urchins had gathered; but just as he reached it he staggered and fell. Nor did he know anything more till he found the carriage stopping with himself and the hamper inside it.

As soon as the coachman had got his harness put to rights, the doctor had driven back to see how the lad had fared, for he had felt the carriage go over something. They had found him lying beside his hamper, had secured both, and as a preliminary measure were proceeding to deliver the latter.

"Whaur am I? whaur the deevil am I?" cried Shargar, jumping up and falling back again.

"Don't you know me, Moray?" said the doctor, for he felt shy of calling the poor boy by his nickname: *he* had no right to do so.

"Na, I dinna ken ye. Lat me awa'.—I beg yer pardon, doctor: I thocht ye was ane o' thae wuddyfous rinnin' awa' wi' Donal' Joss's basket. Eh me! sic a stoun' i' my airm! But naebody ca's me Moray. They a' ca' me Shargar. What richt hae *I* to be ca'd *Moray?*" added the poor boy, feeling, I almost believe for the first time, the stain upon his birth. Yet he had as good a right before God to be called *Moray* as any other son of that worthy sire, the Baron of Rothie included. Possibly the trumpet-blowing angels did call him Moray, or some better name.

"The coachman will deliver your parcel, Moray," said the doctor, this time repeating the name with emphasis.

"Deil a bit o' 't!" cried Shargar. "He daurna lea' his box wi' thae deevils o' horses. What gars ye keep sic horses, doctor? They'll play some mischeef some day."

"Indeed, they've played enough already, my poor boy. They've broken your arm."

"Never min' that. That's no muckle. Ye're welcome, doctor, to my twa airms for what ye hae dune for Robert an' that lang-leggit frien' o' his—the Lord forgie me—Mr. Ericson. But ye maun jist pay him what I canna mak for a day or twa, till 't jines again—to haud them gaein', ye ken.—It winna be muckle to you, doctor," added Shargar, beseechingly.

"Trust me for that, Moray," returned Dr. Anderson. "I owe you a good deal more than that. My brains might have been out by this time."

"The Lord be praised!" said Shargar, making about his first profession of Christianity. "Robert 'ill think something o' me noo."

During this conversation the coachman sat expecting some one to appear from the shop, and longing to pitch into the "camstary" horse, but not daring to lift his whip beyond its natural angle. No one came. All at once Shargar knew where he was.

"Guid be here! we're at Donal's door! Guid day to ye, doctor; an' I'm muckle obleeged to ye. Maybe, gin ye war comin' oor gait, the morn, or the neist day, to see Maister Ericson, ye wad tie up my airm, for it gangs wallopin' aboot, an' that canna be guid for the stickin' o' 't thegither again."

"My poor boy! you don't think I'm going to leave you here, do you?" said the doctor, proceeding to open the carriage-door.

"But whaur's the hamper?" said Shargar, looking about him in dismay.

"The coachman has got it on the box," answered the doctor.

"Eh! that 'll never do. Gin thae rampaugin' brutes war to tak a start again, what wad come o' the bit basket? I maun get it doon direckly."

"Sit still. I will get it down, and deliver it myself." As he spoke the doctor got out.

"Tak care o' 't, sir; tak care o' 't. William Walker said there was a jar o' drained hinney i' the basket; an' the bairns wad miss 't sair gin 't war spult."

"I will take good care of it," responded the doctor.

He delivered the basket, returned to the carriage, and told the coachman to drive home.

"Whaur are ye takin' me till?" exclaimed Shargar. "Willie hasna payed me for the parcel."

"Never mind Willie. I'll pay you," said the doctor.

"But Robert wadna like me to tak siller whaur I did nae wark for 't," objected Shargar. "He's some pernickety (*precise*)—Robert. But I'll jist say 'at ye garred me, doctor. Maybe that 'll saitisfee him. An' faith! I'm queer aboot my left fin here."

"We'll soon set it all right," said the doctor.

When they reached his house he led the way to his surgery, and there put the broken limb in splints. He then told Johnston to help the patient to bed.

"I maun gang hame," objected Shargar. "What wad Robert think?"

"I will tell him all about it," said the doctor.

"Yersel, sir?" stipulated Shargar.

"Yes, myself."

"Afore nicht?"

"Directly," answered the doctor, and Shargar yielded.

"But what *will* Robert say?" were his last words, as he fell asleep, appreciating, no doubt, the superiority of the bed to his usual lair upon the hearthrug.

Robert was delighted to hear how well Shargar had acquitted himself. Followed a small consultation about him; for the accident had ripened the doctor's intentions concerning the outcast.

"As soon as his arm is sound again, he shall go to the grammar-school," he said.

"An' the college?" asked Robert.

"I hope so," answered the doctor. "Do you think he will do well? He has plenty of courage, at all events, and that is a fine thing."

"Ow ay," answered Robert; "he's no ill aff for smeddum *(spirit)*—that is, gin it be for ony ither body. He wad never lift a han' for himsel'; an' that's what garred me tak till him sae muckle. He's a fine crater. He canna gang him lane, but he'll gang wi' onybody—and haud up wi' him."

"What do you think him fit for, then?"

Now Robert had been building castles for Shargar out of the hopes which the doctor's friendliness had given him. Therefore he was ready with his answer.

"Gin ye cud ensure him no bein' made a general o', he wad mak a gran' sojer. Set 's face foret, and say 'quick mairch,' an' he'll ca his bagonet throu auld Hornie. But lay nae consequences upo' him, for he cudna stan' unner them."

Dr. Anderson laughed, but thought none the less, and went home to see how his patient was getting on.

CHAPTER XIV.

MYSIE'S FACE.

MEANTIME Ericson grew better. A space of hard, clear weather, in which everything sparkled with frost and sunshine, did him good. But not yet could he use his brain. He turned with dislike even from his friend Plato. He would sit in bed or on his chair by the fireside for hours, with his hands folded before him, and his eyelids drooping, and let his thoughts flow, for he could not think. And that these thoughts flowed not always with other than sweet sounds over the stones of question, the curves of his lip would testify to the friendly-furtive glance of the watchful Robert. None but the troubled mind knows its own consolations; and I believe the saddest life has its own presence—however it may be unrecognized as such—of the upholding Deity. Doth God care for the hairs that perish from our heads? To a mind like Ericson's the remembered scent, the

recurring vision of a flower loved in childhood, is enough to sustain anxiety with beauty, for the lovely is itself healing and hope-giving, because it is the form and presence of the true. To have such a presence is *to be;* and while a mind exists in any high consciousness, the intellectual trouble that springs from the desire to know its own life, to be assured of its rounded law and security, ceases, for the desire itself falls into abeyance.

But although Ericson was so weak, he was always able and ready to help Robert in any difficulty not unfrequently springing from his imperfect preparation in Greek; for while Mr. Innes was an excellent Latin scholar, his knowledge of Greek was too limited either to compel learning or inspire enthusiasm. And with the keen instinct he possessed in everything immediate between man and man, Robert would sometimes search for a difficulty in order to request its solution; for then Ericson would rouse himself to explain as few men could have explained: where a clear view was to be had of anything, Ericson either had it or knew that he had it not. Hence Robert's progress was good; for one word from a wise helper will clear off a whole atmosphere of obstructions.

At length one day when Robert came home he found him seated at the table, with his slate, working away at the Differential Calculus.

After this he recovered more rapidly, and ere another week was over began to attend one class a day. He had been so far in advance before, that though he could not expect prizes, there was no fear of his *passing*.

One morning, Robert, coming out from a lecture, saw Ericson in the quadrangle talking to an elderly gentleman. When they met in the afternoon Ericson told him that that was Mr. Lindsay, and that he had asked them both to spend the evening at his house. Robert would go anywhere to be with his friend.

He got out his Sunday clothes, and dressed himself with anxiety: he had visited scarcely at all, and was shy and doubtful. He then sat down to his books, till Ericson came to his door —dressed, and hence in Robert's eyes ceremonial —a stately, graceful gentleman. Renewed awe came upon him at the sight, and renewed gratitude. There was a flush on Ericson's cheek, and a fire in his eye. Robert had never seen him look so grand. But there was a something about him that rendered him uneasy—a look that made Ericson seem strange, as if his life lay in some far-off region.

"I want you to take your violin with you, Robert," he said.

"Hoots!" returned Robert, "hoo can I do that? To tak her wi' me the first time I gang to a strange hoose, as gin I thocht a'body wad

think as muckle o' my auld wife as I do mysel'! That wadna be mainners—wad it noo, Mr. Ericson?"

"But I told Mr. Lindsay that you could play well. The old gentleman is fond of Scotch tunes, and you will please him if you take it."

"That maks a' the differ," answered Robert.

"Thank you," said Erison, as Robert went towards his instrument; and, turning, would have walked from the house without any additional protection.

"Whaur are ye gaein' that gait, Mr. Ericson? Tak yer plaid, or ye'll be laid up again, as sure's ye live."

"I'm warm enough," returned Ericson.

"That's naething. The cauld 's jist lyin' i' the street like a verra deevil to get a grup o' ye. Gin ye dinna pit on yer plaid, I winna tak my fiddle."

Ericson yielded; and they set out together.

I will account for Ericson's request about the violin.

He went to the episcopal church on Sundays, and sat where he could see Mysie—sat longing and thirsting ever till the music returned. Yet the music he never heard; he watched only its transmutation into form, never taking his eyes off Mysie's face. Reflected thence in a metamorphosed echo, he followed all its changes. Never was one powerless to produce it more

strangely responsive to its influence. She had no voice; she had never been taught the use of any instrument. A world of musical feeling was pent up in her, and music raised the suddener storms in her mobile nature, that she was unable to give that feeling utterance. The waves of her soul dashed the more wildly against their shores, inasmuch as those shores were precipitous, and yielded no outlet to the swelling waters. It was that his soul might hover like a bird of Paradise over the lovely changes of her countenance, changes more lovely and frequent than those of an English May, that Ericson persuaded Robert to take his violin.

The last of the sunlight was departing, and a large full moon was growing through the fog on the horizon. The sky was almost clear of clouds, and the air was cold and penetrating. Robert drew Eric's plaid closer over his chest. Eric thanked him lightly, but his voice sounded eager; and it was with a long hasty stride that he went up the hill through the gathering of the light frosty mist. He stopped at the stair upon which Robert had found him that memorable night. They went up. The door had been left on the latch for their entrance. They went up more steps between rocky walls. When in after years he read the *Purgatorio*, as often as he came to one of its ascents, Robert saw this stair with his inward eye. At the top of the stair

was the garden, still ascending, and at the top of the garden shone the glow of Mr. Lindsay's parlour through the red-curtained window. To Robert it shone a refuge for Ericson from the night air; to Ericson it shone the casket of the richest jewel of the universe. Well might the ruddy glow stream forth to meet him! Only in glowing red could such beauty be rightly closed. With trembling hand he knocked at the door.

They were shown at once into the parlour. Mysie was putting away her book as they entered, and her back was towards them. When she turned, it seemed even to Robert as if all the light in the room came only from her eyes. But that light had been all gathered out of the novel she had just laid down. She held out her hand to Eric, and her sweet voice was yet more gentle than wont, for he had been ill. His face flushed at the tone. But although she spoke kindly, he could hardly have fancied that she showed him special favour.

Robert stood with his violin under his arm, feeling as awkward as if he had never handled anything more delicate than a pitchfork. But Mysie sat down to the table, and began to pour out the tea, and he came to himself again. Presently her father entered. His greeting was warm and mild and sleepy. He had come from poring over Spotiswood, in search of some Will

o' the wisp or other, and had grown stupid from want of success. But he revived after a cup of tea, and began to talk about northern genealogies; and Ericson did his best to listen. Robert wondered at the knowledge he displayed: he had been tutor the foregoing summer in one of the oldest and poorest, and therefore proudest families in Caithness. But all the time his host talked Ericson's eyes hovered about Mysie, who sat gazing before her with look distraught, with wide eyes and scarce-moving eyelids, beholding something neither on sea or shore; and Mr. Lindsay would now and then correct Ericson in some egregious blunder; while Mysie would now and then start awake and ask Robert or Ericson to take another cup of tea. Before the sentence was finished, however, she would let it die away, speaking the last words mechanically, as her consciousness relapsed into dreamland. Had not Robert been with Ericson, he would have found it wearisome enough; and except things took a turn, Ericson could hardly be satisfied with the pleasure of the evening. Things did take a turn.

"Robert has brought his fiddle," said Ericson, as the tea was removed.

"I hope he will be kind enough to play something," said Mr. Lindsay.

"I'll do that," answered Robert, with alacrity. "But ye maunna expec' ower muckle, for I'm but

a prentice-han'," he added, as he got the instrument ready.

Before he had drawn the bow once across it, attention awoke in Mysie's eyes; and before he had finished playing, Ericson must have had quite as much of the "beauty born of murmuring sound" as was good for him. Little did Mysie think of the sky of love, alive with silent thoughts, that arched over her. The earth teems with love that is unloved. The universe itself is one sea of infinite love, from whose consort of harmonies if a stray note steal across the sense, it starts bewildered.

Robert played better than usual. His touch grew intense, and put on all its delicacy, till it was like that of the spider, which, as Pope so admirably says,

Feels at each thread, and lives along the line.

And while Ericson watched its shadows, the music must have taken hold of him too; for when Robert ceased, he sang a wild ballad of the northern sea, to a tune strange as itself. It was the only time Robert ever heard him sing. Mysie's eyes grew wider and wider as she listened. When it was over,

"Did ye write that sang yersel', Mr. Ericson?" asked Robert.

"No," answered Ericson. "An old shepherd up in our parts used to say it to me when I was a boy."

"Didna he sing 't?" Robert questioned further.

"No, he didn't. But I heard an old woman crooning it to a child in a solitary cottage on the shore of Stroma, near the Swalchie whirlpool, and that was the tune she sang it to, if singing it could be called."

"I don't quite understand it, Mr. Ericson," said Mysie. "What does it mean?"

"There was once a beautiful woman lived there-away," began Ericson.—But I have not room to give the story as he told it, embellishing it, no doubt, as with such a mere tale was lawful enough, from his own imagination. The substance was that a young man fell in love with a beautiful witch, who let him go on loving her till he cared for nothing but her, and then began to kill him by laughing at him. For no witch can fall in love herself, however much she may like to be loved. She mocked him till he drowned himself in a pool on the seashore. Now the witch did not know that; but as she walked along the shore, looking for things, she saw his hand lying over the edge of a rocky basin. Nothing is more useful to a witch than the hand of a man, so she went to pick it up. When she found it fast to an arm, she would have chopped it off, but seeing whose it was, she would, for some reason or other best known to a witch, draw off his ring first. For it was an enchanted ring which she had given him to be-

witch his love, and now she wanted both it and the hand to draw to herself the lover of a young maiden whom she hated. But the dead hand closed its fingers upon hers, and her power was powerless against the dead. And the tide came rushing up, and the dead hand held her till she was drowned. She lies with her lover to this day at the bottom of the Swalchie whirlpool; and when a storm is at hand, strange moanings rise from the pool, for the youth is praying the witch lady for her love, and she is praying him to let go her hand.

While Ericson told the story the room still glimmered about Robert as if all its light came from Mysie's face, upon which the flickering fire-light alone played. Mr. Lindsay sat a little back from the rest, with an amused expression: legends of such sort did not come within the scope of his antiquarian reach, though he was ready enough to believe whatever tempted his own taste, let it be as destitute of likelihood as the story of the dead hand. When Ericson ceased, Mysie gave a deep sigh, and looked full of thought, though I daresay it was only feeling. Mr. Lindsay followed with an old tale of the Sinclairs, of which he said Ericson's reminded him, though the sole association was that the foregoing was a Caithness story, and the Sinclairs are a Caithness family. As soon as it was over, Mysie, who could not hide all her

impatience during its lingering progress, asked Robert to play again. He took up his violin, and with great expression gave the air of Ericson's ballad two or three times over, and then laid down the instrument. He saw indeed that it was too much for Mysie, affecting her more, thus presented after the story, than the singing of the ballad itself. Thereupon Ericson, whose spirits had risen greatly at finding that he could himself secure Mysie's attention, and produce the play of soul in feature which he so much delighted to watch, offered another story; and the distant rush of the sea, borne occasionally into the "grateful gloom" upon the cold sweep of a February wind, mingled with one tale after another, with which he entranced two of his audience, while the third listened mildly content.

The last of the tales Ericson told was as follows:—

"One evening-twilight in spring, a young English student, who had wandered northwards as far as the outlying fragments of Scotland called the Orkney and Shetland islands, found himself on a small island of the latter group, caught in a storm of wind and hail, which had come on suddenly. It was in vain to look about for any shelter; for not only did the storm entirely obscure the landscape, but there was nothing around him save a desert moss.

"At length, however, as he walked on for mere

walking's sake, he found himself on the verge of a cliff, and saw, over the brow of it, a few feet below him, a ledge of rock, where he might find some shelter from the blast, which blew from behind. Letting himself down by his hands, he alighted upon something that crunched beneath his tread, and found the bones of many small animals scattered about in front of a little cave in the rock, offering the refuge he sought. He went in, and sat upon a stone. The storm increased in violence, and as the darkness grew he became uneasy, for he did not relish the thought of spending the night in the cave. He had parted from his companions on the opposite side of the island, and it added to his uneasiness that they must be full of apprehension about him. At last there came a lull in the storm, and the same instant he heard a footfall, stealthy and light as that of a wild beast, upon the bones at the mouth of the cave. He started up in some fear, though the least thought might have satisfied him that there could be no very dangerous animals upon the island. Before he had time to think, however, the face of a woman appeared in the opening. Eagerly the wanderer spoke. She started at the sound of his voice. He could not see her well, because she was turned towards the darkness of the cave.

"'Will you tell me how to find my way across the moor to Shielness?' he asked.

"'You cannot find it to-night,' she answered, in a sweet tone, and with a smile that bewitched him, revealing the whitest of teeth.

"'What am I to do, then?' he asked.

"'My mother will give you shelter, but that is all she has to offer.'

"'And that is far more than I expected a minute ago,' he replied. 'I shall be most grateful.'

"She turned in silence and left the cave. The youth followed.

"She was barefooted, and her pretty brown feet went catlike over the sharp stones, as she led the way down a rocky path to the shore. Her garments were scanty and torn, and her hair blew tangled in the wind. She seemed about five and twenty, lithe and small. Her long fingers kept clutching and pulling nervously at her skirts as she went. Her face was very gray in complexion, and very worn, but delicately formed, and smooth-skinned. Her thin nostrils were tremulous as eyelids, and her lips, whose curves were faultless, had no colour to give sign of indwelling blood. What her eyes were like he could not see, for she had never lifted the delicate films of her eyelids.

"At the foot of the cliff they came upon a little hut leaning against it, and having for its inner apartment a natural hollow within it. Smoke was spreading over the face of the rock, and the

grateful odour of food gave hope to the hungry student. His guide opened the door of the cottage; he followed her in, and saw a woman bending over a fire in the middle of the floor. On the fire lay a large fish boiling. The daughter spoke a few words, and the mother turned and welcomed the stranger. She had an old and very wrinkled, but honest face, and looked troubled. She dusted the only chair in the cottage, and placed it for him by the side of the fire, opposite the one window, whence he saw a little patch of yellow sand over which the spent waves spread themselves out listlessly. Under this window there was a bench, upon which the daughter threw herself in an unusual posture, resting her chin upon her hand. A moment after the youth caught the first glimpse of her blue eyes. They were fixed upon him with a strange look of greed, amounting to craving, but as if aware that they belied or betrayed her, she dropped them instantly. The moment she veiled them, her face, notwithstanding its colourless complexion, was almost beautiful.

"When the fish was ready, the old woman wiped the deal table, steadied it upon the uneven floor, and covered it with a piece of fine table-linen. She then laid the fish on a wooden platter, and invited the guest to help himself. Seeing no other provision, he pulled from his pocket a hunting knife, and divided a portion

from the fish, offering it to the mother first.

"'Come, my lamb,' said the old woman; and the daughter approached the table. But her nostrils and mouth quivered with disgust.

"The next moment she turned and hurried from the hut.

"'She doesn't like fish,' said the old woman, 'and I haven't anything else to give her.'

"'She does not seem in good health,' he rejoined.

"The woman answered only with a sigh, and they ate their fish with the help of a little rye-bread. As they finished their supper, the youth heard the sound as of the pattering of a dog's feet upon the sand close to the door; but ere he had time to look out of the window, the door opened and the young woman entered. She looked better, perhaps from having just washed her face. She drew a stool to the corner of the fire opposite him. But as she sat down, to his bewilderment, and even horror, the student spied a single drop of blood on her white skin within her torn dress. The woman brought out a jar of whisky, put a rusty old kettle on the fire, and took her place in front of it. As soon as the water boiled, she proceeded to make some toddy in a wooden bowl.

"Meantime the youth could not take his eyes off the young woman, so that at length he found himself fascinated, or rather bewitched. She

kept her eyes for the most part veiled with the loveliest eyelids fringed with darkest lashes, and he gazed entranced; for the red glow of the little oil-lamp covered all the strangeness of her complexion. But as soon as he met a stolen glance out of those eyes unveiled, his soul shuddered within him. Lovely face and craving eyes alternated fascination and repulsion.

"The mother placed the bowl in his hands. He drank sparingly, and passed it to the girl. She lifted it to her lips, and as she tasted—only tasted it—looked at him. He thought the drink must have been drugged and have affected his brain. Her hair smoothed itself back, and drew her forehead backwards with it; while the lower part of her face projected towards the bowl, revealing, ere she sipped, her dazzling teeth in strange prominence. But the same moment the vision vanished; she returned the vessel to her mother, and rising, hurried out of the cottage.

"Then the old woman pointed to a bed of heather in one corner with a murmured apology; and the student, wearied both with the fatigues of the day and the strangeness of the night, threw himself upon it, wrapped in his cloak. The moment he lay down, the storm began afresh, and the wind blew so keenly through the crannies of the hut, that it was only by

drawing his cloak over his head that he could protect himself from its currents. Unable to sleep, he lay listening to the uproar which grew in violence, till the spray was dashing against the window. At length the door opened, and the young woman came in, made up the fire, drew the bench before it, and lay down in the same strange posture, with her chin propped on her hand and elbow, and her face turned towards the youth. He moved a little; she dropped her head, and lay on her face, with her arms crossed beneath her forehead. The mother had disappeared.

"Drowsiness crept over him. A movement of the bench roused him, and he fancied he saw some four-footed creature as tall as a large dog trot quietly out of the door. He was sure he felt a rush of cold wind. Gazing fixedly through the darkness, he thought he saw the eyes of the damsel encountering his, but a glow from the falling together of the remnants of the fire, revealed clearly enough that the bench was vacant. Wondering what could have made her go out in such a storm, he fell fast asleep.

"In the middle of the night he felt a pain in his shoulder, came broad awake, and saw the gleaming eyes and grinning teeth of some animal close to his face. Its claws were in his shoulder, and its mouth in the act of seeking his throat. Before it had fixed its fangs, how-

ever, he had its throat in one hand, and sought his knife with the other. A terrible struggle followed; but regardless of the tearing claws, he found and opened his knife. He had made one futile stab, and was drawing it for a surer, when, with a spring of the whole body, and one wildly-contorted effort, the creature twisted its neck from his hold, and with something betwixt a scream and a howl, darted from him. Again he heard the door open; again the wind blew in upon him, and it continued blowing; a sheet of spray dashed across the floor, and over his face. He sprung from his couch and bounded to the door.

"It was a wild night—dark, but for the flash of whiteness from the waves as they broke within a few yards of the cottage; the wind was raving, and the rain pouring down the air. A gruesome sound as of mingled weeping and howling came from somewhere in the dark. He turned again into the hut and closed the door, but could find no way of securing it.

"The lamp was nearly out, and he could not be certain whether the form of the young woman was upon the bench or not. Overcoming a strong repugnance, he approached it, and put out his hands—there was nothing there. He sat down and waited for the daylight: he dared not sleep any more.

"When the day dawned at length, he went out

yet again, and looked around. The morning was dim and gusty and gray. The wind had fallen, but the waves were tossing wildly. He wandered up and down the little strand, longing for more light.

"At length he heard a movement in the cottage. By and by the voice of the old woman called to him from the door.

"'You're up early, sir. I doubt you didn't sleep well.'

"'Not very well,' he answered. 'But where is your daughter?'

"'She's not awake yet,' said the mother. 'I'm afraid I have but a poor breakfast for you. But you'll take a dram and a bit of fish. It's all I've got.'

"Unwilling to hurt her, though hardly in good appetite, he sat down at the table. While they were eating the daughter came in, but turned her face away and went to the further end of the hut. When she came forward after a minute or two, the youth saw that her hair was drenched, and her face whiter than before. She looked ill and faint, and when she raised her eyes, all their fierceness had vanished, and sadness had taken its place. Her neck was now covered with a cotton handkerchief. She was modestly attentive to him, and no longer shunned his gaze. He was gradually yielding to the temptation of braving another night in

the hut, and seeing what would follow, when the old woman spoke.

"'The weather will be broken all day, sir,' she said. 'You had better be going, or your friends will leave without you.'

"Ere he could answer, he saw such a beseeching glance on the face of the girl, that he hesitated, confused. Glancing at the mother, he saw the flash of wrath in her face. She rose and approached her daughter, with her hand lifted to strike her. The young woman stooped her head with a cry. He darted round the table to interpose between them. But the mother had caught hold of her; the handkerchief had fallen from her neck; and the youth saw five blue bruises on her lovely throat—the marks of the four fingers and the thumb of a left hand. With a cry of horror he darted from the house, but as he reached the door he turned. His hostess was lying motionless on the floor, and a huge gray wolf came bounding after him."

An involuntary cry from Mysie interrupted the story-teller. He changed his tone at once.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lindsay, for telling you such a horrid tale. Do forgive me. I didn't mean to frighten you more than a little."

"Only a case of lycanthropia," remarked Mr. Lindsay, as coolly as if that settled everything

about it and lycanthropia, horror and all, at once.

Mysie tried to laugh, but succeeded badly. Robert took his violin, and its tones had soon swept all the fear from her face, leaving in its stead a trouble that has no name—the trouble of wanting one knows not what—or how to seek it.

It was now time to go home. Mysie gave each an equally warm good-night and thanks, Mr. Lindsay accompanied them to the door, and the students stepped into the moonlight. Across the links the sound of the sea came with a swell.

As they went down the garden, Ericson stopped. Robert thought he was looking back to the house, and went on. When Ericson joined him, he was pale as death.

"What *is* the maitter wi' ye, Mr. Ericson?" he asked in terror.

"Look there!" said Ericson, pointing, not to the house, but to the sky.

Robert looked up. Close about the moon were a few white clouds. Upon these white clouds, right over the moon, and near as the eyebrow to an eye, hung part of an opalescent halo, bent into the rude, but unavoidable suggestion of an eyebrow; while, close around the edge of the moon, clung another, a pale storm-halo. To this pale iris and faint-hued eyebrow the full moon itself formed the white pupil: the

whole was a perfect eye of ghastly death, staring out of the winter heaven. The vision may never have been before, may never have been again, but this Ericson and Robert saw that night.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST OF THE COALS.

THE next Sunday Robert went with Ericson to the episcopal chapel, and for the first time in his life heard the epic music of the organ. It was a new starting point in his life. The worshipping instrument flooded his soul with sound, and he stooped beneath it as a bather on the shore stoops beneath the broad wave rushing up the land. But I will not linger over this portion of his history. It is enough to say that he sought the friendship of the organist, was admitted to the instrument; touched, trembled, exulted; grew dissatisfied, fastidious, despairing; gathered hope and tried again, and yet again; till at last, with constantly recurring fits of self-despite, he could not leave the grand creature alone. It became a rival even to his violin. And once before the end of March, when the organist was ill, and another was not to be had, he ventured to oc-

cupy his place both at morning and evening service.

Dr. Anderson kept George Moray in bed for a few days, after which he went about for a while with his arm in a sling. But the season of bearing material burdens was over for him now. Dr. Anderson had an interview with the master of the grammar-school; a class was assigned to Moray, and with a delight, resting chiefly on his social approximation to Robert, which in one week elevated the whole character of his person and countenance and bearing, George Moray bent himself to the task of mental growth. Having good helpers at home, and his late-developed energy turning itself entirely into the new channel, he got on admirably. As there was no other room to be had in Mrs. Fyvie's house, he continued for the rest of the session to sleep upon the rug, for he would not hear of going to another house. The doctor had advised Robert to drop the nickname as much as possible; but the first time he called him Moray, Shargar threatened to cut his throat, and so between the two the name remained.

I presume that by this time Doctor Anderson had made up his mind to leave his money to Robert, but thought it better to say nothing about it, and let the boy mature his independence. He had him often to his house. Ericson frequently accompanied him; and as there

was a good deal of original similarity between the doctor and Ericson, the latter soon felt his obligation no longer a burden. Shargar likewise, though more occasionally, made one of the party, and soon began, in his new circumstances, to develop the manners of a gentleman. I say *develop* advisedly, for Shargar had a deep humanity in him, as abundantly testified by his devotion to Robert, and humanity is the body of which true manners is the skin and ordinary manifestation: true manners are the polish which lets the internal humanity shine through, just as the polish on marble reveals its veined beauty. Many talks did the elderly man hold with the three youths, and his experience of life taught Ericson and Robert much, especially what he told them about his Brahmin friend in India. Moray, on the other hand, was chiefly interested in his tales of adventure when on service in the Indian army, or engaged in the field sports of that region so prolific in monsters. His gipsy blood and lawless childhood, spent in wandering familiarity with houseless nature, rendered him more responsive to these than the others, and his kindled eye and pertinent remarks raised in the doctor's mind an early question whether a commission in India might not be his best start in life.

Between Ericson and Robert, as the former recovered his health, communication from the

deeper strata of human need became less frequent. Ericson had to work hard to recover something of his leeway; Robert had to work hard that prizes might witness for him to his grandmother and Miss St. John. To the latter especially, as I think I have said before, he was anxious to show well, wiping out the blot, as he considered it, of his all but failure in the matter of a bursary. For he looked up to her as to a goddess who just came near enough to the earth to be worshipped by him who dwelt upon it.

The end of the session came nigh. Ericson passed his examinations with honour. Robert gained the first Greek and third Latin prize. The evening of the last day arrived, and on the morrow the students would be gone—some to their homes of comfort and idleness, others to hard labour in the fields; some to steady reading, perhaps to school again to prepare for the next session, and others to be tutors all the summer months, and return to the wintry city as to freedom and life. Shargar was to remain at the grammar-school.

That last evening Robert sat with Ericson in his room. It was a cold night—the night of the last day of March. A bitter wind blew about the house, aud dropped spiky hailstones upon the skylight. The friends were to leave on the morrow, but to leave together; for they

had already sent their boxes, one by the carrier to Rothieden, the other by a sailing vessel to Wick, and had agreed to walk together as far as Robert's home, where he was in hopes of inducing his friend to remain for a few days if he found his grandmother agreeable to the plan. Shargar was asleep on the rug for the last time, and Robert had brought his coal-scuttle into Ericson's room to combine their scanty remains of well-saved fuel in a common glow, over which they now sat.

"I wonder what my grannie 'ill say to me," said Robert.

"She'll be very glad to see you, whatever she may say," remarked Ericson.

"She'll say 'Noo, be dooce,' the minute I hae shacken hands wi' her," said Robert.

"Robert," returned Ericson solemnly, "if I had a grandmother to go home to, she might box my ears if she liked—I wouldn't care. You do not know what it is not to have a soul belonging to you on the face of the earth. It is so cold and so lonely!"

"But you have a cousin, haven't you?" suggested Robert.

Ericson laughed, but good-naturedly.

"Yes," he answered, "a little man with a fishy smell, in a blue tail-coat with brass buttons, and a red and black nightcap."

"But," Robert ventured to hint, "he might

go in a kilt and top-boots, like Satan in my grannie's copy o' the *Paradise Lost*, for onything I would care."

"Yes, but he's just like his looks. The first thing he'll do the next morning after I go *home*, will be to take me into his office, or shop, as he calls it, and get down his books, and show me how many barrels of herring I owe him, with the price of each. To do him justice, he only charges me wholesale."

"What 'll he do that for?"

"To urge on me the necessity of diligence, and the choice of a profession," answered Ericson, with a smile of mingled sadness and irresolution. "He will set forth what a loss the interest of the money is, even if I should pay the principal; and remind me that although he has stood my friend, his duty to his own family imposes limits. And he has at least a couple of thousand pounds in the county bank. I don't believe he would do anything for me but for the honour it will be to the family to have a professional man in it. And yet my father was the making of him."

"Tell me about your father. What was he?"

"A gentle-minded man, who thought much and said little. He farmed the property that had been his father's own, and is now leased by my fishy cousin afore mentioned."

"And your mother?"

"She died just after I was born, and my father never got over it."

"And you have no brothers or sisters?"

"No, not one. Thank God for your grandmother, and do all you can to please her."

A silence followed, during which Robert's heart swelled and heaved with devotion to Ericson; for notwithstanding his openness, there was a certain sad coldness about him that restrained Robert from letting out all the tide of his love. The silence became painful, and he broke it abruptly.

"What are you going to be, Mr. Ericson?"

"I wish you could tell me, Robert. What would you have me to be? Come now."

Robert thought for a moment.

"Weel, ye canna be a minister, Mr. Ericson, 'cause ye dinna believe in God, ye ken," he said, simply.

"Don't say that, Robert," Ericson returned, in a tone of pain with which no displeasure was mingled. "But you are right. At best I only hope in God; I don't believe in him."

"I'm thinkin' there canna be muckle differ atween houp an' faith," said Robert. "Mony a ane 'at says they believe in God has unco little houp o' onything frae 's han', I'm thinkin'."

My reader may have observed a little change for the better in Robert's speech. Dr. Anderson had urged upon him the necessity of being

able at least to speak English; and he had been trying to modify the antique Saxon dialect they used at Rothieden with the newer and more refined English. But even when I knew him, he would upon occasion, especially when the subject was religion or music, fall back into the broadest Scotch. It was as if his heart could not issue freely by any other gate than that of his grandmother tongue.

Fearful of having his last remark contradicted —for he had an instinctive desire that it should lie undisturbed where he had cast it in the field of Ericson's mind, he hurried to another question.

"What for shouldna ye be a doctor?"

"Now you'll think me a fool, Robert, if I tell you why."

"Far be it frae me to daur think sic a word, Mr. Ericson!" said Robert devoutly.

"Well, I'll tell you, whether or not," returned Ericson. "I could, I believe, amputate a living limb with considerable coolness; but put a knife in a dead body I could not."

"I think I know what you mean. Then you must be a lawyer."

"A lawyer! O Lord!" said Ericson.

"Why not?" asked Robert, in some wonderment; for he could not imagine Ericson acting from mere popular prejudice or fancy.

"Just think of spending one's life in an atmo-

sphere of squabbles. It's all very well when one gets to be a judge and dispense justice; but—well, it's not for me. I *could* not do the best for my clients. And a lawyer has nothing to do with the kingdom of heaven—only with his clients. He *must* be a party-man. He must secure for one so often at the loss of the rest. My duty and my conscience would always be at strife."

"Then what *will* you be, Mr. Ericson?"

"To tell the truth, I would rather be a watchmaker than anything else I know. I might make one watch that would go right, I suppose, if I lived long enough. But no one would take an apprentice of my age. So I suppose I must be a tutor, knocked about from one house to another, patronized by ex-pupils, and smiled upon as harmless by mammas and sisters to the end of the chapter. And then something of a pauper's burial, I suppose. *Che sara sara.*"

Ericson had sunk into one of his worst moods. But when he saw Robert looking unhappy, he changed his tone, and would be—what he could not be—merry.

"But what's the use of talking about it?" he said. "Get your fiddle, man, and play The Wind that shakes the Barley."

"No, Mr. Ericson," answered Robert; "I have no heart for the fiddle. I would rather have some poetry."

"Oh!—Poetry!" returned Ericson, in a tone of contempt—yet not very hearty contempt.

"We're gaein' awa', Mr. Ericson," said Robert; "an' the Lord 'at we ken naething aboot alane kens whether we'll ever meet again i' this place. And sae——"

"True enough, my boy," interrupted Ericson. "I have no need to trouble myself about the future. I believe that is the real secret of it after all. I shall never want a profession or anything else."

"What do you mean, Mr. Ericson?" asked Robert, in half-defined terror.

"I mean, my boy, that I shall not live long. I know that—thank God!"

"How do you know it?"

"My father died at thirty, and my mother at six-and-twenty, both of the same disease. But that's not how I know it."

"How do you know it then?"

Ericson returned no answer, He only said—

"Death will be better than life. One thing I don't like about it though," he added, "is the coming on of unconsciousness. I cannot bear to lose my consciousness even in sleep. It is such a terrible thing!"

"I suppose that's ane o' the reasons that we canna be content withoot a God," responded Robert. "It's dreidfu' to think even o' fa'in' asleep withoot some ane greater an' nearer than

the *me* watchin' ower't. But I'm jist sayin' ower again what I hae read in ane o' your papers, Mr. Ericson. Jist lat me luik."

Venturing more than he had ever yet ventured, Robert rose and went to the cupboard where Ericson's papers lay. His friend did not check him. On the contrary, he took the papers from his hand, and searched for the poem indicated.

"I'm not in the way of doing this sort of thing, Robert," he said.

"I know that," answered Robert.

And Ericson read.

SLEEP.

Oh, is it Death that comes
To have a foretaste of the whole?
  To-night the planets and the stars
  Will glimmer through my window-bars,
But will not shine upon my soul.

For I shall lie as dead,
Though yet I am above the ground;
  All passionless, with scarce a breath,
  With hands of rest and eyes of death,
I shall be carried swiftly round.

Or if my life should break
The idle night with doubtful gleams,
  Through mossy arches will I go,
  Through arches ruinous and low,
And chase the true and false in dreams.

Why should I fall asleep?
When I am still upon my bed,

The moon will shine, the winds will rise,
And all around and through the skies
The light clouds travel o'er my head.

O, busy, busy things!
Ye mock me with your ceaseless life;
For all the hidden springs will flow,
And all the blades of grass will grow,
When I have neither peace nor strife.

And all the long night through,
The restless streams will hurry by;
And round the lands, with endless roar,
The white waves fall upon the shore,
And bit by bit devour the dry.

Even thus, but silently,
Eternity, thy tide shall flow—
And side by side with every star
Thy long-drawn swell shall bear me far,
An idle boat with none to row.

My senses fail with sleep;
My heart beats thick; the night is noon;
And faintly through its misty folds
I hear a drowsy clock that holds
Its converse with the waning moon.

Oh, solemn mystery!
That I should be so closely bound
With neither terror nor constraint,
Without a murmur of complaint,
And lose myself upon such ground!

"Rubbish!" said Ericson, as he threw down the sheets, disgusted with his own work, which so often disappoints the writer, especially if he

is by any chance betrayed into reading it aloud.

"Dinna say that, Mr. Ericson," returned Robert. "Ye maunna say that. Ye hae nae richt to lauch at honest wark, whether it be yer ain or ony ither body's. The poem noo——"

"Don't call it a poem," interrupted Ericson. "It's not worthy of the name."

"I *will* ca' 't a poem," persisted Robert; "for it's a poem to me, whatever it may be to you. An' hoo I ken 'at it's a poem is jist this: it opens my een like music to something I never saw afore."

"What is that?" asked Ericson, not sorry to be persuaded that there might after all be some merit in the productions painfully despised of himself.

"Jist this: it's only whan ye dinna want to fa' asleep 'at it luiks fearsome to ye. An' maybe the fear o' death comes i' the same way: we're feared at it 'cause we're no a'thegither ready for 't; but whan the richt time comes, it'll be as nat'ral as fa'in' asleep whan we're doonricht sleepy. Gin there be a God to ca' oor Father in heaven, I'm no thinkin' that he wad to sae mony bonny tunes pit a scraich for the hinder end. I'm thinkin', gin there be onything in 't ava—ye ken I'm no sayin', for I dinna ken—we maun jist lippen till him to dee dacent an' bonny, an' nae sic strange awfu' fash aboot it as some fowk wad mak a religion o' expeckin'."

Ericson looked at Robert with admiration mingled with something akin to merriment.

"One would think it was your grandfather holding forth, Robert," he said. "How came you to think of such things at your age?"

"I'm thinkin'," answered Robert, "ye warna muckle aulder nor mysel' whan ye took to sic things, Mr. Ericson. But 'deed, maybe my luckie-daddie *(grandfather)* pat them i' my heid, for I had a heap ado wi' his fiddle for a while. She's deid noo."

Not understanding him, Ericson began to question, and out came the story of the violins. They talked on till the last of their coals was burnt out, and then they went to bed.

Shargar had undertaken to rouse them early, that they might set out on their long walk with a long day before them. But Robert was awake before Shargar. The all but soulless light of the dreary season awoke him, and he rose and looked out. Aurora, as aged now as her loved Tithonus, peered, gray-haired and desolate, over the edge of the tossing sea, with hardly enough of light in her dim eyes to show the broken crests of the waves that rushed shorewards before the wind of her rising. Such an east wind was the right breath to issue from such a pale mouth of hopeless revelation as that which opened with dead lips across the troubled sea on the far horizon. While he gazed, the

east darkened; a cloud of hail rushed against the window; and Robert retreated to his bed. But ere he had fallen asleep, Ericson was beside him; and before he was dressed, Ericson appeared again, with his stick in his hand. They left Shargar still asleep, and descended the stairs, thinking to leave the house undisturbed. But Mrs. Fyvie was watching for them, and insisted on their taking the breakfast she had prepared. They then set out on their journey of forty miles, with half a loaf in their pockets, and money enough to get bread and cheese, and a bottle of the poorest ale, at the far-parted roadside inns.

When Shargar awoke, he wept in desolation, then crept into Robert's bed, and fell fast asleep again.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRANGE NIGHT.

THE youths had not left the city a mile behind, when a thick snowstorm came on. It did not last long, however, and they fought their way through it into a glimpse of sun. To Robert, healthy, powerful, and except at rare times, hopeful, it added to the pleasure of the journey to contend with the storm, and there was a certain steely indifference about Ericson that carried him through. They trudged on steadily for three hours along a good turnpike road, with great black masses of cloud sweeping across the sky, which now sent them a glimmer of sunlight, and now a sharp shower of hail. The country was very dreary—a succession of undulations rising into bleak moorlands, and hills whose heather would in autumn flush the land with glorious purple, but which now looked black and cheerless, as if no sunshiue could ever warm them. Now and then the moorland would sweep down to the edge of the road, diversified with

dark holes from which peats were dug, and an occasional quarry of gray granite. At one moment endless pools would be shining in the sunlight, and the next the hail would be dancing a mad fantastic dance all about them: they pulled their caps over their brows, bent their heads, and struggled on.

At length they reached their first stage, and after a meal of bread and cheese and an offered glass of whisky, started again on their journey. They did not talk much, for their force was spent on their progress.

After some consultation whether to keep the road or take a certain short cut across the moors, which would lead them into it again with a saving of several miles, the sun shining out with a little stronger promise than he had yet given, they resolved upon the latter. But in the middle of the moorland the wind and the hail came on with increased violence, and they were glad to tack from one to another of the huge stones that lay about, and take a short breathing time under the lee of each; so that when they recovered the road, they had lost as many miles in time and strength as they had saved in distance. They did not give in, however, but after another rest and a little more refreshment, started again.

The evening was now growing dusk around them, and the fatigue of the day was telling so severely on Ericson, that when in the twilight they

heard the blast of a horn behind them, and turning saw the two flaming eyes of a well-known four-horse coach come fluctuating towards them, Robert insisted on their getting up and riding the rest of the way.

"But I can't afford it," said Ericson.

"But I can," said Robert.

"I don't doubt it," returned Ericson. "But I owe you too much already."

"Gin ever we win hame—I mean to the heart o' hame—ye can pay me there."

"There will be no need then."

"Whaur's the need than to mak sic a wark aboot a saxpence or twa atween this and that? I thocht ye cared for naething that time or space or sense could grip or measure. Mr. Ericson, ye're no half sic a philosopher as ye wad set up for.—Hillo!"

Ericson laughed a weary laugh, and as the coach stopped in obedience to Robert's hail, he scrambled up behind.

The guard knew Robert, was pitiful over the condition of the travellers, would have put them inside, but that there was a lady there, and their clothes were wet, got out a great horse-rug and wrapped Robert in it, put a spare coat of his own, about an inch thick, upon Ericson, drew out a flask, took a pull at it, handed it to his new passengers, and blew a vigorous blast on his long horn, for they were approaching a desolate

shed where they had to change their weary horses for four fresh thorough-breds.

Away they went once more, careering through the gathering darkness. It was delightful indeed to have to urge one weary leg past the other no more, but be borne along towards food, fire, and bed. But their adventures were not so nearly over as they imagined. Once more the hail fell furiously—huge hailstones, each made of many, half-melted and welded together into solid lumps of ice. The coachman could scarcely hold his face to the shower, and the blows they received on their faces and legs, drove the thin-skinned, high-spirited horses nearly mad. At length they would face it no longer. At a turn in the road, where it crossed a brook by a bridge with a low stone wall, the wind met them right in the face with redoubled vehemence; the leaders swerved from it, and were just rising to jump over the parapet, when the coachman, whose hands were nearly insensible with cold, threw his leg over the reins, and pulled them up. One of the leaders reared, and fell backwards; one of the wheelers kicked vigorously; a few moments, and in spite of the guard at their heads, all was one struggling mass of bodies and legs, with a broken pole in the midst. The few passengers got down; and Robert, fearing that yet worse might happen and remembering the lady, opened the door. He found

her quite composed. As he helped her out,

"What is the matter?" asked the voice dearest to him in the world—the voice of Miss St. John.

He gave a cry of delight. Wrapped in the horse-cloth, Miss St. John did not know him.

"What is the matter?" she repeated.

"Ow, naething, mem—naething. Only I doobt we winna get ye hame the nicht."

"Is it you, Robert?" she said, gladly recognizing his voice.

"Ay, it's me, and Mr. Ericson. "We'll tak care o' ye, mem."

"But surely we shall get home!"

Robert had heard the crack of the breaking pole.

"'Deed, I doobt no."

"What are we to do then?"

"Come into the lythe *(shelter)* o' the bank here, oot o' the gait o' thae brutes o' horses," said Robert, taking off his horse-cloth and wrapping her in it.

The storm hissed and smote all around them. She took Robert's arm. Followed by Ericson, they left the coach and the struggling horses, and withdrew to a bank that overhung the road. As soon as they were out of the wind, Robert, who had made up his mind, said,

"We canna be mony yairds frae the auld hoose o' Bogbonnie. We micht win throu the

nicht there weel eneuch. I'll speir at the gaird, the minute the horses are clear. We war 'maist ower the brig, I heard the coachman say."

"I know quite well where the old house is," said Ericson. "I went in the last time I walked this way."

"Was the door open?" asked Robert.

"I don't know," answered Ericson. "I found one of the windows open in the basement."

"We'll get the len' o' ane o' the lanterns, an' gang direckly. It canna be mair nor the breedth o' a rig or twa frae the burn."

"I can take you by the road," said Ericson.

"It will be very cold," said Miss St. John,—already shivering, partly from disquietude.

"There's timmer eneuch there to haud 's warm for a twalmonth," said Robert.

He went back to the coach. By this time the horses were nearly extricated. Two of them stood steaming in the lamplight, with their sides going at twenty bellows' speed. The guard would not let him have one of the coach lamps, but gave him a small lantern of his own. When he returned with it, he found Ericson and Miss St. John talking together.

Ericson led the way, and the others followed.

"Whaur are ye gaein', gentlemen?" asked the guard, as they passed the coach.

"To the auld hoose," answered Robert.

"Ye canna do better. I maun bide wi' the

coch till the lave gang back to Drumheid wi' the horses, on' fess anither pole. Faith, it 'ill be weel into the mornin' or we win oot o' this. Tak care hoo ye gang. There's holes i' the auld hoose, I doobt."

"We'll tak gude care, ye may be sure, Hector," said Robert, as they left the bridge.

The house to which Ericson was leading them was in the midst of a field. There was just light enough to show a huge mass standing in the dark, without a tree or shelter of any sort. When they reached it, all that Miss St. John could distinguish was a wide broken stair leading up to the door, with glimpses of a large, plain, ugly, square front. The stones of the stair sloped and hung in several directions; but it was plain to a glance that the place was dilapidated through extraordinary neglect, rather than by the usual wear of time. In fact, it belonged only to the beginning of the preceding century, somewhere in Queen Anne's time. There was a heavy door to it, but fortunately for Miss St. John, who would not quite have relished getting in at the window of which Ericson had spoken, it stood a little ajar. The wind roared in the gap and echoed in the empty hall into which they now entered. Certainly Robert was right: there was wood enough to keep them warm; for that hall, and every room into which they went, from top to bottom of the huge

house, was lined with pine. No paint-brush had ever passed upon it. Neither was there a spot to be seen upon the grain of the wood: it was clean as the day when the house was finished, only it had grown much browner. A close gallery, with window frames which had never been glazed, at one story's height, leading across from the one side of the first floor to the other, looked down into the great echoing hall, which rose in the centre of the building to the height of two stories; but this was unrecognizable in the poor light of the guard's lantern. All the rooms on every floor opened each into the other; —but why should I give such a minute description, making my reader expect a ghost story, or at least a nocturnal adventure? I only want him to feel something of what our party felt as they entered this desolate building, which, though some hundred and twenty years old, bore not a single mark upon the smooth floors or spotless walls to indicate that article of furniture had ever stood in it, or human being ever inhabited it. There was a strange and unusual horror about the place—a feeling quite different from that belonging to an ancient house, however haunted it might be. It was like a body that had never had a human soul in it. There was no sense of a human history about it. Miss St. John's feeling of *eeriness* rose to the height when, in wandering through the many rooms in

search of one where the windows were less broken, she came upon one spot in the floor. It was only a hole worn down through floor after floor, from top to bottom, by the drip of the rains from the broken roof: it looked like the disease of the desolate place and she shuddered.

Here they must pass the night, with the wind roaring awfully through the echoing emptiness, and every now and then the hail clashing against what glass remained in the windows. They found one room with the window well boarded up, for until lately some care had been taken of the place to keep it from the weather. There Robert left his companions, who presently heard the sounds of tearing and breaking below, necessity justifying him in the appropriation of some of the wood-work for their own behoof. He tore a panel or two from the walls, and returning with them, lighted a fire on the empty hearth, where, from the look of the stone and mortar, certainly never fire had blazed before. The wood was dry as a bone, and burnt up gloriously.

Then first Robert bethought himself that they had nothing to eat. He himself was full of merriment, and cared nothing about eating; for had he not Miss St. John and Ericson there? but for them something must be provided. He took his lantern and went back though the storm. The hail had ceased, but the wind blew

tremendously. The coach stood upon the bridge like a stranded vessel, its two lamps holding doubtful battle with the wind, now flaring out triumphantly, now almost yielding up the ghost. Inside, the guard was snoring in defiance of the pother o'er his head.

"Hector! Hector!" cried Robert.

"Ay, ay," answered Hector. "It's no time to wauken yet."

"Hae ye nae basket, Hector, wi' something to eat in 't—naething gaein' to Rothieden 'at a a body micht say *by yer leave* till?"

"Ow! it's you, is 't?" returned Hector, rousing himself. "Na. Deil ane. An' gin I had, I daurna gie ye 't."

"I wad mak free to steal 't, though, an' tak my chance," said Robert. "But ye say ye hae nane?"

"Nane, I tell ye. Ye winna hunger afore the mornin', man."

"I'll stan' hunger as weel 's you ony day, Hector. It's no for mysel'. There's Miss St. John."

"Hoots!" said Hector, peevishly, for he wanted to go to sleep again, "gang and mak luve till her. Nae lass 'll think o' meat as lang 's ye do that. That 'll haud her ohn hungert."

The words were like blasphemy in Robert's ear. He make love to Miss St. John! He turned from the coach-door in disgust. But

there was no place he knew of where anything could be had, and he must return empty-handed.

The light of the fire shone through a little hole in the boards that closed the window. His lamp had gone out, but, guided by that, he found the road again, and felt his way up the stairs. When he entered the room he saw Miss St. John sitting on the floor, for there was nowhere else to sit, with the guard's coat under her. She had taken off her bonnet. Her back leaned against the side of the chimney, and her eyes were bent thoughtfully on the ground. In their shine Robert read instinctively that Ericson had said something that had set her thinking. He lay on the floor at some distance, leaning on his elbow, and his eye had the flash in it that indicates one who has just ceased speaking. They had not found his absence awkward at least.

"I hae been efter something to eat," said Robert; "but I canna fa' in wi' onything. We maun jist tell stories or sing sangs, as fowk do in buiks, or else Miss St. John 'ill think lang."

They did sing songs, and they did tell stories. I will not trouble my reader with more than the sketch of one which Robert told—the story of the old house wherein they sat—a house without a history, save the story of its no history. It had been built for the jointure-house

of a young countess, whose husband was an old man. A lover to whom she had turned a deaf ear had left the country, begging ere he went her acceptance of a lovely Italian grayhound. She was weak enough to receive the animal. Her husband died the same year, and before the end of it the dog went mad, and bit her. According to the awful custom of the time they smothered her between two feather-beds, just as the house of Bogbonnie was ready to receive her furniture, and become her future dwelling. No one had ever occupied it.

If Miss St. John listened to story and song without as much show of feeling as Mysie Lindsay would have manifested, it was not that she entered into them less deeply. It was that she *was* more, not felt less.

Listening at her window once with Robert, Eric Ericson had heard Mary St. John play: this was their first meeting. Full as his mind was of Mysie, he could not fail to feel the charm of a noble, stately womanhood that could give support, instead of rousing sympathy for helplessness. There was in the dignified simplicity of Mary St. John that which made every good man remember his mother; and a good man will think this grand praise, though a fast girl will take it for a doubtful compliment.

Seeing her begin to look weary, the young men spread a couch for her as best they could,

made up the fire, and telling her they would be in the hall below, retired, kindled another fire, and sat down to wait for the morning. They held a long talk. At length Robert fell asleep on the floor.

Ericson rose. One of his fits of impatient doubt was upon him. In the dying embers of the fire he strode up and down the waste hall, with the storm raving around it. He was destined to an early death; he would leave no one of his kin to mourn for him; the girl whose fair face had possessed his imagination, would not give one sigh to his memory, wandering on through the regions of fancy all the same; and the death-struggle over, he might awake in a godless void, where, having no creative power in himself, he must be tossed about, a conscious yet helpless atom, to eternity. It was not annihilation he feared, although he did shrink from the thought of unconsciousness; it was life without law that he dreaded, existence without the bonds of a holy necessity, thought without faith, being without God.

For all her fatigue Miss St. John could not sleep. The house quivered in the wind which howled more and more madly through its long passages and empty rooms; and she thought she heard cries in the midst of the howling. In vain she reasoned with herself: she could not rest. She rose and opened the door of her room,

with a vague notion of being nearer to the young men.

It opened upon the narrow gallery, already mentioned as leading from one side of the first floor to the other at mid-height along the end of the hall. The fire below shone into this gallery, for it was divided from the hall only by a screen of crossing bars of wood, like unglazed window-frames, possibly intended to hold glass. Of the relation of the passage to the hall Mary St. John knew nothing, till, approaching the light, she found herself looking down into the red dusk below. She stood rivetted; for in the centre of the hall, with his hands clasped over his head like the solitary arch of a ruined Gothic aisle, stood Ericson.

His agony had grown within him—the agony of the silence that brooded immovable throughout the infinite, whose sea would ripple to no breath of the feeble tempest of his prayers. At length it broke from him in low but sharp sounds of words.

"O God," he said, "if thou art, why dost thou not speak? If I am thy handiwork—dost thou forget that which thou hast made?"

He paused, motionless, then cried again:

"There can be no God, or he would hear."

"God has heard *me*!" said a full-toned voice of feminine tenderness somewhere in the air. Looking up, Eriscon saw the dim form of Mary

St. John half way up the side of the lofty hall. The same moment she vanished—trembling at the sound of her own voice.

Thus to Ericson as to Robert had she appeared as an angel.

And was she less of a divine messenger because she had a human body, whose path lay not through the air? The storm of misery folded its wings in Eric's bosom, and, at the sound of her voice, there was a great calm. Nor if we inquire into the matter shall we find that such an effect indicated anything derogatory to the depth of his feelings or the strength of his judgment. It is not through the judgment that a troubled heart can be set at rest. It needs a revelation, a vision; a something for the higher nature that breeds and infolds the intellect, to recognize as of its own, and lay hold of by faithful hope. And what fitter messenger of such hope than the harmonious presence of a woman, whose form itself tells of highest law, and concord, and uplifting obedience; such a one whose beauty walks the upper air of noble loveliness; whose voice, even in speech, is one of the "sphere-born harmonious sisters"? The very presence of such a being gives Unbelief the lie, deep as the throat of her lying. Harmony, which is beauty and law, works necessary faith in the region capable of truth. It needs the intervention of no reasoning. It is beheld. This

visible Peace, with that voice of woman's truth, said, "God has heard *me!*" What better testimony could an angel have brought him? Or why should an angel's testimony weigh more than such a woman's? The mere understanding of a man like Ericson would only have demanded of an angel proof that he was an angel, proof that angels knew better than he did in the matter in question, proof that they were not easy-going creatures that took for granted the rumours of heaven. The best that a miracle can do is to give hope; of the objects of faith it can give no proof; one spiritual testimony is worth a thousand of them. For to gain the sole proof of which these truths admit, a man must grow into harmony with them. If there are no such things he cannot become conscious of a harmony that has no existence; he cannot thus deceive himself; if there are, they must yet remain doubtful until the harmony between them and his own willing nature is established. The perception of this harmony is their only and incommunicable proof. For this process time is needful; and therefore we are saved by hope. Hence it is no wonder that before another half-hour was over, Ericson was asleep by Robert's side.

They were aroused in the cold gray light of the morning by the blast of Hector's horn. Miss St. John was ready in a moment. The coach

was waiting for them at the end of the grassy road that led from the house. Hector put them all inside. Before they reached Rothieden the events of the night began to wear the doubtful aspect of a dream. No allusion was made to what had occurred while Robert slept; but all the journey Ericson felt towards Miss St. John as Wordsworth felt towards the leech-gatherer, who, he says, was

> like a man from some far region sent,
> To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

And Robert saw a certain light in her eyes which reminded him of how she looked when, having repented of her momentary hardness towards him, she was ministering to his wounded head.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOME AGAIN.

WHEN Robert opened the door of his grandmother's parlour, he found the old lady seated at breakfast. She rose, pushed back her chair, and met him in the middle of the room; put her old arms round him, offered her smooth white cheek to him, and wept. Robert wondered that she did not look older; for the time he had been away seemed an age, although in truth only eight months.

"Hoo are ye, laddie?" she said. "I'm richt glaid, for I hae been thinkin' lang to see ye. Sit ye doon."

Betty rushed in, drying her hands on her apron. She had not heard him enter.

"Eh losh!" she cried, and put her wet apron to her eyes. "Sic a man as ye 're grown, Robert! A puir body like me maunna be speykin' to ye noo."

"There's nae odds in me, Betty," returned Robert.

"'Deed but there is. Ye 're sax feet an' a hairy ower, I s' warran'."

"I said there was nae odds *i'* me, Betty," persisted Robert, laughing.

"I kenna what may be *in* ye," retorted Betty; "but there's an unco' odds *upo'* ye."

"Haud yer tongue, Betty," said her mistress. "Ye oucht to ken better nor stan' jawin' wi' young men. Fess mair o' the creamy cakes."

"Maybe Robert wad like a drappy o' parritch."

"Onything, Betty," said Robert. "I'm at deith's door wi' hunger."

"Rin, Betty, for the cakes. An' fess a loaf o' white breid; we canna bide for the parritch."

Robert fell to his breakfast, and while he ate —somewhat ravenously—he told his grandmother the adventures of the night, and introduced the question whether he might not ask Ericson to stay a few days with him.

"Ony frien' o' yours, laddie," she replied, qualifying her words only with the addition— "gin he be a frien'.—Whaur is he noo?"

"He's up at Miss Naper's."

"Hoots! What for didna ye fess him in wi' ye?—Betty!"

"Na, na, grannie. The Napers are frien's o' his. We maunna interfere wi' them. I'll gang up mysel' ance I hae had my brakfast."

"Weel, weel, laddie. Eh! I'm blythe to see ye! Hae ye gotten ony prizes noo?"

"Ay have I. I'm sorry they 're nae baith o' them the first. But I hae the first o' ane an' the third o' the ither."

"I *am* pleased at that, Robert. Ye'll be a man some day gin ye haud frae drink an' frae—frae leein'."

"I never tellt a lee i' my life, grannie."

"Na. I dinna think 'at ever ye did.—An' what's that crater Shargar aboot?"

"Ow, jist gaein' to be a croon o' glory to ye, grannie. He vroucht like a horse till Dr. Anderson took him by the han', an' sent him to the schuil. An' he's gaein' to mak something o' 'im, or a' be dune. He's a fine crater, Shargar."

"He tuik a munelicht flittin' frae here," rejoined the old lady, in a tone of offence. "He micht hae said gude day to me, I think."

"Ye see he was feart at ye, grannie."

"Feart at *me*, laddie! Wha ever was feart at me? I never feart onybody i' my life."

So little did the dear old lady know that she was a terror to her neighbourhood!—simply because, being a law to herself, she would therefore be a law to other people,—a conclusion that cannot be concluded.

Mrs. Falconer's courtesy did not fail. Her grandson had ceased to be a child; her responsibility had in so far ceased; her conscience was relieved at being rid of it; and the humanity of her great heart came out to greet the

youth. She received Ericson with perfect hospitality, made him at home as far as the stately respect she showed him would admit of his being so, and confirmed in him the impression of her which Robert had given him. They held many talks together; and such was the circumspection of Ericson that, not saying a word he did not believe, he so said what he did believe, or so avoided the points upon which they would have differed seriously, that although his theology was of course far from satisfying her, she yet affirmed her conviction that the root of the matter was in him. This distressed Ericson, however, for he feared he must have been deceitful, if not hypocritical.

It was with some grumbling that the Napiers, especially Miss Letty, parted with him to Mrs. Falconer. The hearts of all three had so taken to the youth, that he found himself more at home in that hostelry than anywhere else in the world. Miss Letty was the only one that spoke lightly of him—she even went so far as to make good-natured game of him sometimes—all because she loved him more than the others—more indeed than she cared to show, for fear of exposing "an old woman's ridiculous fancy," as she called her predilection.—"A lang-leggit, prood, landless laird," she would say, with a moist glimmer in her loving eyes, "wi' the maist ridiculous feet ye ever saw—hardly room

for the five taes atween the twa! Losh!"

When Robert went forth into the streets, he was surprised to find how friendly every one was. Even old William MacGregor shook him kindly by the hand, inquired after his health, told him not to study too hard, informed him that he had a copy of a queer old book that he would like to see, &c., &c. Upon reflection Robert discovered the cause: though he had scarcely gained a bursary, he had gained prizes; and in a little place like Rothieden—long may there be such places!—everybody with any brains at all took a share in the distinction he had merited.

Ericson stayed only a few days. He went back to the twilight of the north, his fishy cousin, and his tutorship at Sir Olaf Petersen's. Robert accompanied him ten miles on his journey, and would have gone further, but that he was to play on his violin before Miss St. John the next day for the first time.

When he told his grandmother of the appointment he had made, she only remarked, in a tone of some satisfaction,

"Weel, she's a fine lass, Miss St. John; and gin ye tak to ane anither, ye canna do better."

But Robert's thoughts were so different from Mrs. Falconer's that he did not even suspect what she meant. He no more dreamed of marrying Miss St John than of marrying his forbidden

grandmother. Yet she was no less at this period the ruling influence of his life; and if it had not been for the benediction of her presence and power, this part of his history too would have been torn by inward troubles. It is not good that a man should batter day and night at the gate of heaven. Sometimes he can do nothing else, and then nothing else is worth doing; but the very noise of the siege will sometimes drown the still small voice that calls from the open postern. There is a door wide to the jewelled wall not far from any one of us, even when he least can find it.

Robert, however, notwithstanding the pedestal upon which Miss St. John stood in his worshipping regard, began to be aware that his feeling towards her was losing something of its placid flow, and I doubt whether Miss St. John did not now and then see that in his face which made her tremble a little, and doubt whether she stood on safe ground with a youth just waking into manhood—tremble a little, not for herself, but for him. Her fear would have found itself more than justified, if she had surprised him kissing her glove, and then replacing it where he had found it, with the air of one consciously guilty of presumption.

Possibly also Miss St. John may have had to confess to herself that had she not had her history already, and been ten years his senior, she

might have found no little attraction in the noble bearing and handsome face of young Falconer. The rest of his features had now grown into complete harmony of relation with his whilom premature and therefore portentous nose; his eyes glowed and gleamed with humanity, and his whole countenance bore self-evident witness of being a true face and no mask, a revelation of his individul being, and not a mere inheritance from a fine breed of fathers and mothers. As it was, she could admire and love him without danger of falling in love with him; but not without fear lest he should not assume the correlative position. She saw no way of prevention, however, without running a risk of worse. She shrunk altogether from *putting on* anything; she abhorred tact, and pretence was impracticable with Mary St. John. She resolved that if she saw any definite ground for uneasiness she would return to England, and leave any impression she might have made to wear out in her absence and silence. Things did not seem to render this necessary yet.

Meantime the violin of the dead shoemaker blended its wails with the rich harmonies of Mary St. John's piano, and the soul of Robert went forth upon the level of the sound and hovered about the beauty of his friend. Oftener than she approved was she drawn by Robert's eagerness into these *consorts*.

But the heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord.

While Robert thus once more for a season stood behind the cherub with the flaming sword, Ericson was teaching two stiff-necked youths in a dreary house in the midst of one of the moors of Caithness. One day he had a slight attack of blood-spitting, and welcomed it as a sign from what heaven there might be beyond the grave.

He had not received the consolation of Miss St. John without, although unconsciously, leaving something in her mind in return. No human being has ever been allowed to occupy the position of a pure benefactor. The receiver has his turn, and becomes the giver. From her talk with Ericson, and even more from the influence of his sad holy doubt, a fresh touch of the actinism of the solar truth fell upon the living seed in her heart, and her life burst forth afresh, began to bud in new questions that needed answers, and new prayers that sought them.

But she never dreamed that Robert was capable of sympathy with such thoughts and feelings: he was but a boy. Nor in power of dealing with truth was he at all on the same level with her, for however poor he might have considered her theories, she had led a life hitherto, had passed through sorrow without bitterness,

had done her duty without pride, had hoped without conceit of favour, had, as she believed, heard the voice of God saying, "This is the way." Hence she was not afraid when the mists of prejudice began to rise from around her path, and reveal a country very different from what she had fancied it. She was soon able to perceive that it was far more lovely and full of righteousness and peace than she had supposed. But this anticipates; only I shall have less occasion to speak of Miss St. John by the time she has come into this purer air of the uphill road.

Robert was happier than he ever could have expected to be in his grandmother's house. She treated him like an honoured guest, let him do as he would, and go where he pleased. Betty kept the gable room in the best of order for him, and, pattern of housemaids, dusted his table without disturbing his papers. For he began to have papers; nor were they occupied only with the mathematics to which he was now giving his chief attention, preparing, with the occasional help of Mr. Innes, for his second session.

He had fits of wandering, though; visited all the old places; spent a week or two more than once at Bodyfauld; rode Mr. Lammie's half-broke filly; revelled in the glories of the summer once more; went out to tea occasionally, or supped with the schoolmaster; and, ex-

cept going to church on Sunday, which was a weariness to every inch of flesh upon his bones, enjoyed everything.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A GRAVE OPENED.

ONE thing that troubled Robert on this his first return home, was the discovery that the surroundings of his childhood had deserted him. There they were, as of yore, but they seemed to have nothing to say to him—no remembrance of him. It was not that everything looked small and narrow; it was not that the streets he saw from his new quarters, the gable-room, were awfully still after the roar of Aberdeen, and a passing cart seemed to shudder at the loneliness of the noise itself made; it was that everything seemed to be conscious only of the past and care nothing for him now. The very chairs with their inlaid backs had an embalmed look, and stood as in a dream. He could pass even the walled-up door without emotion, for all the feeling that had been gathered about the knob that admitted him to Mary St. John, had transferred itself to the brass bell-pull at her street-door.

But one day, after standing for a while at the window, looking down on the street where he had first seen the beloved form of Ericson, a certain old mood began to revive in him. He had been working at quadratic equations all the morning; he had been foiled in the attempt to find the true algebraic statement of a very tough question involving various ratios; and, vexed with himself, he had risen to look out, as the only available *zeitvertreib*. It was one of those rainy days of spring which it needs a hopeful mood to distinguish from autumnal ones —dull, depressing, persistent: there might be sunshine in Mercury or Venus—but on the earth could be none, from his right hand round by India and America to his left; and certainly there was none between—a mood to which all sensitive people are liable who have not yet learned by faith in the everlasting to rule their own spirits. Naturally enough his thoughts turned to the place where he had suffered most—his old room in the garret. Hitherto he had shrunk from visiting it; but now he turned away from the window, went up the steep stairs, with their one sharp corkscrew curve, pushed the door, which clung unwillingly to the floor, and entered. It was a nothing of a place—with a window that looked only to heaven. There was the empty bedstead against the wall, where he had so often kneeled, sending forth vain

prayers to a deaf heaven! Had they indeed been vain prayers, and to a deaf heaven? or had they been prayers which a hearing God must answer not according to the haste of the praying child, but according to the calm course of his own infinite law of love?

Here, somehow or other, the things about him did not seem so much absorbed in the past, notwithstanding those untroubled rows of papers bundled in red tape. True, they looked almost awful in their lack of interest and their non-humanity, for there is scarcely anything that absolutely loses interest save the records of money; but his mother's workbox lay behind them. And, strange to say, the side of that bed drew him to kneel down: he did not yet believe that prayer was in vain. If God had not answered him before, that gave no certainty that he would not answer him now. It was, he found, still as rational as it had ever been to hope that God would answer the man that cried to him. This came, I think, from the fact that God had been answering him all the time, although he had not recognized his gifts as answers. Had he not given him Ericson, his intercourse with whom and his familiarity with whose doubts had done anything but quench his thirst after the higher life? For Ericson's, like his own, were true and good and reverent doubts, not merely consistent with but

in a great measure springing from devoutness and aspiration. Surely such doubts are far more precious in the sight of God than many beliefs?

He kneeled and sent forth one cry after the Father, arose, and turned towards the shelves, removed some of the bundles of letters, and drew out his mother's little box.

There lay the miniature, still and open-eyed as he had left it. There too lay the bit of paper, brown and dry, with the hymn and the few words of sorrow written thereon. He looked at the portrait, but did not open the folded paper. Then first he thought whether there might not be something more in the box: what he had taken for the bottom seemed to be a tray. He lifted it by two little ears of ribbon, and there, underneath, lay a letter addressed to his father, in the same old-fashioned handwriting as the hymn. It was sealed with brown wax, full of spangles, impressed with a bush of something—he could not tell whether rushes or reeds or flags. Of course he dared not open it. His holy mother's words to his erring father must be sacred even from the eyes of their son. But what other or fitter messenger than himself could bear it to its destination? It was for this that he had been guided to it.

For years he had regarded the finding of his father as the first duty of his manhood: it was as

if his mother had now given her sanction to the quest, with this letter to carry to the husband who, however he might have erred, was yet dear to her. He replaced it in the box, but the box no more on the forsaken shelf with its dreary barricade of soulless records. He carried it with him, and laid it in the bottom of his box, which henceforth he kept carefully locked: there lay as it were the pledge of his father's salvation, and his mother's redemption from an eternal grief.

He turned to his equation: it had cleared itself up; he worked it out in five minutes. Betty came to tell him that the dinner was ready, and he went down, peaceful and hopeful, to his grandmother.

While at home he never worked in the evenings: it was bad enough to have to do so at college. Hence nature had a chance with him again. Blessings on the wintry blasts that broke into the first youth of Summer! They made him feel what summer was! Blessings on the cheerless days of rain, and even of sleet and hail, that would shove the reluctant year back into January. The fair face of Spring, with her tears dropping upon her quenchless smiles, peeped in suppressed triumph from behind the growing corn and the budding sallows on the river-bank. Nay, even when the snow came once more in defiance of calendars, it was but a back-ground from which the near genesis should "stick fiery off."

In general he had a lonely walk after his lesson with Miss St. John was over: there was no one at Rothieden to whom his heart and intellect both were sufficiently drawn to make a close friendship possible. He had companions, however: Ericson had left his papers with him. The influence of these led him into yet closer sympathy with Nature and all her moods; a sympathy which, even in the stony heart of London, he not only did not lose but never ceased to feel. Even there a breath of wind would not only breathe upon him, it would breathe into him; and a sunset seen from the Strand was lovely as if it had hung over rainbow seas. On his way home he would often go into one of the shops where the neighbours congregated in the evenings, and hold a little talk; and although, with Miss St. John filling his heart, his friend's poems his imagination, and geometry and algebra his intellect, great was the contrast between his own inner mood and the words by which he kept up human relations with his townsfolk, yet in after years he counted it one of the greatest blessings of a lowly birth and education that he knew hearts and feelings which to understand one must have been young amongst them. He would not have had a chance of knowing such as these if he had been the son of Dr. Anderson and born in Aberdeen.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROBERT MEDIATES.

ONE lovely evening in the first of the summer Miss St. John had dismissed him earlier than usual, and he had wandered out for a walk. After a round of a couple of miles, he returned by a fir-wood, through which went a pathway. He had heard Mary St. John say that she was going to see the wife of a labourer who lived at the end of this path. In the heart of the trees it was growing very dusky; but when he came to a spot where they stood away from each other a little space, and the blue sky looked in from above with one cloud floating in it from which the rose of the sunset was fading, he seated himself on a little mound of moss that had gathered over an ancient stump by the footpath, and drew out his friend's papers. Absorbed in his reading, he was not aware of an approach till the rustle of silk startled him. He lifted up his eyes, and saw Miss St. John a few yards from him on the pathway. He rose.

"It's almost too dark to read now, isn't it, Robert?" she said.

"Ah!" said Robert, "I know this writing so well that I could read it by moonlight. I wish I might read some of it to you. You *would* like it."

"May I ask whose it is, then? Poetry, too!"

"It's Mr. Ericson's. But I'm feared he wouldna like me to read it to anybody but myself. And yet——"

"I don't think he would mind me," returned Miss St. John. "I do know him a little. It is not as if I were *quite* a stranger, you know. Did he tell you not?"

"No. But then he never thought of such a thing. I don't know if it's fair, for they are carelessly written, and there are words and lines here and there that I am sure he would alter if he cared for them ae hair."

"Then if he doesn't care for them, he won't mind my hearing them. There!" she said, seating herself on the stump. "You sit down on the grass and read me—one at least."

"You'll remember they were never intended to be read?" urged Robert, not knowing what he was doing, and so fulfilling his destiny.

"I will be as jealous of his honour as ever you can wish," answered Miss St. John gaily.

Robert laid himself on the grass at her feet, and read:—

MY TWO GENIUSES.

One is a slow and melancholy maid:
I know not if she cometh from the skies,
Or from the sleepy gulfs, but she will rise
Often before me in the twilight shade
Holding a bunch of poppies, and a blade
Of springing wheat: prostrate my body lies
Before her on the turf, the while she ties
A fillet of the weed about my head;
And in the gaps of sleep I seem to hear
A gentle rustle like the stir of corn,
And words like odours thronging to my ear:
"Lie still, beloved, still until the morn;
Lie still with me upon this rolling sphere,
Still till the judgment—thou art faint and worn."

The other meets me in the public throng:
Her hair streams backward from her loose attire;
She hath a trumpet and an eye of fire;
She points me downward steadily and long—
"There is thy grave—arise, my son, be strong!
Hands are upon thy crown; awake, aspire
To immortality; heed not the lyre
Of the enchantress, nor her poppy-song;
But in the stillness of the summer calm,
Tremble for what is godlike in thy being.
Listen awhile, and thou shalt hear the psalm
Of victory sung by creatures past thy seeing;
And from far battle-fields there comes the neighing
Of dreadful onset, though the air is balm."

Maid with the poppies, must I let thee go?
Alas! I may not; thou art likewise dear;
I am but human, and thou hast a tear,
When she hath nought but splendour, and the glow

Of a wild energy that mocks the flow
Of the poor sympathies which keep us here.
Lay past thy poppies, and come twice as near,
And I will teach thee, and thou too shalt grow;
And thou shalt walk with me in open day
Through the rough thoroughfares with quiet grace;
And the wild-visaged maid shall lead the way,
Timing her footsteps to a gentler pace,
As her great orbs turn ever on thy face,
Drinking in draughts of loving help alway.

Miss St. John did not speak.

"War ye able to follow him?" asked Robert.

"Quite, I assure you," she answered, with a tremulousness in her voice which delighted Robert as evidence of his friend's success.

"But they're nae a' so easy to follow, I can tell ye, mem. Just hearken to this," he said, with some excitement.

When the storm was proudest,
And the wind was loudest,
I heard the hollow caverns drinking down below;
When the stars were bright,
And the ground was white,
I heard the grasses springing underneath the snow.

Many voices spake—
The river to the lake,
The iron-ribbed sky was talking to the sea;
And every starry spark
Made music with the dark,
And said how bright and beautiful everything must be.

"That line, mem," remarked Robert, "'s only jist scrattit in, as gin he had no intention o' leavin' 't, an' only set it there to keep room for anither. But we'll jist gang on wi' the lave o' 't. I ouchtna to hae interruppit it.

When the sun was setting,
All the clouds were getting
Beautiful and silvery in the rising moon;
Beneath the leafless trees
Wrangling in the breeze,
I could hardly see them for the leaves of June.

When the day had ended,
And the night descended,
I heard the sound of streams that I heard not through the day,
And every peak afar,
Was ready for a star,
And they climbed and rolled around until the morning gray.

Then slumber soft and holy
Came down upon me slowly;
And I went I know not whither, and I lived I know not how;
My glory had been banished,
For when I woke it vanished,
But I waited on its coming, and I am waiting now.

"*There!*" said Robert, ending, "can ye mak onything o' that, Miss St. John?"

"I don't say I can in words," she answered; "but I think I could put it all into music."

"But surely ye maun hae some notion o' what it's aboot afore you can do that."

"Yes; but I have some notion of what it's about, I think. Just lend it to me; and by the time we have our next lesson, you will see whether I'm not able to show you I understand it. I shall take good care of it," she added, with a smile, seeing Robert's reluctance to part with it. "It doesn't matter my having it, you know, now that you've read it to me. I want to make you do it justice.—But it's quite time I were going home. Besides, I really don't think you can see to read any more."

"Weel, it's better no to try, though I hae them maistly upo' my tongue: I might blunder, and that wad blaud them.—Will you let me go home with you?" he added, in pure tremulous English.

"Certainly, if you like," she answered; and they walked towards the town.

Robert opened the fountain of his love for Ericson, and let it gush like a river from a hill-side. He talked on and on about him, with admiration, gratitude, devotion. And Miss St. John was glad of the veil of the twilight over her face as she listened, for the boy's enthusiasm trembled through her as the wind through an Æolian harp. Poor Robert! He did not know, I say, what he was doing, and so was fulfilling his sacred destiny.

"Bring your manuscripts when you come next," she said, as they walked along—gently adding,

"I admire your friend's verses very much, and should like to hear more of them."

"I'll be sure an' do that," answered Robert, in delight that he had found one to sympathize with him in his worship of Ericson, and that one his other idol.

When they reached the town, Miss St. John, calling to mind its natural propensity to gossip, especially on the evening of a market-day, when the shopkeepers, their labours over, would be standing in a speculative mood at their doors, surrounded by groups of friends and neighbours, felt shy of showing herself on the square with Robert, and proposed that they should part, giving as a by-the-by reason that she had a little shopping to do as she went home. Too simple to suspect the real reason, but with a heart that delighted in obedience, Robert bade her good night at once, and took another way.

As he passed the door of Merson the haberdasher's shop, there stood William MacGregor, the weaver, looking at nothing and doing nothing. We have seen something of him before: he was a remarkable compound of good nature and bad temper. People were generally afraid of him, because he had a biting satire at his command, amounting even to wit, which found vent in verse—not altogether despicable even from a literary point of view. The only person

he, on his part, was afraid of, was his own wife; for upon her, from lack of apprehension, his keenest irony fell, as he said, like water on a duck's back, and in respect of her he had, therefore, no weapon of offence to strike terror withal. Her dulness was her defence. He liked Robert. When he saw him, he wakened up, laid hold of him by the button, and drew him in.

"Come in, lad," he said, "an' tak a pinch. I'm waitin' for Merson." As he spoke he took from his pocket his *mull*, made of the end of a ram's horn, and presented it to Robert, who accepted the pledge of friendship. While he was partaking, MacGregor drew himself with some effort upon the counter, saying in a half-comical, half-admonitory tone,

"Weel, and hoo's the mathematics, Robert?"

"Thrivin'," answered Robert, falling into his humour.

"Weel, that's verra weel. Duv ye min', Robert, hoo, whan ye was aboot the age o' aucht year aul', ye cam' to me ance at my shop aboot something yer gran'mither, honest woman, wantit, an' I, by way o' takin' my fun o' ye, said to ye, 'Robert, ye hae grown desperate; ye're a man clean; ye hae gotten the breeks on.' An' says ye, 'Ay, Mr. MacGregor, I want naething noo but a watch an' a wife?'"

"I doobt I've forgotten a' aboot it, Mr. MacGregor," answered Robert. "But I've made some progress, accordin' to your story, for Dr. Anderson, afore I cam hame, gae me a watch. An' a fine crater it is, for it aye does its best, an' sae I excuse its shortcomin's."

"There's just ae thing, an' nae anither," returned the manufacturer, "that I can*not* excuse in a watch. Gin a watch gangs ower fest, ye fin' 't oot. Gin she gangs ower slow, ye fin' 't oot, an' ye can aye calculate upo' 't correck eneuch for maitters sublunairy, as Mr. Maccleary says. An' gin a watch stops a'thegither, ye ken it's failin', an' ye ken whaur it sticks, an' a' 'at ye say 's 'Tut, tut, de'il hae 't for a watch!' But there's ae thing that God nor man canna bide in a watch, an' that's whan it stan's still for a bittock, an' syne gangs on again. Ay, ay! tic, tic, tic! wi' a fair face and a leein' hert. It wad gar ye believe it was a' richt, and time for anither tum'ler, whan it's twal o'clock, an' the kirkyaird fowk thinkin' aboot risin'. Fegs, I had a watch o' my father's, an' I regairdit it wi' a reverence mair like a human bein': the second time it played me that pliskie, I dang oot its guts upo' the loupin'-on-stane at the door o' the chop. But lat the watch sit: whaur's the wife? Ye canna be a man yet wantin' the wife—by yer ain statement."

"The watch cam unsoucht, Mr. MacGregor,

an' I'm thinkin' sae maun the wife," answered Robert, laughing.

"Preserve me for ane frae a wife that comes unsoucht," returned the weaver. "But, my lad, there may be some wives that winna come whan they *are* soucht. Preserve me frae them too!—Noo, maybe ye dinna ken what I mean—*but tak ye tent what ye're aboot.* Dinna ye think 'at ilka bonnie lass 'at may like to haud a wark wi' ye 's jist ready to mairry ye aff han' whan ye say, 'Noo, my dawtie.'—An' ae word mair, Robert: Young men, especially braw lads like yersel', 's unco ready to fa' in love wi' women fit to be their mithers. An' sae ye see——"

He was interrupted by the entrance of a girl. She had a shawl over her head, notwithstanding it was summer weather, and crept in hesitatingly, as if she were not quite at one with herself as to her coming purchase. Approaching a boy behind the counter on the opposite side of the shop, she asked for something, and he proceeded to serve her. Robert could not help thinking, from the one glimpse of her face he had got through the dusk, that he had seen her before. Suddenly the vision of an earthen floor with a pool of brown sunlight upon it, bare feet, brown hair, and soft eyes, mingled with a musk odour wafted from Arabian fairy-land, rose before him: it was Jessie Hewson.

"I ken that lassie," he said, and moved to

get down from the counter on which he too had seated himself.

"Na, na," whispered the manufacturer, laying, like the Ancient Mariner, a brown skinny hand of restraint upon Robert's arm—"na, na, never heed her. Ye maunna speyk to ilka lass 'at ye ken.—Poor thing! she's been doin' something wrang, to gang slinkin' aboot i' the gloamin' like a baukie (*bat*), wi' her plaid ower her heid. Dinna fash wi' her."

"Nonsense!" returned Robert, with indignation. "What for shouldna I speik till her? She's a decent lassie—a dochter o' James Hewson, the cottar at Bodyfauld. I ken her fine."

He said this in a whisper; but the girl seemed to hear it, for she left the shop with a perturbation which the dimness of the late twilight could not conceal. Robert hesitated no longer, but followed her, heedless of the louder expostulations of MacGregor. She was speeding away down the street, but he took longer strides than she, and was almost up with her, when she drew her shawl closer about her head, and increased her pace.

"Jessie!" said Robert, in a tone of expostulation. But she made no answer. Her head sunk lower on her bosom, and she hurried yet faster. He gave a long stride or two and laid his hand on her shoulder. She stood still, trembling.

"Jessie, dinna ye ken me—Robert Faukner? Dinna be feart at me. What's the maitter wi' ye, 'at ye winna speik till a body? Hoo's a' the fowk at hame?"

She burst out crying, cast one look into Robert's face, and fled. What a change was in that face! The peach-colour was gone from her cheek; it was pale and thin. Her eyes were hollow, with dark shadows under them, the shadows of a sad sunset. A foreboding of the truth arose in his heart, and the tears rushed up into his eyes. The next moment the eidolon of Mary St. John, moving gracious and strong, clothed in worship and the dignity which is its own defence, appeared beside that of Jessie Hewson, her bowed head shaken with sobs, and her weak limbs urged to ungraceful flight. As if walking in the vision of an eternal truth, he went straight to Captain Forsyth's door.

"I want to speak to Miss St. John, Isie," said Robert.

"She'll be doon in a minit."

"But isna yer mistress i' the drawin'-room? —I dinna want to see *her*."

"Ow, weel," said the girl, who was almost fresh from the country, "jist rin up the stair, an' chap at the door o' her room."

With the simplicity of a child, for what a girl told him to do must be right, Robert sped up

the stair, his heart going like a fire-engine. He had never approached Mary's room from this side, but instinct or something else led him straight to her door. He knocked.

"Come in," she said, never doubting it was the maid, and Robert entered.

She was brushing her hair by the light of a chamber candle. Robert was seized with awe, and his limbs trembled. He could have kneeled before her—not to beg forgiveness, he did not think of that—but to worship, as a man may worship a woman. It is only a strong, pure heart like Robert's that ever can feel all the inroad of the divine mystery of womanhood. But he did not kneel. He had a duty to perform. A flush rose in Miss St. John's face, and sank away, leaving it pale. It was not that she thought once of her own condition, with her hair loose on her shoulders, but, able only to conjecture what had brought him thither, she could not but regard Robert's presence with dismay. She stood with her ivory brush in her right hand uplifted, and a great handful of hair in her left. She was soon relieved, however, although, what with his contemplated intercession, the dim vision of Mary's lovely face between the masses of her hair, and the lavender odour that filled the room—perhaps also a faint suspicion of impropriety sufficient to give force to the rest—Robert was thrown back into the

abyss of his mother-tongue, and out of this abyss talked like a Behemoth.

"Robert!" said Mary, in a tone which, had he not been so eager after his end, he might have interpreted as one of displeasure.

"Ye maun hearken till me, mem.—Whan I was oot at Bodyfauld," he began methodically, and Mary, bewildered, gave one hasty brush to her handful of hair and again stood still: she could imagine no connection between this meeting and their late parting—"Whan I was oot at Bodyfauld ae simmer, I grew acquant wi' a bonnie lassie there, the dochter o' Jeames Hewson, an honest cottar, wi' Shakspeare an' the Arabian Nichts upo' a skelf i' the hoose wi' 'im. I gaed in ae day whan I wasna weel; an' she jist ministert to me, as nane ever did but yersel', mem. An' she was that kin' an' mither-like to the wee bit greitin' bairnie 'at she had to tak care o' 'cause her mither was oot wi' the lave shearin'! Her face was jist like a simmer day, an' weel I likit the luik o' the lassie!—I met her again the nicht. Ye never saw sic a change. A white face, an' nothing but greitin' to come oot o' her. She ran frae me as gin I had been the de'il himsel'. An' the thocht o' you, sae bonnie an' straucht an' gran' cam ower me."

Yielding to a masterful impulse, Robert did kneel now. As if sinner, and not mediator, he

pressed the hem of her garment to his lips.

"Dinna be angry at me, Miss St. John," he pleaded, "but be mercifu' to the lassie. Wha's to help her that can no more luik a man i' the face, but the clear-e'ed lass that wad luik the sun himsel' oot o' the lift gin he daured to say a word against her. It's ae woman that can uphaud anither. Ye ken what I mean, an' I needna say mair."

He rose and turned to leave the room.

Bewildered and doubtful, Miss St. John did not know what to answer, but felt that she must make some reply.

"You haven't told me where to find the girl, or what you want me to do with her."

"I'll fin' oot whaur she bides," he said, moving again towards the door.

"But what am I to do with her, Robert?"

"That's your pairt. Ye maun fin' oot what to do wi' her. I canna tell ye that. But gin I was you, I wad gie her a kiss to begin wi'. She's nane o' yer brazen-faced hizzies, yon. A kiss wad be the savin' o' her."

"But you may be—But I have nothing to go upon. She would resent my interference."

"She's past resentin' onything. She was gaein' aboot the toon like ane o' the deid 'at hae naething to say to onybody, an' naebody onything to say to them. Gin she gangs on like that she'll no be alive lang."

That night Jessie Hewson disappeared. A mile or two up the river under a high bank, from which the main current had receded, lay an awful, swampy place—full of reeds, except in the middle where was one round space full of dark water and mud. Near this Jessie Hewson was seen about an hour after Robert had thus pled for her with his angel.

The event made a deep impression upon Robert. The last time that he saw them, James and his wife were as cheerful as usual, and gave him a hearty welcome. Jessie was in service, and doing well, they said. The next time he opened the door of the cottage it was like the entrance to a haunted tomb. Not a smile was in the place. James's cheeriness was all gone. He was sitting at the table with his head leaning on his hand. His bible was open before him, but he was not reading a word. His wife was moving lislessly about. They looked just as Jessie had looked that night—as if they had died long ago, but somehow or other could not get into their graves and be at rest. The child Jessie had nursed with such care was toddling about, looking rueful with loss. George had gone to America, and the whole of that family's joy had vanished from the earth.

The subject was not resumed between Miss St. John and Robert. The next time he saw her, he knew by her pale troubled face that she

had heard the report that filled the town; and she knew by his silence that it had indeed reference to the same girl of whom he had spoken to her. The music would not go right that evening. Mary was *distraite*, and Robert was troubled. It was a week or two before there came a change. When the turn did come, over his being love rushed up like a spring-tide from the ocean of the Infinite.

He was accompanying her piano with his violin. He made blunders, and her playing was out of heart. They stopped as by consent, and a moment's silence followed. All at once she broke out with something Robert had never heard before. He soon found that it was a fantasy upon Ericson's poem. Ever through a troubled harmony ran a silver thread of melody from far away. It was the caverns drinking from the tempest overhead, the grasses growing under the snow, the stars making music with the dark, the streams filling the night with the sounds the day had quenched, the whispering call of the dreams left behind in "the fields of sleep,"—in a word, the central life pulsing in aeonian peace through the outer ephemeral storms. At length her voice took up the theme. The silvery thread became song, and through all the opposing, supporting harmonies she led it to the solution of a close in which the only sorrow was in the music itself, for its very life

is an "endless ending." She found Robert kneeling by her side. As she turned from the instrument his head drooped over her knee. She laid her hand on his clustering curls, bethought herself, and left the room. Robert wandered out as in a dream. At midnight he found himself on a solitary hill-top, seated in the heather, with a few tiny fir-trees about him, and the sounds of a wind, ethereal as the stars overhead, flowing through their branches: he heard the sound of it, but it did not touch him.

Where was God?

In him and his question.

CHAPTER XX.

ERICSON LOSES TO WIN.

IF Mary St. John had been an ordinary woman, and if, notwithstanding, Robert had been in love with her, he would have done very little in preparation for the coming session. But although she now *possessed* him, although at times he only knew himself as loving her, there was such a mountain air of calm about her, such an outgoing divinity of peace, such a largely moulded harmony of being, that he could not love her otherwise than grandly. For her sake, weary with loving her, he would yet turn to his work, and, to be worthy of her, or rather, for he never dreamed of being worthy of her, to be worthy of leave to love her, would forget her enough to lay hold of some abstract truth of lines, angles, or symbols. A strange way of being in love, reader? You think so? I would there were more love like it: the world would be centuries nearer its redemption if a millionth

part of the love in it were of the sort. All I insist, however, on my reader's believing is, that it showed, in a youth like Robert, not less but more love that he could go against love's sweetness for the sake of love's greatness. Literally, not figuratively, Robert would kiss the place where her foot had trod; but I know that once he rose from such a kiss "to trace the hyperbola by means of a string."

It had been arranged between Ericson and Robert, in Miss Napier's parlour, the old lady knitting beside, that Ericson should start, if possible, a week earlier than usual, and spend the difference with Robert at Rothieden. But then the old lady had opened her mouth and spoken. And I firmly believe, though little sign of tenderness passed between them, it was with an elder sister's feeling for Letty's admiration of the "lan'less laird," that she said as follows:—

"Dinna ye think, Mr. Ericson, it wad be but fair to come to us neist time? Mistress Faukner, honest lady, an' lang hae I kent her, 's no sae auld a frien' to you, Mr. Ericson, as oorsel's—nae offence to her, ye ken. A'body canna be frien's to a'body, ane as lang 's anither, ye ken."

"'Deed I maun alloo, Miss Naper," interposed Robert, "it's only fair. Ye see, Mr. Ericson, I cud see as muckle o' ye almost, the tae way as the tither. Miss Naper maks me welcome as weel's you."

"An' I *will* mak ye welcome, Robert, as lang's ye're a gude lad, as ye are, and gang na efter—nae ill gait. But lat me hear o' yer doin' as sae mony young gentlemen do, espeacially whan they're ta'en up by their rich relations, an', public-hoose as this is, I'll close the door o' 't i' yer face."

"Bless me, Miss Naper!" said Robert, "what hae I dune to set ye at me that gait? Faith, I dinna ken what ye mean."

"Nae mair do I, laddie. I hae naething against ye whatever. Only ye see auld fowk luiks aheid, an' wad fain be as sure o' what's to come as o' what's gane."

"Ye maun bide for that, I doobt," said Robert.

"Laddie," retorted Miss Napier, "ye hae mair sense nor ye hae ony richt till. Haud the tongue o' ye. Mr. Ericson 's to come here neist."

And the old lady laughed such good humour into her stocking-sole, that the foot destined to wear it ought never to have been cold while it lasted. So it was then settled; and a week before Robert was to start for Aberdeen, Ericson walked into The Boar's Head. Half an hour after that, Crookit Caumill was shown into the ga'le room with the message to Maister Robert that Maister Ericson was come, and wanted to see him.

Robert pitched Hutton's Mathematics into the grate, sprung to his feet, all but embraced Crookit Caumill on the spot, and was deterred

only by the perturbed look the man wore. Crookit Caumill was a very human creature, and hadn't a fault but the drink, Miss Napier said. And very little of that he would have had if she had been as active as she was willing.

"What's the maitter, Caumill?" asked Robert, in considerable alarm.

"Ow, naething, sir," returned Campbell.

"What gars ye look like that, than?" insisted Robert.

"Ow, naething. But whan Miss Letty cried doon the close upo' me, she had her awpron till her een, an' I thocht something bude to be wrang; but I hadna the hert to speir."

Robert darted to the door, and rushed to the inn, leaving Caumill describing *iambi* on the road behind him.

When he reached The Boar's Head there was nobody to be seen. He darted up the stair to the room where he had first waited upon Ericson.

Three or four maids stood at the door. He asked no question, but went in, a dreadful fear at his heart. Two of the sisters and Dr. Gow stood by the bed.

Ericson lay upon it, clear-eyed, and still. His cheek was flushed. The doctor looked round as Robert entered.

"Robert," he said, "you must keep your friend here quiet. He's broken a blood-vessel—walked too much, I suppose. He'll be all right soon, I

hope; but we can't be too careful. Keep him quiet—that's the main thing. He mustn't speak a word."

So saying he took his leave.

Ericson held out his thin hand. Robert grasped it. Ericson's lips moved as if he would speak.

"Dinna speik, Mr. Ericson," said Miss Letty, whose tears were flowing unheeded down her cheeks, "dinna speik. We a' ken what ye mean an' what ye want wi'oot that."

Then she turned to Robert, and said in a whisper,

"Dr. Gow wadna hae ye sent for; but I kent weel eneuch 'at he wad be a' the quaieter gin ye war here. Jist gie a chap upo' the flure gin ye want onything, an' I'll be wi' ye in twa seconds."

The sisters went away. Robert drew a chair beside the bed, and once more was nurse to his friend. The doctor had already bled him at the arm: such was the ordinary mode of treatment then.

Scarcely was he seated, when Ericson spoke —a smile flickering over his worn face.

"Robert, my boy," he said.

"Dinna speak," said Robert, in alarm; "dinna speak, Mr. Ericson."

"Nonsense," returned Ericson, feebly. "They're making a work about nothing. I've done as

much twenty times since I saw you last, and I'm not dead yet. But I think it's coming."

"What's coming?" asked Robert, rising in alarm.

"Nothing," answered Ericson, soothingly,—"only death.—I should like to see Miss St. John once before I die. Do you think she would come and see me if I were really dying?"

"I'm sure she wad. But gin ye speik like this, Miss Letty winna lat *me* come near ye, no to say *her*. Oh, Mr. Ericson! gin ye dee, I sanna care to live."

Bethinking himself that such was not the way to keep Ericson quiet, he repressed his emotion, sat down behind the curtain, and was silent. Ericson fell fast asleep. Robert crept from the room, and telling Miss Letty that he would return presently, went to Miss St. John.

"How can I go to Aberdeen without him!" he thought as he walked down the street.

Neither was a guide to the other; but the questioning of two may give just the needful points by which the parallax of a truth may be gained.

"Mr. Ericson's here, Miss St. John," he said, the moment he was shown into her presence.

Her face flushed. Robert had never seen her look so beautiful.

"He's verra ill," he added.

Her face grew pale—very pale.

"He asked if I thought you would go and see him—that is if he were going to die."

A sunset flush, but faint as on the clouds of the east, rose over her pallor.

"I will go at once," she said, rising.

"Na, na," returned Robert, hastily. "It has to be managed. It's no to be dune a' in a hurry. For ae thing, there's Dr. Gow says he maunna speak ae word; and for anither, there's Miss Letty 'ill jist be like a watch-dog to haud a'body oot ower frae 'im. We maun bide oor time. But gin ye say ye'll gang, that 'll content him i' the meantime. I'll tell him."

"I will go any moment," she said. "Is he very ill?"

"I'm afraid he is. I doobt I'll hae to gang to Aberdeen withoot him."

A week after, though he was better, his going was out of the question. Robert wanted to stay with him, but he would not hear of it. He would follow in a week or so, he said, and Robert must start fair with the rest of the *semies*.

But all the removal he was ever able to bear was to the "red room," the best in the house, opening, as I have already mentioned, from an outside stair in the archway. They put up a great screen inside the door, and there the lan'-less laird lay like a lord.

CHAPTER XXI.

SHARGAR ASPIRES.

ROBERT'S heart was dreary when he got on the box-seat of the mail-coach at Rothieden—it was yet drearier when he got down at the Royal Hotel in the street of Bon Accord—and it was dreariest of all when he turned his back on Ericson's, and entered his own room at Mrs. Fyvie's.

Shargar had met him at the coach. Robert had scarcely a word to say to him. And Shargar felt as dreary as Robert when he saw him sit down, and lay his head on the table without a word.

"What's the maitter wi' ye, Robert?" he faltered out at last. "Gin ye dinna speyk to me, I'll cut my throat. I will, faith!"

"Haud yer tongue wi' yer nonsense, Shargar. Mr. Ericson's deein'."

"O lord!" said Shargar, and said nothing more for the space of ten minutes.

Then he spoke again—slowly and sententiously.

"He hadna you to tak' care o' him, Robert. Whaur is he?"

"At the Boar's Heid."

"That's weel. He'll be luikit efter there."

"A body wad like to hae their ain han' in 't, Shargar."

"Ay. I wiss we had him here again."

The ice of trouble thus broken, the stream of talk flowed more freely.

"Hoo are ye gettin' on at the schule, man?" asked Robert.

"Nae that ill," answered Shargar. "I was at the heid o' my class yesterday for five meenits."

"An' hoo did ye like it?"

"Man, it was fine. I thocht I was a gentleman a' at ance."

"Haud ye at it, man," said Robert, as if from the heights of age and experience, "and maybe ye *will* be a gentleman some day."

"Is 't poassible, Robert? A crater like me grow intil a gentleman?" said Shargar, with wide eyes.

"What for no?" returned Robert.

"Eh, man!" said Shargar.

He stood up, sat down again, and was silent.

"For ae thing," resumed Robert, after a pause, during which he had been pondering upon the possibilities of Shargar's future—"for ae thing, I doobt whether Dr. Anderson wad hae ta'en

ony fash aboot ye, gin he hadna thocht ye had the makin' o' a gentleman i' ye."

"Eh, man!" said Shargar.

He stood up again, sat down again, and was finally silent.

Next day Robert went to see Dr. Anderson, and told him about Ericson. The doctor shook his head, as doctors have done in such cases from Æsculapius downwards. Robert pressed no further questions.

"Will he be taken care of where he is?" asked the doctor.

"Guid care o'," answered Robert.

"Has he any money, do you think?"

"I hae nae doobt he has some, for he's been teachin' a' the summer. The like o' him maun an' will work whether they're fit or no."

"Well at all events, you write, Robert, and give him the hint that he's not to fash himself about money, for I have more than he'll want. And you may just take the hint yourself at the same time, Robert, my boy," he added in, if possible, a yet kinder tone.

Robert's way of showing gratitude was the best way of all. He returned kindness with faith.

"Gin I be in ony want, doctor, I'll jist rin to ye at ance. An' gin I want ower muckle ye maun jist say *na*."

"That's a good fellow. You take things as a body means them."

"But hae ye naething ye wad like me to do for ye this session, sir?"

"No. I won't have you do anything but your own work. You have more to do than you had last year. Mind your work; and as often as you get tired over you books, shut them up and come to me. You may bring Shargar with you sometimes, but we must take care and not make too much of him all at once."

"Ay, ay, Doctor. But he's a fine crater, Shargar, an' I dinna think he'll be that easy to blaud. What do you think he's turnin' ower i' that reid heid o' his noo?"

"I can't tell that. But there's something to come out of the red head, I do believe. What is he thinking of?"

"Whether it be possible for him ever to be a gentleman. Noo I tak that for a good sign i' the likes o' him."

"No doubt of it. What did you say to him?"

"I tellt him 'at hoo I didna think ye wad hae ta'en sae muckle fash gin ye hadna had some houps o' the kin' aboot him."

"You said well. Tell him from me that I expect him to be a gentleman. And by the way, Robert, do try a little, as I think I said to you once before, to speak English. I don't mean that you should give up Scotch, you know."

"Weel, sir, I *hae* been tryin'; but what am I

to do whan ye speyk to me as gin ye war my ain father. I canna min' upo' a word o' English whan ye do that."

Dr. Anderson laughed, but his eyes glittered.

Robert found Shargar busy over his Latin version. With a "Weel, Shargar," he took his books and sat down. A few moments after, Shargar lifted his head, stared a while at Robert, and then said,

"Duv you railly think it, Robert?"

"Think what? What are ye haverin' at, ye gowk?"

"Duv ye think 'at I ever *could* grow intil a gentleman?"

"Dr. Anderson says he expecs 't o' ye."

"Eh, man!"

A long pause followed, and Shargar spoke again.

"Hoo am I to begin, Robert?"

"Begin what?"

"To be a gentleman."

Robert scratched his head, like Brutus, and at length became oracular.

"Speyk the truth," he said.

"I'll do that. But what aboot—my father?"

"Naebody 'ill cast up yer *father* to ye. Ye need hae nae fear o' that."

"My mither, than?" suggested Shargar, with hesitation.

"Ye maun haud yer face to the fac'."

"Ay, ay. But gin they said onything, ye ken —aboot *her*."

"Gin ony man-body says a word agen yer mither, ye maun jist knock him doon upo' the spot."

"But I michtna be able."

"Ye could try, ony gait."

"He micht knock *me* down, ye ken."

"Weel, gae doon than."

"Ay."

This was all the instruction Robert ever gave Shargar in the duties of a gentleman. And I doubt whether Shargar sought further enlightenment by direct question of any one. He worked harder than ever; grew cleanly in his person, even to fastidiousness; tried to speak English; and a wonderful change gradually, but rapidly, passed over his outer man. He grew taller and stronger, and as he grew stronger, his legs grew straighter, till the defect of approximating knees, the consequence of hardship, all but vanished. His hair became darker, and the albino look less remarkable, though still he would remind one of a vegetable grown in a cellar.

Dr. Anderson thought it well that he should have another year at the grammar school before going to college.—Robert now occupied Ericson's room, and left his own to Shargar.

Robert heard every week from Miss St. John about Ericson. Her reports varied much; but

on the whole he got a little better as the winter went on. She said that the good women at the Boar's Head paid him every attention: she did not say that almost the only way to get him to eat was to carry him delicacies which she had prepared with her own hands.

She had soon overcome the jealousy with which Miss Letty regarded her interest in their guest, and before many days had passed she would walk into the archway and go up to his room without seeing any one, except the sister whom she generally found there. By what gradations their intimacy grew I cannot inform my reader, for on the events lying upon the boundary of my story, I have received very insufficient enlightenment; but the result it is easy to imagine. I have already hinted at an early disappointment of Miss St. John. She had grown greatly since, and her estimate of what she had lost had altered considerably in consequence. But the change was more rapid after she became acquainted with Ericson. She would most likely have found the young man she thought she was in love with in the days gone by a very commonplace person now. The heart which she had considered dead to the world had, even before that stormy night in the old house, begun to expostulate against its owner's mistake, by asserting a fair indifference to that portion of its pasthistory. And now, to her large nature the sim-

plicity, the suffering, the patience, the imagination, the grand poverty of Ericson, were irresistibly attractive. Add to this that she became his nurse, and soon saw that he was not indifferent to her—and if she fell in love with him as only a full-grown woman can love, without Ericson's *lips* saying anything that might not by Love's jealousy be interpreted as only of grateful affection, why should she not?

And what of Marjory Lindsay? Ericson had not forgotten her. But the brightest star must grow pale as the sun draws near; and on Ericson there were two suns rising at once on the low sea-shore of life whereon he had been pacing up and down moodily for three-and-twenty years, listening evermore to the unprogressive rise and fall of the tidal waves, all talking of the eternal, all unable to reveal it—the sun of love and the sun of death. Mysie and he had never met. She pleased his imagination; she touched his heart with her helplessness; but she gave him no welcome to the shrine of her beauty: he loved through admiration and pity. He broke no faith to her; for he had never offered her any save in looks, and she had not accepted it. She was but a sickly plant grown in a hot-house. On his death-bed he found a woman a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land! A strong she-angel with mighty

wings, Mary St. John came behind him as he fainted out of life, tempered the burning heat ot the Sun of Death, and laid him to sleep in the cool twilight of her glorious shadow. In the stead of trouble about a wilful, thoughtless girl, he found repose and protection and motherhood in a great-hearted woman.

For Ericson's sake, Robert made some effort to preserve the acquaintance of Mr. Lindsay and his daughter. But he could hardly keep up a conversation with Mr. Lindsay, and Mysie showed herself utterly indifferent to him even in the way of common friendship. He told her ot Ericson's illness: she said she was sorry to hear it, and looked miles away. He could never get within a certain atmosphere of—what shall I call it? *avertedness* that surrounded her. She had always lived in a dream of unrealities; and the dream had almost devoured her life.

One evening Shargar was later than usual in coming home from the walk, or ramble rather, without which he never could settle down to his work. He knocked at Robert's door.

"Whaur do ye think I've been, Robert?"

"Hoo suld I ken, Shargar?" answered Robert, puzzling over a problem.

"I've been haein' a glaiss wi' Jock Mitchell."

"Wha's Jock Mitchell?"

"My brither Sandy's groom, as I tellt ye afore."

"Ye dinna think I can min' a' your havers, Shargar. Whaur was the comin' gentleman whan ye gaed to drink wi' a chield like that, wha, gin my memory serves me, ye tauld me yersel' was i' the mids o' a' his maister's deevilry?"

"Yer memory serves ye weel eneuch to be doon upo' me," said Shargar. "But there's a bit wordy 'at they read at the cathedral kirk the last Sunday 'at's stucken to me as gin there was something by ordinar' in 't."

"What's that?" asked Robert, pretending to go on with his calculations all the time.

"Ow, nae muckle; only this: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged'.—I took a lesson frae Jeck the giant-killer, wi' the Welsh giant—was 't Blunderbore they ca'd him?—an' poored the maist o' my glaiss doon my breist. It wasna like ink; it wadna du my sark ony ill."

"But what garred ye gang wi' 'im at a'? He wasna fit company for a gentleman."

"A gentleman 's some saft gin he be ony the waur o' the company he gangs in till. There may be rizzons, ye ken. Ye needna du as they du. Jock Mitchell was airin' Reid Rorie an' Black Geordie. An' says I—for I wantit to ken whether I was sic a breme-buss (*broom-bush*) as I used to be—says I, 'Hoo are ye, Jock Mitchell?' An' says Jock, 'Brawly. Wha the deevil are ye?' An' says I, 'Nae mair o' a deevil nor yersel', Jock

Mitchell, or Alexander, Baron Rothie, either—though maybe that's no little o' ane.' 'Preserve me!' cried Jock, 'it's Shargar.'—'Nae mair o' that, Jock,' says I. 'Gin I bena a gentleman, or a' be dune,'—an' there I stack, for I saw I was a muckle fule to lat oot onything o' the kin' to Jock. And sae he seemed to think, too, for he brak oot wi' a great guffaw; an' to win ower 't, I jined, an' leuch as gin naething was farrer aff frae my thochts than ever bein' a gentleman. 'Whaur do ye pit up, Jock?' I said. 'Oot by here,' he answert, 'at Luckie Maitlan's.'—'That's a queer place for a baron to put up, Jock,' says I. 'There's rizzons,' says he, an' lays his forefinger upo' the side o' 's nose, o' whilk there was hardly eneuch to haud it ohn gane intil the opposit ee. 'We're no far frae there,' says I—an' deed I can hardly tell ye, Robert, what garred me say sae, but I jist wantit to ken what that gentleman-brither o' mine was efter; 'tak the horse hame,' says I—'I'll jist loup upo' Black Geordie—an' we'll hae a glaiss thegither. I'll stan' treat.' Sae he gae me the bridle, an' I lap on. The deevil tried to get a moufu' o' my hip, but, faith! I was ower swack for 'im; an' awa we rade."

"I didna ken 'at ye cud ride, Shargar."

"Hoots! I cudna help it. I was aye takin' the horse to the watter at The Boar's Heid, or The Royal Oak, or Lucky Happit's, or The

Aucht an' Furty. That's hoo I cam to ken Jock sae weel. We war guid eneuch frien's whan I didna care for leein' or sweirin,' an' sic like."

"And what on earth did ye want wi' 'im noo?"

"I tell ye I wantit to ken what that ne'er-do-weel brither o' mine was efter. I had seen the horses stan'in' aboot twa or three times i' the gloamin'; an' Sandy maun be aboot ill gin he be aboot onything."

"What can 't maitter to you, Shargar, what a man like him 's aboot?"

"Weel, ye see, Robert, my mither aye broucht me up to ken a' 'at fowk was aboot, for she said ye cud never tell whan it micht turn oot to the weelfaur o' yer advantage—gran' words!—I wonner whaur she forgathert wi' them. But she was a terrible wuman, my mither, an' kent a heap o' things—mair nor 't was gude to ken, maybe. She gaed aboot the country sae muckle, an' they say the gipsies she gaed amang 's a dreadfu' auld fowk, an' hae the wisdom o' the Egyptians 'at Moses wad hae naething to do wi'."

"Whaur is she noo?"

"I dinna ken. She may turn up ony day."

"There's ae thing, though, Shargar: gin ye want to be a gentleman, ye maunna gang keekin' that gate intil ither fowk's affairs."

"Weel, I maun gie 't up. I winna say a word

o' what Jock Mitchell tellt me aboot Lord Sandy."

"Ow, say awa'."

"Na, na; ye wadna like to hear aboot ither fowk's affairs. My mither tellt me he did verra ill efter Watterloo till a fremt (*stranger*) lass at Brussels. But that's neither here nor there. I maun set aboot my version, or I winna get it dune the nicht."

"What is Lord Sandy after? What did the rascal tell you? Why do you make such a mystery of it?" said Robert, authoritatively, and in his best English.

"'Deed I cudna mak naething o' 'm. He winkit an' he mintit *(hinted)* an' he gae me to unnerstan' 'at the deevil was efter some lass or ither, but wha—my lad was as dumb 's the graveyard about that. Gin I cud only win at that, maybe I cud play him a plisky. But he coupit ower three glasses o' whusky, an' the mair he drank the less he wad say. An' sae I left him."

"Well, take care what you're about, Shargar. I don't think Dr. Anderson would like you to be in such company," said Robert; and Shargar departed to his own room and his version.

Towards the end of the session Miss St. John's reports of Ericson were worse. Yet he was very hopeful himself, and thought he was getting better fast. Every relapse he regarded as tem-

porary; and when he got a little better, thought he had recovered his original position. It was some relief to Miss St. John to communicate her anxiety to Robert.

After the distribution of the prizes, of which he gained three, Robert went the same evening to visit Dr. Anderson, intending to go home the next day. The doctor gave him five golden sovereigns—a rare sight in Scotland. Robert little thought in what service he was about to spend them.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROBERT IN ACTION.

IT was late when he left his friend. As he walked through the Gallowgate, an ancient narrow street, full of low courts, some one touched him upon the arm. He looked round. It was a young woman. He turned again to walk on.

"Mr. Faukner," she said, in a trembling voice, which Robert thought he had heard before.

He stopped.

"I don't know you," he said. "I can't see your face. Tell me who you are."

She returned no answer, but stood with her head aside. He could see that her hands shook.

"What do you want with me—if you won't say who you are?"

"I want to tell you something," she said; "but I canna speyk here. Come wi' me."

"I won't go with you without knowing who you are or where you're going to take me."

"Dinna ye ken me?" she said pitifully, turning a little towards the light of the gas-lamp, and looking up in his face.

"It canna be Jessie Hewson?" said Robert, his heart swelling at the sight of the pale worn countenance of the girl.

"I was Jessie Hewson ance," she said, "but naebody here kens me by that name but yersel'. Will ye come in? There's no a crater i' the hoose but mysel'."

Robert turned at once. "Go on," he said.

She led the way up a narrow stone stair between two houses. A door high up in the gable admitted them. The boards bent so much under his weight that Robert feared the floor would fall.

"Bide ye there, sir, till I fess a licht," she said.

This was Robert's first introduction to a phase of human life with which he became familiar afterwards.

"Mind hoo ye gang, sir," she resumed, returning with a candle. "There's nae flurin' there. Haud i' the middle efter me, or ye'll gang throu."

She led him into a room, with nothing in it but a bed, a table, and a chair. On the table was a half-made shirt. In the bed lay a tiny baby, fast asleep. It had been locked up alone in the dreary garret. Robert approached to

look at the child, for his heart felt very warm to poor Jessie.

"A bonnie bairnie," he said.

"Isna he, sir? Think o' 'im comin' to me! Nobody can tell the mercy o' 't. Isna it strange that the verra sin suld bring an angel frae haven upo' the back o' 't to uphaud an' restore the sinner? Fowk thinks it's a punishment; but eh me! it's a mercifu' ane. It's a wonner he didna think shame to come to me. But he cam to beir *my* shame."

Robert wondered at her words. She talked of her sin with such a meek openness! She looked her shame in the face, and acknowledged it hers. Had she been less weak and worn, perhaps she could not have spoken thus.

"But what am I aboot!" she said, checking herself. "I didna fess ye here to speyk aboot mysel'. He's efter mair mischeef, and gin onything cud be dune to haud him frae 't——"

"Wha's efter mischeef, Jessie?" interrupted Robert.

"Lord Rothie. He's gaein' aff the nicht in Skipper Hornbeck's boat to Antwerp, I think they ca' 't, an' a bonnie young leddy wi' 'im. They war to sail wi' the first o' the munelicht. —Surely I'm nae ower late," she added, going to the window. "Na, the mune canna be up yet."

"Na," said Robert; "I dinna think she rises

muckle afore twa o'clock the nicht. But hoo ken ye? Are ye sure o' 't? It's an awfu' thing to think o'."

"To convence ye, I maun jist tell ye the trowth. The hoose we're in hasna a gude character. We're middlin' dacent up here; but the lave o' the place is dreadfu'. Eh for the bonnie leys o' Bodyfauld! Gin ye see my father, tell him I'm nane waur than I was."

"They think ye droont i' the Dyer's Pot, as they ca' 't."

"There I am again!" she said—"miles awa' an' nae time to be lost!—My lord has a man they ca' Mitchell. Ower weel I ken him. There's a wuman doon the stair 'at he comes to see whiles; an' twa or three nichts ago, I heard them lauchin' thegither. Sae I hearkened. They war baith some fou I'm thinkin'. I cudna tell ye a' 'at they said. That's a punishment noo, gin ye like—to see and hear the warst o' yer ain ill doin's. He tellt the limmer a heap o' his lord's secrets. Ay, he tellt her aboot me, an' hoo I had gane and droont mysel'. I could hear 'maist ilka word 'at he said; for ye see the flurin' here 's no verra soon', and I was jist 'at I cudna help hearkenin'. My lord's aff the nicht, as I tell ye. It's a queer gait, but a quaiet, he thinks, nae doobt. Gin onybody wad but tell her hoo mony een the baron's made sair wi' greitin'!"

"But hoo's that to be dune?" said Robert.

"I dinna ken. But I hae been watchin' to see you ever sin' syne. I hae seen ye gang by mony a time. Ye're the only man I ken 'at I could speyk till aboot it. Ye maun think what ye can do. The warst o' 't is I canna tell wha she is or whaur she bides."

"In that case, I canna see what's to be dune."

"Cudna ye watch them aboord, an' slip a letter intil her han'? Or ye cud gie 't to the skipper to gie her."

"I ken the skipper weel eneuch. He's a respectable man. Gin he kent what the baron was efter, he wadna tak him on boord."

"That wad do little guid. He wad only hae her aff some ither gait."

"Weel," said Robert, rising, "I'll awa' hame, an' think aboot it as I gang.—Wad ye tak a feow shillin's frae an auld frien'?" he added with hesitation, putting his hand in his pocket.

"Na—no a baubee," she answered. "Nobody sall say it was for mysel' I broucht ye here. Come efter me, an' min' whaur ye pit doon yer feet. It's no sicker."

She led him to the door. He bade her good night.

"Tak care ye dinna fa' gaein' doon the stair. It's maist as steep 's a wa'."

As Robert came from between the houses, he caught a glimpse of a man in a groom's dress

going in at the street-door of that he had left.

All the natural knighthood in him was roused. But what could he do? To write was a sneaking way. He would confront the baron. The baron and the girl would both laugh at him. The sole conclusion he could arrive at was to consult Shargar.

He lost no time in telling him the story.

"I tauld ye he was up to some deevilry or ither," said Shargar. "I can shaw ye the verra hoose he maun be gaein' to tak her frae."

"Ye vratch! what for didna ye tell me that afore?"

"Ye wadna hear aboot ither fowk's affairs. Na, not you! But some fowk has no richt to consideration. The verra stanes they say 'ill cry oot ill secrets like brither Sandy's."

"Whase hoose is 't?"

"I dinna ken. I only saw him come oot o' 't ance, an' Jock Mitchell was haudin' Black Geordie roon' the neuk. It canna be far frae Mr. Lindsay's 'at you an' Mr. Ericson used to gang till."

"Come an' lat me see 't direckly," cried Robert, starting up, with a terrible foreboding at his heart.

They were in the street in a moment. Shargar led the way by a country lane to the top of the hill on the right, and then turning to the

left, brought him to some houses standing well apart from each other. It was a region unknown to Robert. They were the backs of the houses of which Mr. Lindsay's was one.

"This is the hoose," said Shargar.

Robert rushed into action. He knocked at the door. Mr. Lindsay's Jenny opened it.

"Is yer mistress in, Jenny?" he asked at once.

"Na. Ay. The maister's gane to Bors Castle."

"It's Miss Lindsay I want to see."

"She's up in her ain room wi' a sair heid."

Robert looked her hard in the face, and knew she was lying.

"I want to see her verra partic'lar," he said.

"Weel, ye canna see her," returned Jenny angrily. "I'll tell her onything ye like."

Concluding that little was to be gained by longer parley, but quite uncertain whether Mysie was in the house or not, Robert turned to Shargar, took him by the arm, and walked away in silence. When they were beyond earshot of Jenny, who stood looking after them,

"Ye're sure that's the hoose, Shargar?" said Robert quietly.

"As sure's deith, and may be surer, for I saw him come oot wi' my ain een."

"Weel, Shargar, it's grown something awfu' noo. It's Miss Lindsay. Was there iver sic a

villain as that Lord Rothie—that brither o' yours!"

"I disoun 'im frae this verra 'oor," said Shargar solemnly.

"Something *maun* be dune. We'll awa' to the quay, an' see what'll turn up. I wonner hoo's the tide."

"The tide's risin'. They'll never try to win oot till it's slack watter—furbye 'at the Amphitrite, for as braid 's she is, and her bows modelled efter the cheeks o' a resurrection cherub upo' a gravestane, draws a heap o' watter: an' the bar they say 's waur to win ower nor usual: it's been gatherin' again."

As they spoke, the boys were making for the new town, eagerly. Just opposite where the Amphitrite lay was a public-house: into that they made up their minds to go, and there to write a letter, which they would give to Miss Lindsay if they could, or, if not, leave with Skipper Hoornbeek. Before they reached the river, a thick rain of minute drops began to fall, rendering the night still darker, so that they could scarcely see the vessels from the pavement on the other side of the quay, along which they were hurrying, to avoid the cables, rings, and stone posts that made its margin dangerous in the dim light. When they came to the Smack Inn they crossed right over to reach the Amphitrite. A growing fear kept them silent as they approached her berth. It was

empty. They turned and stared at each other in dismay.

One of those amphibious animals that loiter about the borders of the water was seated on a stone smoking, probably fortified against the rain by the whisky inside him.

"Whaur's the Amphitrite, Alan?" asked Shargar, for Robert was dumb with disappointment and rage.

"Half doon to Stanehive by this time, I'm thinkin'," answered Alan. "For a brewin' tub like her, she fummles awa nae ill wi' a licht win' astarn o' her. But I'm doobtin' afore she win across the herrin-pot her fine passengers 'll win at the boddom o' their stamacks. It's like to blaw a bonnetfu', and she rows awfu' in ony win'. I dinna think she cud capsize, but for wamlin' she's waur nor a bairn with the grips."

In absolute helplessness, the boys had let him talk on: there was nothing more to be done; and Alan was in a talkative mood.

"Fegs! gin 't come on to blaw," he resumed, "I wadna wonner gin they got the skipper to set them ashore at Stanehive. I heard auld Horny say something aboot lyin' to there for a bit, to tak a keg or something aboord."

The boys looked at each other, bade Alan good night, and walked away.

"Hoo far is 't to Stonehaven, Shargar?" said Robert.

"I dinna richtly ken. Maybe frae twal to fifteen mile."

Robert stood still. Shargar saw his face pale as death, and contorted with the effort to control his feelings.

"Shargar," he said, "what *am* I to do? I vowed to Mr. Ericson that, gin he deid, I wad luik efter that bonny lassie. An' noo whan he's lyin' a' but deid, I hae latten her slip throu' my fingers wi' clean carelessness. What *am* I to do? Gin I cud only win to Stonehaven afore the Amphitrite! I cud gang aboord wi' the keg, and gin I cud do naething mair, I wad hae tried to do my best. Gin I do naething, my hert 'll brak wi' the weicht o' my shame."

Shargar burst into a roar of laughter. Robert was on the point of knocking him down, but took him by the throat as a milder proceeding, and shook him.

"Robert! Robert!" gurgled Shargar, as soon as his choking had overcome his merriment, "ye're an awfu' Hielan'man. Hearken to me. I beg—g—g yer pardon. What I was thinkin' o' was——"

Robert relaxed his hold. But Shargar, notwithstanding the lesson Robert had given him, could hardly speak yet for the enjoyment of his own device.

"Gin we could only get rid o' Jock Mitchell!——" he crowed; and burst out again.

"He's wi' a wuman i' the Gallowgate," said Robert.

"Losh, man!" exclaimed Shargar, and started off at full speed.

He was no match for his companion, however.

"Whaur the deevil are ye rinnin' till, ye wirrycow (*scarecrow*)?" panted Robert, as he laid hold of his collar.

"Lat me gang, Robert," gasped Shargar. "Losh, man! ye'll be on Black Geordie in anither ten meenits, an' me ahin' ye upo' Reid Rorie. An' faith gin we binna at Stanehive afore the Dutchman wi' 's boddom foremost, it 'll be the faut o' the horse and no o' the men."

Robert's heart gave a bound of hope.

"Hoo 'ill ye get them, Shargar?" he asked eagerly.

"Steal them," answered Shargar, struggling to get away from the grasp still upon his collar.

"We micht be hanged for that."

"Weel, Robert, I'll tak a' the wyte o' 't. Gin it hadna been for you, I micht ha' been hangt by this time for ill doin': for you're sake I'll be hangt for weel doin', an' welcome. Come awa'. To steal a mairch upo' brither Sandy wi' aucht (*eight*) horse-huves o' 's ain! Ha! ha! ha!"

They sped along, now running themselves out of breath, now walking themselves into it again, until they reached a retired hostelry between the two towns. Warning Robert not to show him-

self, Shargar disappeared round the corner of the house.

Robert grew weary, and then anxious. At length Shargar's face came through the darkness.

"Robert," he whispered, "gie 's yer bonnet. I'll be wi' ye in a moment noo."

Robert obeyed, too anxious to question him. In about three minutes more Shargar reappeared, leading what seemed the ghost of a black horse; for Robert could see only his eyes, and his hoofs made scarcely any noise. How he had managed it with a horse of Black Geordie's temper, I do not know, but some horses will let some persons do anything with them: he had drawn his own stockings over his fore feet, and tied their two caps upon his hind hoofs.

"Lead him awa' quaietly up the road till I come to ye," said Shargar, as he took the mufflings off the horse's feet. "An' min' 'at he doesna tak a nip o' ye. He's some ill for bitin'. I'll be efter ye direckly. Rorie's saiddlet an' bridled. He only wants his carpet-shune."

Robert led the horse a few hundred yards, then stopped and waited. Shargar soon joined him, already mounted on Red Roderick.

"Here's yer bonnet, Robert. It's some foul, I doobt. But I cudna help it. Gang on, man. Up wi' ye. Maybe I wad hae better keepit

Geordie mysel'. But ye can ride. Ance ye're on, he canna bite ye."

But Robert needed no encouragement from Shargar. In his present mood he would have mounted a griffin. He was on horseback in a moment. They trotted gently through the streets, and out of the town. Once over the Dee, they gave their horses the rein, and off they went through the dark drizzle. Before they got half way they were wet to the skin; but little did Robert, or Shargar either, care for that. Not many words passed between them.

"Hoo 'ill ye get the horse (*plural*) in again, Shargar?" asked Robert.

"Afore I get them back," answered Shargar, "they'll be tired eneuch to gang hame o' themsel's. Gin we had only had the luck to meet Jock!—that wad hae been gran'."

"What for that?"

"I wad hae cawed Reid Rorie ower the heid o' 'm, an' left him lyin'—the coorse villain!"

The horses never flagged till they drew up in the main street of Stonehaven. Robert ran down to the harbour to make inquiry, and left Shargar to put them up.

The moon had risen, but the air was so full of vapour that she only succeeded in melting the darkness a little. The sea rolled in front, awful in its dreariness, under just light enough to show a something unlike the land. But the rain

had ceased, and the air was clearer. Robert asked a solitary man, with a telescope in his hand, whether he was looking out for the Amphitrite. The man asked him gruffly in return what he knew of her. Possibly the nature of the keg to be put on board had something to do with his Scotch reply. Robert told him he was a friend of the captain, had missed the boat, and would give any one five shillings to put him on board. The man went away and returned with a companion. After some further questioning and bargaining, they agreed to take him. Robert loitered about the pier full of impatience. Shargar joined him.

Day began to break over the waves. They gleamed with a blue-gray leaden sheen. The men appeared coming along the harbour, and descended by a stair into a little skiff, where a barrel, or something like one lay under a tarpaulin. Robert bade Shargar good-bye, and followed. They pushed off, rowed out into the bay, and lay on their oars waiting for the vessel. The light grew apace, and Robert fancied he could distinguish the two horses with one rider against the sky on the top of the cliffs, moving northwards. Turning his eyes to the sea, he saw the canvas of the brig, and his heart beat fast. The men bent to their oars. She drew nearer, and lay to. When they reached her he caught the rope the sailors threw, was on board in a moment, and

went aft to the captain. The Dutchman stared. In a few words Robert made him understand his object, offering to pay for his passage, but the good man would not hear of it. He told him that the lady and gentleman had come on board as brother and sister: the baron was too knowing to run his head into the noose of Scotch law.

"I cannot throw him over the board," said the skipper; "and what am I to do? I am afraid it is of no use. Ah! poor thing!"

By this time the vessel was under way. The wind freshened. Mysie had been ill ever since they left the mouth of the river: now she was much worse. Before another hour passed, she was crying to be taken home to her papa. Still the wind increased, and the vessel laboured much.

Robert never felt better, and if it had not been for the cause of his sea-faring, would have thoroughly enjoyed it. He put on some sea-going clothes of the captain's, and set himself to take his share in working the brig, in which he was soon proficient enough to be useful. When the sun rose, they were in a tossing wilderness of waves. With the sunrise, Robert began to think he had been guilty of a great folly. For what could he do? How was he to prevent the girl from going off with her lover the moment they landed? But his poor attempt would verify his willingness.

The baron came on deck now and then, looking bored. He had not calculated on having to nurse the girl. Had Mysie been well, he could have amused himself with her, for he found her ignorance interesting. As it was, he felt injured, and indeed disgusted at the result of the experiment.

On the third day the wind abated a little; but towards night it blew hard again, and it was not until they reached the smooth waters of the Scheldt that Mysie made her appearance on deck, looking dreadfully ill, and altogether like a miserable, unhappy child. Her beauty was greatly gone, and Lord Rothie did not pay her much attention.

Robert had as yet made no attempt to communicate with her, for there was scarcely a chance of her concealing a letter from the baron. But as soon as they were in smooth water, he wrote one, telling her in the simplest language that the baron was a bad man, who had amused himself by making many women fall in love with him, and then leaving them miserable: he knew one of them himself.

Having finished his letter, he began to look abroad over the smooth water, and the land smooth as the water. He saw tall poplars, the spires of the forest, and rows of round-headed dumpy trees, like domes. And he saw that all the buildings like churches, had either spires

like poplars, or low round domes like those other trees. The domes gave an eastern aspect to the country. The spire of Antwerp cathedral especially had the poplar for its model. The pinnacles which rose from the base of each successive start of its narrowing height were just the clinging, upright branches of the poplar —a lovely instance of Art following Nature's suggestion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ROBERT FINDS A NEW INSTRUMENT.

AT length the vessel lay along side the quay, and as Mysie stepped from its side the skipper found an opportunity of giving her Robert's letter. It was the poorest of chances, but Robert could think of no other. She started on receiving it, but regarding the skipper's significant gestures put it quietly away. She looked anything but happy, for her illness had deprived her of courage, and probably roused her conscience. Robert followed the pair, saw them enter "The Great Labourer"—what could the name mean? could it mean The Good Shepherd?—and turned away helpless, objectless indeed, for he had done all that he could, and that all was of no potency. A world of innocence and beauty was about to be hurled from its orbit of light into the blackness of outer chaos; he knew it, and was unable to speak word or do deed that should frustrate the power of a devil who so loved himself that he counted it an honour to a girl to

have him for her ruin. Her after life had no significance for him, save as a trophy of his victory. He never perceived that such victory was not yielded to him; that he gained it by putting on the garments of light; that if his inward form had appeared in its own ugliness, not one of the women whose admiration he had secured would not have turned from him as from the monster of an old tale.

Robert wandered about till he was so weary that his head ached with weariness. At length he came upon the open space before the cathedral, whence the poplar-spire rose aloft into a blue sky flecked with white clouds. It was near sunset, and he could not see the sun, but the upper half of the spire shone glorious in its radiance. From the top his eye sank to the base. In the base was a little door half open. Might not that be the lowly narrow entrance through the shadow up to the sun-filled air? He drew near with a kind of tremor, for never before had he gazed upon visible grandeur growing out of the human soul, in the majesty of everlastingness—a tree of the Lord's planting. Where had been but an empty space of air and light and darkness, had risen, and had stood for ages, a mighty wonder awful to the eye, solid to the hand. He peeped through the opening of the door: there was the foot of a stair—marvellous as the ladder of Jacob's dream—turning

away towards the unknown. He pushed the door and entered. A man appeared and barred his advance. Robert put his hand in his pocket and drew out some silver. The man took one piece—looked at it—turned it over—put it in his pocket, and led the way up the stair. Robert followed and followed and followed.

He came out of stone walls upon an airy platform whence the spire ascended heavenwards. His conductor led upward still, and he followed, winding within a spiral network of stone, through which all the world looked in. Another platform, and yet another spire springing from its basement. Still up they went, and at length stood on a circle of stone surrounding like a coronet the last base of the spire which lifted its apex untrodden. Then Robert turned and looked below. He grasped the stones before him. The loneliness was awful.

There was nothing between him and the roofs of the houses, four hundred feet below, but the spot where he stood. The whole city, with its red roofs, lay under him. He stood uplifted on the genius of the builder, and the town beneath him was a toy. The all but featureless flat spread forty miles on every side, and the roofs of the largest buildings below were as dovecots. But the space between was alive with awe—so vast, so real!

He turned and descended, winding through

the network of stone which was all between him and space. The object of the architect must have been to melt away the material from before the eyes of the spirit. He hung in the air in a cloud of stone. As he came in his descent within the ornaments of one of the basements, he found himself looking through two thicknesses of stone lace on the nearing city. Down there was the beast of prey and his victim; but for the moment he was above the region of sorrow. His weariness and his headache had vanished utterly. With his mind tossed on its own speechless delight, he was slowly descending still, when he saw on his left hand a door a-jar. He would look what mystery lay within. A push opened it. He discovered only a little chamber lined with wood. In the centre stood something—a bench-like piece of furniture, plain and worn. He advanced a step; peered over the top of it; saw keys, white and black; saw pedals below: it was an organ! Two strides brought him in front of it. A wooden stool, polished and hollowed with centuries of use, was before it. But where was the bellows? That might be down hundreds of steps below, for he was half-way only to the ground. He seated himself musingly, and struck, as he thought, a dumb chord. Responded, up in the air, far overhead, a mighty booming clang. Startled, almost frightened,

even as if Mary St. John had said she loved him, Robert sprung from the stool, and, without knowing why, moved only by the chastity of delight, flung the door to the post. It banged and clicked. Almost mad with the joy of the titanic instrument, he seated himself again at the keys, and plunged into a tempest of clanging harmony. One hundred bells hang in that tower of wonder, an instrument for a city, nay, for a kingdom. Often had Robert dreamed that he was the galvanic centre of a thunder-cloud of harmony, flashing off from every finger the willed lightning tone: such was the unexpected scale of this instrument—so far aloft in the sunny air rang the responsive notes, that his dream appeared almost realized. The music, like a fountain bursting upwards, drew him up and bore him aloft. From the resounding cone of bells overhead he no longer heard their tones proceed, but saw level-winged forms of light speeding off with a message to the nations. It was only his roused phantasy; but a sweet tone is nevertheless a messenger of God; and a right harmony and sequence of such tones is a little gospel.

At length he found himself following, till that moment unconsciously, the chain of tunes he well remembered having played on his violin the night he went first with Ericson to see Mysie, ending with his strange chant about

the witch lady and the dead man's hand.

Ere he had finished the last, his passion had begun to fold its wings, and he grew dimly aware of a beating at the door of the solitary chamber in which he sat. He knew nothing of the enormity of which he was guilty—presenting unsought the city of Antwerp with a glorious phantasia. He did not know that only upon grand, solemn, world-wide occasions, such as a king's birthday or a ball at the Hôtel de Ville, was such music on the card. When he flung the door to, it had closed with a spring lock, and for the last quarter of an hour three gens-d'arme, commanded by the sacristan of the tower, had been thundering thereat. He waited only to finish the last notes of the wild Orcadian chant, and opened the door. He was seized by the collar, dragged down the stair into the street, and through a crowd of wondering faces—poor unconscious dreamer! it will not do to think on the house-top even, and you had been dreaming very loud indeed in the church spire—away to the bureau of the police.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DEATH.

I NEED not recount the proceedings of the Belgian police; how they interrogated Robert concerning a letter from Mary St. John which they found in an inner pocket; how they looked doubtful over a copy of Horace that lay in his coat, and put evidently a momentous question about some algebraical calculations on the fly leaf of it. Fortunately or unfortunately —I do not know which—Robert did not understand a word they said to him. He was locked up, and left to fret for nearly a week; though what he could have done had he been at liberty, he knew as little as I know. At last, long after it was useless to make any inquiry about Miss Lindsay, he was set at liberty. He could just pay for a steerage passage to London, whence he wrote to Dr. Anderson for a supply, and was in Aberdeen a few days after.

This was Robert's first cosmopolitan experience. He confided the whole affair to the doc-

tor, who approved of all, saying it could have been of no use, but he had done right. He advised him to go home at once, for he had had letters inquiring after him. Ericson was growing steadily worse—in fact, he feared Robert might not see him alive.

If this news struck Robert to the heart, his pain was yet not without some poor alleviation:—he need not tell Ericson about Mysie, but might leave him to find out the truth when, free of a dying body, he would be better able to bear it. That very night he set off on foot for Rothieden. There was no coach from Aberdeen till eight the following morning, and before that he would be there.

It was a dreary journey without Ericson. Every turn of the road reminded him of him. And Ericson too was going a lonely unknown way.

Did ever two go together upon that way? Might not two die together and not lose hold of each other all the time, even when the sense of the clasping hands was gone, and the soul had withdrawn itself from the touch? Happy they who prefer the will of God to their own even in this, and would, as the best friend, have him near who *can* be near—him who made the fourth in the fiery furnace! Fable or fact, reader, I do not care. The One I mean *is*, and in him I hope.

Very weary was Robert when he walked into his grandmother's house.

Betty came out of the kitchen at the sound of his entrance.

"Is Mr. Ericson——?"

"Na; he's nae deid," she answered. "He'll maybe live a day or twa, they say."

"Thank God!" said Robert, and went to his grandmother.

"Eh, laddie!" said Mrs. Falconer, the first greetings over, "ane 's ta'en an' anither 's left! but what for 's mair nor I can faddom. There's that fine young man, Maister Ericson, at deith's door; an' here am I, an auld runklet wife, left to cry upo' deith, an' he winna hear me."

"Cry upo' God, grannie, an' no upo' deith," said Robert, catching at the word as his grandmother herself might have done. He had no such unfair habit when I knew him, and always spoke to one's meaning, not one's words. But then he had a wonderful gift of knowing what what one's meaning was.

He did not sit down, but, tired as he was, went straight to The Boar's Head. He met no one in the archway, and walked up to Ericson's room. When he opened the door, he found the large screen on the other side, and hearing a painful cough, lingered behind it, for he could not control his feelings sufficiently. Then he heard a voice—Ericson's voice; but oh, how changed!

—He had no idea that he ought not to listen.

"Mary," the voice said, "do not look like that. *I* am not suffering. It is only my body. Your arm round me makes me so strong! Let me lay my head on your shoulder."

A brief pause followed.

"But, Eric," said Mary's voice, "there is one that loves you better than I do."

"If there is," returned Ericson, feebly, "he has sent his angel to deliver me."

"But you do believe in him, Eric?"

The voice expressed anxiety no less than love.

"I am going to see. There is no other way. When I find him, I shall believe in him. I shall love him with all my heart, I know. I love the thought of him now."

"But that's not himself, my—darling!" she said.

"No. But I cannot love himself till I find him. Perhaps there is no Jesus."

"Oh, don't say that. I can't bear to hear you talk so."

"But, dear heart, if you're so sure of him, do you think he would turn me away because I don't do what I can't do? I would if I could with all my heart. If I were to say I believed in him, and then didn't trust him, I could understand it. But when it's only that I'm not sure about what I never saw, or had enough of proof to satisfy me of, how can he be vexed at that?

You seem to me to do him great wrong, Mary. Would you now banish me for ever, if I should, when my brain is wrapped in the clouds of death, forget you along with everything else for a moment?"

"No, no, no. Don't talk like that, Eric, dear. There may be reasons, you know."

"I know what they say well enough. But I expect Him, if there is a Him, to be better even than you, my beautiful—and I don't know a fault in you, but that you believe in a God you can't trust. If I believed in a God, wouldn't I trust him just? And I do hope in him. We'll see, my darling. When we meet again I think you'll say I was right."

Robert stood like one turned into marble. Deep called unto deep in his soul. The waves and the billows went over him.

Mary St. John answered not a word. I think she must have been conscience-stricken. Surely the Son of Man saw *nearly* as much faith in Ericson as in her. Only she clung to the word as a bond that the Lord had given her: she would rather have his bond.

Ericson had another fit of coughing. Robert heard the rustling of ministration. But in a moment the dying man again took up the word. He seemed almost as axious about Mary's faith as she was about his.

"There's Robert," he said: "I do believe that

boy would die for me, and I never did anything to deserve it. Now Jesus Christ must be as good as Robert at least. *I* think he must be a great deal better, if he's Jesus Christ at all. Now Robert might be hurt if I didn't believe in *him*. But I've never seen Jesus Christ. It's all in an old book, over which the people that say they believe in it the most, fight like dogs and cats. I beg your pardon, my Mary; but they do, though the words are ugly."

"Ah! but if you had tried it as I've tried it, you would know better, Eric."

"I think I should, dear. But it's too late now. I must just go and see. There's no other way left."

The terrible cough came again. As soon as the fit was over, with a grand despair in his heart, Robert went from behind the screen.

Ericson was on a couch. His head lay on Mary St. John's bosom. Neither saw him.

"Perhaps," said Ericson, panting with death, "a kiss in heaven may be as good as being married on earth, Mary."

She saw Robert and did not answer. Then Eric saw him. He smiled; but Mary grew very pale.

Robert came forward, stooped and kissed Ericson's forehead, kneeled and kissed Mary's hand, rose and went out.

From that moment they were both dead to

him. *Dead*, I say—not lost, not estranged, but dead—that is, awful and holy. He wept for Eric. He did not weep for Mary yet. But he found a time.

Ericson died two days after.

Here endeth Robert's youth.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN MEMORIAM.

IN memory of Eric Ericson, I add a chapter of sonnets gathered from his papers, almost desiring that those only should read them who turn to the book a second time. How his papers came into my possession, will be explained afterwards.

Tumultuous rushing o'er the outstretched plains ;
A wildered maze of comets and of suns ;
The blood of changeless God that ever runs
With quick diastole up the immortal veins ;
A phantom host that moves and works in chains ;
A monstrous ficton which, collapsing, stuns
The mind to stupor and amaze at once ;
A tragedy which that man best explains
Who rushes blindly on his wild career
With trampling hoofs and sound of mailed war,
Who will not nurse a life to win a tear,
But is extinguished like a falling star:—
Such will at times this life appear to me,
Until I learn to read more perfectly.

HOM. IL. v. 403.

If thou art tempted by a thought of ill,
Crave not too soon for victory, nor deem
Thou art a coward if thy safety seem
To spring too little from a righteous will:
For there is nightmare on thee, nor until
Thy soul hath caught the morning's early gleam
Seek thou to analyse the monstrous dream
By painful introversion; rather fill
Thine eye with forms thou knowest to be truth:
But see thou cherish higher hope than this;
A hope hereafter that thou shalt be fit
Calm-eyed to face distortion, and to sit
Transparent among other forms of youth
Who own no impulse save to God and bliss.

And must I ever wake, gray dawn, to know
Thee standing sadly by me like a ghost?
I am perplexed with thee, that thou shouldst cost
This Earth another turning: all a-glow
Thou shouldst have reached me, with a purple show
Along far mountain-tops: and I would post
Over the breadth of seas though I were lost
In the hot phantom-chase for life, if so
Thou camest ever with this numbing sense
Of chilly distance and unlovely light;
Waking this gnawing soul anew to fight
With its perpetual load: I drive thee hence—
I have another mountain-range from whence
Bursteth a sun unutterably bright.

GALILEO.

" And yet it moves!" Ah, Truth, where wert thou then,
When all for thee they racked each piteous limb?
Wert thou in Heaven, and busy with thy hymn,
When those poor hands convulsed that held thy pen?
Art thou a phantom that deceivest men
To their undoing? or dost thou watch him
Pale, cold, and silent in his dungeon dim?
And wilt thou ever speak to him again?
" It moves, it moves! Alas, my flesh was weak;
That was a hideous dream! I'll cry aloud
How the green bulk wheels sunward day by day!
Ah me! ah me! perchance my heart was proud
That I alone should know that word to speak;
And now, sweet Truth, shine upon these, I pray."

If thou wouldst live the Truth in very deed,
Thou hast thy joy, but thou hast more of pain.
Others will live in peace, and thou be fain
To bargain with despair, and in thy need
To make thy meal upon the scantiest weed.
These palaces, for thee they stand in vain;
Thine is a ruinous hut; and oft the rain
Shall drench thee in the midnight; yea the speed
Of earth outstrip thee pilgrim, while thy feet
Move slowly up the heights. Yet will there come
Through the time-rents about thy moving cell,
An arrow for despair, and oft the hum
Of far-off populous realms where spirits dwell.

TO * * * *

Speak, Prophet of the Lord! We may not start
To find thee with us in thine ancient dress,
Haggard and pale from some bleak wilderness,
Empty of all save God and thy loud heart:
Nor with like rugged message quick to dart
Into the hideous fiction mean and base:
But yet, O prophet man, we need not less,
But more of earnest; though it is thy part
To deal in other words, if thou wouldst smite
The living Mammon, seated, not as then
In bestial quiescence grimly dight,
But thrice as much an idol-god as when
He stared at his own feet from morn to night.*

THE WATCHER.

From out a windy cleft there comes a gaze
Of eyes unearthly which go to and fro
Upon the people's tumult, for below
The nations smite each other: no amaze
Troubles their liquid rolling, or affrays
Their deep-set contemplation: steadily glow
Those ever holier eye-balls, for they grow
Liker unto the eyes of one that prays.
And if those clasped hands tremble, comes a power
As of the might of worlds, and they are holden
Blessing above us in the sunrise golden;
And they will be uplifted till that hour
Of terrible rolling which shall rise and shake
This conscious nightmare from us and we wake.

---

* This sonnet and the preceding are both one line deficient.

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE.

I

One do I see and twelve; but second there
Methinks I know thee, thou beloved one;
Not from thy nobler port, for there are none
More quiet-featured; some there are who bear
Their message on their brows, while others wear
A look of large commission, nor will shun
The fiery trial, so their work is done:
But thou hast parted with thine eyes in prayer—
Unearthly are they both; and so thy lips
Seem like the porches of the spirit land;
For thou hast laid a mighty treasure by,
Unlocked by Him in Nature, and thine eye
Burns with a vision and apocalypse
Thy own sweet soul can hardly understand.

II

A Boanerges too! Upon my heart
It lay a heavy hour: features like thine
Should glow with other message than the shine
Of the earth-burrowing levin, and the start
That cleaveth horrid gulfs. Awful and swart
A moment stoodest thou, but less divine—
Brawny and clad in ruin!—till with mine
Thy heart made answering signals, and apart
Beamed forth thy two rapt eye-balls doubly clear,
And twice as strong because thou didst thy duty,
And though affianced to immortal Beauty,
Hiddest not weakly underneath her veil
The pest of Sin and Death which maketh pale:
Henceforward be thy spirit doubly dear. *

* To these two sonnets Falconer had appended this note. "Something I wrote to Ericson concerning these, during my

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY.

There is not any weed but hath its shower,
There is not any pool but hath its star;
And black and muddy though the waters are,
We may not miss the glory of a flower,
And winter moons will give them magic power
To spin in cylinders of diamond spar;
And everything hath beauty near and far,
And keepeth close and waiteth on its hour.
And I when I encounter on my road
A human soul that looketh black and grim,
Shall I more ceremonious be than God?
Shall I refuse to watch one hour with him
Who once beside our deepest woe did bud
A patient watching flower about the brim.

'Tis not the violent hands alone that bring
The curse, the ravage, and the downward doom,
Although to these full oft the yawning tomb
Owes deadly surfeit; but a keener sting,
A more immortal agony, will cling
To the half-fashioned sin which would assume
Fair Virtue's garb. The eye that sows the gloom
With quiet seeds of Death henceforth to spring
What time the sun of passion burning fierce
Breaks through the kindly cloud of circumstance;
The bitter word, and the unkindly glance,

first college vacation, produced a reply of which the following is a passage: 'On writing the first I was not aware that James and John were the Sons of Thunder. For a time it did indeed grieve me to think of the spiritual-minded John as otherwise than a still and passionless lover of Christ.'"

The crust and canker coming with the years,
Are liker Death than arrows, and the lance
Which through the living heart at once doth pierce.

SPOKEN OF SEVERAL PHILOSOPHERS.

I pray you, all ye men, who put your trust
In moulds and systems and well-tackled gear,
Holding that Nature lives from year to year
In one continual round because she must—
Set me not down, I pray you, in the dust
Of all these centuries, like a pot of beer,
A pewter-pot disconsolately clear,
Which holds a potful, as is right and just.
I will grow clamorous—by the rood, I will,
If thus ye use me like a pewter pot.
Good friend, thou art a toper and a sot—
I will not be the lead to hold thy swill,
Nor any lead: I will arise and spill
Thy silly beverage, spill it piping hot.

Nature, to him no message dost thou bear,
Who in thy beauty findeth not the power
To gird himself more strongly for the hour
Of night and darkness. Oh, what colours rare
The woods, the valleys, and the mountains wear
To him who knows thy secret, and in shower
And fog, and ice-cloud, hath a secret bower
Where he may rest until the heavens are fair!
Not with the rest of slumber, but the trance
Of onward movement steady and serene,
Where oft in struggle and in contest keen
His eyes will opened be, and all the dance

Of life break on him, and a wide expanse
Roll upward through the void, sunny and green.

TO JUNE.

Ah, truant, thou art here again, I see!
For in a season of such wretched weather
I thought that thou hadst left us altogether,
Although I could not choose but fancy thee
Skulking about the hill-tops, whence the glee
Of thy blue laughter peeped at times, or rather
Thy bashful awkwardness, as doubtful whether
Thou shouldst be seen in such a company
Of ugly runaways, unshapely heaps
Of ruffian vapour, broken from restraint
Of their slim prison in the ocean deeps.
But yet I may not chide: fall to thy books,
Fall to immediately without complaint—
There they are lying, hills and vales and brooks.

WRITTEN ABOUT THE LONGEST DAY.

Summer, sweet Summer, many-fingered Summer!
We hold thee very dear, as well we may:
It is the kernel of the year to-day—
All hail to thee! Thou art a welcome comer!
If every insect were a fairy drummer,
And I a fifer that could deftly play,
We'd give the old Earth such a roundelay
That she would cast all thought of labour from her.
Ah! what is this upon my window-pane?
Some sulky drooping cloud comes pouting up,
Stamping its glittering feet along the plain!
Well, I will let that idle fancy drop.

Oh, how the spouts are bubbling with the rain!
And all the earth shines like a silver cup!

ON A MIDGE.

Whence do ye come, ye creatures? Each of you
Is perfect as an angel; wings and eyes
Stupendous in their beauty—gorgeous dyes
In feathery fields of purple and of blue!
Would God I saw a moment as ye do!
I would become a molecule in size,
Rest with you, hum with you, or slanting rise
Along your one dear sunbeam, could I view
The pearly secret which each tiny fly,
Each tiny fly that hums and bobs and stirs,
Hides in its little breast eternally
From you, ye prickly grim philosophers,
With all your theories that sound so high:
Hark to the buzz a moment, my good sirs!

ON A WATERFALL.

Here stands a giant stone from whose far top
Comes down the sounding water. Let me gaze
Till every sense of man and human ways
Is wrecked and quenched for ever, and I drop
Into the whirl of time, and without stop
Pass downward thus! Again my eyes I raise
To thee, dark rock; and though the mist and haze
My strength returns when I behold thy prop
Gleam stern and steady through the wavering wrack.
Surely thy strength is human, and like me
Thou bearest loads of thunder on thy back!
And, lo, a smile upon thy visage black—

A breezy tuft of grass which I can see
Waving serenely from a sunlit crack!

Above my head the great pine-branches tower;
Backwards and forwards each to the other bends,
Beckoning the tempest-cloud which hither wends
Like a slow-laboured thought, heavy with power:
Hark to the patter of the coming shower!
Let me be silent while the Almighty sends
His thunder-word along; but when it ends
I will arise and fashion from the hour
Words of stupendous import, fit to guard
High thoughts and purposes, which I may wave,
When the temptation cometh close and hard,
Like fiery brands betwixt me and the grave
Of meaner things—to which I am a slave
If evermore I keep not watch and ward.

I do remember how when very young,
I saw the great sea first, and heard its swell
As I drew nearer, caught within the spell
Of its vast size and its mysterious tongue.
How the floor trembled, and the dark boat swung
With a man in it, and a great wave fell
Within a stone's cast! Words may never tell
The passion of the moment, when I flung
All childish records by, and felt arise
A thing that died no more! An awful power
I claimed with trembling hands and eager eyes,
Mine, mine for ever, an immortal dower.—
The noise of waters soundeth to this hour,
When I look seaward through the quiet skies.

ON THE SOURCE OF THE ARVE.

Hear'st thou the dash of water loud and hoarse
With its perpetual tidings upward climb,
Struggling against the wind? Oh, how sublime!
For not in vain from its portentous source,
Thy heart, wild stream, hath yearned for its full force,
But from thine ice-toothed caverns dark as time
At last thou issuest, dancing to the rhyme
Of thy outvolleying freedom! Lo, thy course
Lies straight before thee as the arrow flies,
Right to the ocean-plains. Away, away!
Thy parent waits thee, and her sunset dyes
Are ruffled for thy coming, and the gray
Of all her glittering borders flashes high
Against the glittering rocks: oh, haste, and fly!

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON: PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOME AGAIN.

WHEN Robert opened the door of his grandmother's parlour, he found the old lady seated at breakfast. She rose, pushed back her chair, and met him in the middle of the room; put her old arms round him, offered her smooth white cheek to him, and wept. Robert wondered that she did not look older; for the time he had been away seemed an age, although in truth only eight months.

"Hoo are ye, laddie?" she said. "I'm richt glaid, for I hae been thinkin' lang to see ye. Sit ye doon."

Betty rushed in, drying her hands on her apron. She had not heard him enter.

"Eh losh!" she cried, and put her wet apron to her eyes. "Sic a man as ye 're grown, Robert! A puir body like me maunna be speykin' to ye noo."

"There's nae odds in me, Betty," returned Robert.

"'Deed but there is. Ye 're sax feet an' a hairy ower, I s' warran'."

"I said there was nae odds i' me, Betty," persisted Robert, laughing.

"I kenna what may be *in* ye," retorted Betty; "but there's an unco' odds *upo'* ye."

"Haud yer tongue, Betty," said her mistress. "Ye ought to ken better nor stan' jawin' wi' young men. Fess mair o' the creamy cakes."

"Maybe Robert wad like a drappy o' parritch."

"Onything, Betty," said Robert. "I'm at deith's door wi' hunger."

"Rin, Betty, for the cakes. An' fess a loaf o' white breid; we canna bide for the parritch."

Robert fell to his breakfast, and while he ate —somewhat ravenously—he told his grandmother the adventures of the night, and introduced the question whether he might not ask Ericson to stay a few days with him.

"Ony frien' o' yours, laddie," she replied, qualifying her words only with the addition— "gin he be a frien'.—Whaur is he noo?"

"He's up at Miss Naper's."

"Hoots! What for didna ye fess him in wi' ye?—Betty!"

"Na, na, grannie. The Napers are frien's o' his. We maunna interfere wi' them. I'll gang up mysel' ance I hae had my brakfast."

"Weel, weel, laddie. Eh! I'm blythe to see ye! Hae ye gotten ony prizes noo?"