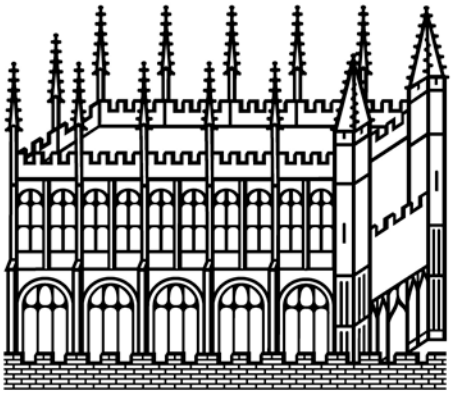

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"You're tired, dear heart," said Lydia.

STONE EDGE.

Novels

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 65, CORNHILL.
1868.

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250. v. 143.

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STONE EDGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LONE MOOR.

On one of the highest, dreariest, coldest and bleakest of the ——shire hills stands a little old grey "Hall." When it was built (the date 1630 is over the door) the whole hill-side must have been moorland; but the ugly squares of field surrounded by bare stone walls, with their scanty crops of barley, and oats, and rushy grass, are encroaching fast on the purple heather which constituted its only beauty. The almost interminable ascent which leads to it across the lone moor, never steep,—long, slow, and tiresome—was merely a track with deep ruts, almost impassable in winter. Yet it must have been a house once of some preten-

sion: the advancing gables with their stone balls and heavy coping had each its double-mullioned six-light window; there were carved mantelpieces and oak wainscoting within, and without an elaborate balustrade surmounted the irregular old wall and flanked the handsome massive stone pillars with their great globes, which shut in a little paved court opening on the lane.

It was within a stone's-throw of some of the most splendid scenery in that beautiful county. From the top of the Edge was a magnificent view over hill and dale, rock and hanging woods. In a steep cleft a mile or two from the house ran a deep valley, whose cliffs and 'tors' rose sheer from the tumbling river at the bottom, with beautiful foliage fringing the precipitous walls of rock,—a dale which tourists came from all parts to see; but the little grey old house turned its back sullenly on it all, crept sufficiently down the hill on the wrong side as if to shut out the view, and turned savagely to contemplate its own dreary hill-sides, bare and high without grandeur, cold and exposed without gaining anything by its elevation.

In the early days when it was built, it must have been easier than now to maintain a "family of distinc-

tion;" for on the estate, by no means very large, to which Stone Edge Hall belonged, there were no less than three of these little old manor-houses, each with its once Catholic chapel attached to it, now turned into a barn or cowshed, possessed once by a family whose pedigree was to be found in county chronicles and old monuments.

It was the end of October, but the wretched little crop of half-ripe oats was still uncarried. In those bleak regions, before the days of draining, the corn was often overtaken by snow before it could be reaped.

"It's a scratting world we live in," said the old farmer who inhabited the Hall, coming in from the vain attempt to rescue the harvest, and throwing himself on the settle by the great open fire. "I wunna fash mysen any longer o' this fashion; if th' ould squire will ha' his rent, happen he may just come and fish it out wi' a ladle, the grun's as fu' o' watter as the pond-head."

"Will ye ha' some parritch, feyther," said a tall, slight woman, with a very sweet sad expression—his wife, though she was some forty years younger than himself.

The only answer was a grunt, but when he had "supped" it in a bowl with a wooden spoon on his

knee, his humour seemed to improve enough for speech.

"Where's Cassandra?" he said.

"Gone down to fetch some barm from Morehead."

"She's ever gadding, and you're allus o' th' fashion o' abetting on her."

His wife silently turned away to her stirring of the washtub, by means of a sort of churn called a "dolly"—a device by which the ——shire mountaineers had anticipated the idea of the American machine.

The old man's complaints went on almost as satisfactorily to himself, shouted through the open door.

"Lyddy! and where's German? *He's* off somewhere too, I'll be bound."

"Why, he took the milking-stool and the pail not ten minit back; ye mun ha' met him as ye came in," answered the patient wife. And old Ashford *had* seen him, and *did* know perfectly where he was, although he indulged himself in complaints, as some people do in spirits, though he by no means denied himself either in this matter.

There was nothing whatever that indicated gentle blood in him—quite the contrary. Yet he was

descended from a very old family, and was the lineal representative of the possessors of one of the most beautiful estates in the county. Some generations before, however, the chief of the house had disinherited his son, and left the property to his daughter and her children; the heir with his descendants had continued to live not far off ever since as very poor farmers.

"Bon sang ne peut pas mentir," says the French proverb; but then it must be good, not only ancient blood, and old German was probably not unlike his ancestor the spendthrift outcast.

Poor Lyddy's fate had not been a happy one. Come of "bettermost" sort of people, she had been left an orphan almost as a child, and taken in by an old grandmother who had scarcely enough to live upon herself. There is no charity so magnificent as that of the poor to the poor. She had died, however, before Lydia was fifteen, and the girl had then to shift for herself, going from one farmhouse to another for wages barely sufficient to clothe her, and, when old German first saw her, she was living at Morehead, the nearest farm to Stone Edge. It was one of the defaced old manor-houses, with a beautiful little chapel attached to it, the only one

which had been preserved in the neighbourhood, and served as the parish church of the district. Old German, when he attended service at all, was in the habit of coming there; he had watched Lydia's pale sweet face across the church, and marked her unwearied step in the cheese-room and kitchen of the farmhouse, and one day, when he met her alone coming up the steep lane from the mill, he accosted her with—

"Lass, I've settled for to ma' thee my wife; thou'rt a housekeeping wench and a tidy, and I think thee'll do; wilt thou be ready for th' asking on next Sabbath day?"

Lyddy looked up much surprised, with a red patch of colour on her cheek and a tear in her eye. An alliance with old Ashford was not a delightful prospect, but she was too much accustomed to be ordered about to have much will of her own in the disposal of herself, and accordingly she did as she was bid, going to her husband's home with no more feeling of hope or gratulation than if it had been a fresh dairymaid's place. Now old German's first wife had been a lady of property, one of the two daughters of a prosperous linen-draper in the nearest little town, and the son and daughter whom she had

left were, not unnaturally, exceedingly angry and annoyed at their father's marriage. In the first place, Cassandra was only three years younger than the new wife, and in the next place she was "nothing but a servant-maid!" Miss Cassandra turned the coldest of cold shoulders on her meek stepmother, and took every opportunity of contemning and crossing her. German was several years younger than his sister, and followed her lead.

There was a little boy born in the due course of time, and poor Lydia, who had no one left in the world to love, driven in by her indifferent husband, who treated her little better than a servant, and seemed to have married her on the Mormon principle of getting a dairymaid in the cheapest manner, threw her whole heart into her passionate affection for her child. He was never out of her arms or her sight; she would sit crooning little songs and inarticulate words of fondness for ever in the intervals of her hard work, while Cassandra looked on rather scornfully at "the to-do she made with the brat." It grew up, however, strong and healthy, a beautiful child, afraid of nothing, whom even his coarse old father took pleasure in, and who won at last Cassandra's unwilling testimony, "Well for sure he is a

pretty un." He was about two years old when one evening old German returned furiously drunk from the market, a not uncommon event with him. Lydia was putting the child to bed, and he escaped out of her hands and ran out to meet "daddy" in his little shirt, the round fat legs and little bare feet padding along the dark stones. German had been quarrelling, and was in one of his worst tempers and half-mad with drink. When the little thing rushed up to him and took hold of his leg, he pushed it angrily away. "What did the imp come blitherin' and botherin' there for?" said he. In his blind fury he threw the child violently from him; it fell with its head against the sharp edge of the iron fender, and before Lydia, who saw it all, could rush across the room, it was lying in a pool of its own blood. She took it up without a word, the baby but once opened its eyes and looked at her—one long piteous look—and then closed them for ever.

The frightful shock sobered the wretched old man at once, but there was nothing to be done; the child was dead. There was small idea in those days of a doctor; he was useless here, and miles away, so no one was sent for. Poor Lydia wandered up and down all that night like one crazed with misery. She

would not part with the little body, and kept stroking and petting it, carrying it in her arms, or putting it to sleep in a corner of the settle, where it lay like a beautiful marble image, but with that tender look of repose that no marble ever gave. She did not seem able to realize that it was dead, and hushed every one who stirred lest its rest should be broken, in a way which almost broke Cassandra's heart. It was not till late the next morning, when she sank into a stupor of utter exhaustion, that they could take the baby from her. And it was buried before she had in any way recovered her senses.

"Where's baby?" she said anxiously, putting one hand to her head, and feeling with the other by her side. When she came to herself, the truth seemed to flash upon her, and her wail as she hid her head under the bed-clothes rang in Cassandra's ears for weeks. And now all the generous part of the girl's nature came out. Her feeling to her stepmother altered entirely; she soothed and petted her like a child, she tended and watched over the poor thing in her patient misery, for Lydia moved about for months in a sort of maze, hardly understanding what was said to her, but lifting up her great eyes sometimes, like a dumb wounded thing which does not compre-

hend, but only suffers; till at last, by dint of sheer love and watchful care, she won her soul back, though shivering and cold and cheerless, to life again. From that time it was beautiful to see the love between the two. Cassandra's was the strongest will, the stoutest heart, the highest spirit—she defended her gentle stepmother against the old man's selfishness and tyranny; she warmed her by her love and cheered her by her hearty joyousness; and in her quieter way, Lyddy, without a moment's hesitation or a word's remark, would have walked through fire and water for her stepdaughter's sake. Her whole soul was devoted to making her happy.

Cassandra was a magnificent lassie. The Scandinavian blood runs in these northern races, which are larger and stronger than those in the southern counties, stouter made, both mind and body. She had something, however, of the rich colouring of more southern latitudes, great dark eyes and masses of dark hair, a rich brown and red bloom on her cheek, a merry arch look in her eyes, and a curious natural ease and courtesy—manners which would have been pronounced perfect in any drawing-room. As before said, her mother had been a lady of property; but it was property only in expectation;

and old Ashford, after the fashion of his temper, had quarrelled desperately with his father-in-law, who, in revenge, left the whole of his money to his other daughter, cutting off Mrs. Ashford altogether. The ill-blood had descended to the next generation in the farmer's mind, and he never allowed his children to go near their aunt and uncle, who had retired from "public life" after keeping a small ale-house, and lived in great ease and dignity on their savings, having no children of their own, in a little house, built in great part by themselves, close to the dusty road near the small town higher up the valley.

Lydia, like many other very quiet people, had a strong will of her own, when sufficiently moved to exert it by anything she thought right, and she was quite determined that, as regarded the children, the breach should be healed, and the advantages of the connection secured. And what is the difference between obstinacy and firmness, but that intelligence is wanting in the first, to show what are the proper objects for which will ought to be exerted?

The first time that she propounded the idea that it would be right for the two to go and see their aunt, German fell into a frightful passion and declared that the Devil himself shouldn't make him consent.

About a month after Lyddy began again exactly as if not a word had been said. The old man was as dogged as ever, but not so violent; the third time he was quite silent, and went out of the house. And now Lyddy's strategics were pointing to the final assault. "I've a heerd that Bessie Broom have a been very badly," said she one day, when with his pipe and his glass of ale he sat in the sunshine in a more peaceful disposition than usual; "and when Nanny Elmes"—the pedlar and news-carrier—"went to Youlcliffe, I sent a comb frae the last honey, and for to hope as how she were of a better fashion."

"And how dared ye to be a sending my things to them as I choose to ha' nought to do wi'?"

"It were my own," said Lyddy, submissively; "old Sammy giv' me the skep when I had a nursed him wi' his confirmation on the flungs; and the heather honey's a deal thought on in some parts."

"And what did they say?" growled German.

"They've a sent Cassandra as pretty a spot for a gownd as ever you saw, and hopes as how she'd be let come and see 'em at next wakes; and a piece for a weskit, yalla and brown and red, very neat, for you." Poor Lyddy shrewdly suspected that it was intended for German junior, but she took the chance.

"And what shall I do with such finery?" said the old man, sulkily, but fingering the bright tissue all the same.

"It cam frae Manchester this fall and was a new pattern, they wrote, just out," answered Lydia.

The vanity of new clothes is by no means usurped by womankind, or for that matter any other kind of vanity. German kept the "weskit," made up with fustian sleeves and back as a sort of jacket—a garment much affected in those parts—which Lyddy got ready with all haste.

"I'll ma' it good to thee, German my lad, an' I ha' to save for a twelvemonth, for I reckon 'twas for thee thy aunt giv' it," said she to the boy, who was standing over her watching her nimble fingers.

"Nay, mother, it ma's naught to me; let my feyther ha' it, and welcome; but thee'll strive as I may get my turn too some day to go down and have my out?"

The first time old Ashford came forth in his new jacket Lydia observed quietly, "Old Nanny's here agin; she's going back to Youlcliffe, and I shall send word as the weskit is very comfable, as you was a wearing of it, and that Cassandra thanks un kindly, and will be over to the feast come Saturday se'nnit."

Old German made a wry face and a grunt; but with the fatal garment clinging to his very back, his mouth was shut: he did not like to say No before Nanny, who had just come into the house, and went sulkily out at the door.

"Am I to go?" said Cassie, looking in eagerly on her return from an expedition to carry down eggs to the valley below. Lydia smiled.

"Yes, child," said Nanny. "And now about your clo'es: them hats ain't wore now," said she solemnly, with her head on one side like a bird; "the more's the pity, they suit some folks rarely, they do," and she looked critically at the beautiful girl before her. The old English costume lingered still among the hills, as picturesque a dress as many that are studied and admired in Italy and Switzerland. Cassie had on a large black flat hat, with no crown, only a rising in the middle, "an oat-cake hat," as it was called, held on chiefly by the strings, a "quilt" petticoat of blue "calamanca," a red cloak and brown stockings, with buckles in her shoes.

"What must I wear?" said she anxiously. Like many other beautiful people, she was nervously anxious to be "just like other folk."

"Ah, she mun ha' a bonnet; can ye bring her

one, Nanny?" said Lydia. "There's a ribbin was her mother's, and some other bits o' things upstairs as we'll look out. Mebbe you'll trust us, Nanny, an we canna pay now?" added she.

"Trust ye, child! Why, I'd trust ye wi' all the money in the king's counting-house—an I'd got it," she added, as a saving clause, as she went away.

During the next fortnight Ashford entirely ignored the visit, and was only somewhat more cross and oracular than usual. In those very secluded regions where events are rare, a fact is none the less esteemed or supposed to be worn threadbare as a topic for conversation because it has been used every week for thirty years or more. One day, as he came in from the field to dinner, he began as if he had never mentioned it before: "They're bad uns at Youlcliffe. Joshua Stracey he sold me a keow now come eight year, was the best i' th' all country side, says he; and I says to he, warn't she queer about the shouthers? And he says to me, she were a rare milker, and there weren't such a one not nowhere round; and Toosday she were just swelled like a barrel, and o' Sunday marn'n she were dead! And he said she were overdruv! Overdruv! and we were a matter of four hours coming from Youlcliffe."

Now this grievance of the cow was of ancient date and bitter memory. Old Ashford had gone to law about it, and had lost his suit; and his wrongs rankling in his mind came rambling out whenever the sluice of words was opened, however far removed from the outrage itself. He had long been friends with Joshua Stracey, one of the sharpest cattle-dealers about; his slow obstinate old nature taking great pride in holding its own against a man who got the better of most people. "He never choused me," was his frequent boast. At last, in an evil hour of confidence over their ale, he told his crony of a certain filly on which he had his eye,—"the owner didn't know what a rare nag 'twould turn out,"—and Ashford had offered some low sum which the man refused, but they were drawing closer and were haggling over a matter of five shillings, when Joshua stepped in privately, bought the foal over his head, reared it, and sold it for a large sum. Ashford never forgot nor forgave this enormity; and when the two old men met at market or fair, there was much ado to prevent their fighting. A sort of feud, a bitter hatred and desire for revenge arose, brooded over in a manner which we can hardly conceive in these days, when one feeling and idea succeeds another so rapidly that none

have the time to rankle as they did in the old days. Therefore it was with undiminished rancour that old German once more began on his wrongs as he flung himself down on the three-cornered chair ready for his dinner.

"He'll come to the gallows yet, he will, and I dunno see what call ony o' mine hae to go to Youlcliffe at all."

Nobody replied. Lydia was putting the last touch to a saucepan containing a savoury something in which onions bore a large share; and Cassie, who was ironing her little bits of finery for the next day, removed them in much haste. Her father cast a grim look at her, and then at German, who had just come in from the field, and stood against the dresser talking to his sister as he waited for his dinner. Ashford did not like to see people enjoying themselves, and he therefore turned sharply on the lad.

"German, there's a moudewarp* ma's no end o' wark alongside the Bogle's Mead. Why ha'n't ye set a trap till it, I say? Ye're a pretty fellow for a farmer."

"I'll see to a trap, but Cassie mun bring some

* "Telling me of the moldwarp and the ant," says Hotspur.—*Henry IV.* Act iii.

wire from Youlcliffe. I ha'n't got none. Is the pottage ready, mother? It's a very pretty smell is onions," said German, to make a diversion.

"They're but poor critturs down at Youlcliffe," the old man went on sententiously, "and as proud as turkeycocks. *I* wouldn't go near 'em, not for sixpence. I cum of an ancient, old family, I do; and Broom's nobbut i' th' public line, for all they cock their heads so high. The king he says to my an*ces*tor—they was out hunting, and Warrior Ashford he had a big grey horse as went over everythink—and King Henry VI. says he, 'Sell me that horse;' and my an*ces*tor he says, 'No, please your Majesty, not at no price.' 'What!' says the king,* riled like, 'is there nowt as you'd sell him for? I'll gie anything ye ask.' 'Well,' says the warrior, 'if ye'll gie me Shining Cliff for a bedding-nook and Briery Bed for a watering-place, I'll take them for the horse.' Then one of the courtiers ups and says, 'Why, they're two of the best estates you've got hereabouts, please your Majesty.' 'King or no king,' says King Henry VI., 'I'll keep to my word,' and so he did, and he took the horse and gived the warrior the property, and they are the best part of the estate now."

* "Roiled him extremely."—*Lord Keeper Guildford.*

"The warrior mun ha' been a big man o' war, a judging by his sword," said Lydia, turning to a formidable weapon which hung by the fire, and too happy to keep the conversation on interests three hundred years old. "I allus think o' Gideon when I hear tell on un."

"It mun hae been queer, too, a skewering chaps right through wi' that long bit o' steel," added the unwarlike German, anxious to help his mother in avoiding aggravating topics by this historical line of discourse.

"Ye dunno know nowt about it," said his father, contemptuously. "Them wos fine times in the ould days, and there's nowt like it now. There's the wakes, as Cassie ma's such a rout about" (the poor girl had not uttered a word); "why, they're nothink to what they were i' th' ould times. I've a heard my grandfather tell how they used to dance and make merry wi' the bagpipes. Where's the bagpipes now I'd like to know?"

"What's them?" said German.

"They'se pigs' bags as ye squeeze music out on," answered his father, rising to go back to the field; "but it's o' no use 'spaining to yo' as is so ignorant like, and has niver seen nowt!"

"He mun be a queer un, mun Joshua," said German, curiously, to his sister as they went out. Joshua was almost the only stranger of whom he ever heard, and the commodity was too rare, even by name, at Stone Edge for the dissipation of talking of him to be despised. "Hearken by feyther, and he mun hae horns and a tail, and there's a son a bit older nor me as he sends of errands by times. I should like fine for to see un."

"Nay, dunna thee say so," said Cassandra; "They mun be a' bad uns, old and young too, for to do such things. What for would'st thou want to hae any dealings wi' bad folk?" she added, anxiously, with a woman's fear of stepping out of the ancient ways. German was turning into the yard to drive the cart-horses out to water at the great stone troughs in the lane, and she followed him with a jug and a pail, for the water was considered better for tea and the dairy than that of the well in the house. She pulled a green leaf of hartstongue as usual, and put it where the rill trickled over a stone out of the hill-side, making thus a tiny spout for the water, and as she stood waiting for it to fill her cans, and the big cart-horses drank at the lower trough with a loud inspiration, the tips of their noses

daintily set on the surface of the water, German went on,—

"Joshua's lad, Nanny telled me, were goin' up and down at Morehead arter his feyther's business last Wissuntide. Everybody goes i' th' world but me. Feyther mun think my yead's like yon balls upo' th' stone stoups, as I'm never to have an out. There's a firetail," said the boy, interrupting the recital of his wrongs to throw a stone at a redstart.

"I'm main glad thou'st missed the poor bird," said Cassie, smiling. "'Twouldn't ha' mended what's amiss wi' thee to hae broken its wing. I'm a'most sorry that it's I as was ast to aunt Bessie's. I've a big mind to let thee go ithstead."

"Nay," said the boy, "that would never do; thee and me's not one for aunt Bessie. Wimen likes wimen mostly for to chatter wi' un. But mebbe thou could'st bring in a word for me, easy like, not all one as a message frae me. There were a cart one fair time, I heerd, at Youlcliffe," he added, with a deep sigh, "wi' a lion and a bear, or summat o' that sort, inside, and a big pictur outside, Buxton's boy telled me. There's a many things to be learnt down i' th' town too, as thou knowest nowt about;—how should a wench?" said German, with

the magnificent contempt of boydom for femality. "Cattle and prices, and ploughs, and sich like;—and I dunno scarce know my own uncle not by sight sin' I were a little un, as could learn me a' them things; and what for?" he added, bitterly. "Because my grandad left his money as he chused. I dunno care for's money, but 'tis hard as I canna go and see the wild beasts and the world a bit, when, as one mid say, it's a' at one's own aunt's door. And then feyther threeps it at me as if it's my fault!"

CHAPTER II.

GOING TO THE WAKES.

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart, or in the head ?
How begot, how nourished ?
Reply, reply.
It is engendered in the eyes,
'Tis the cradle where it lies.

Merchant of Venice.

THE wakes are a very important institution. In the Puritanic tabooing of amusement among the Methodists in the hills, it is one of the few opportunities for it which has still been left undisturbed. "The feast" is determined by the saint's day to whom the church of each village is dedicated, although the fierce old Puritan-Protestants who celebrate it would be horrified if they knew that they were keeping a "Papist festival."

On the Saturday before they began, Cassandra, with a beating heart, set out with her bundle in her hand containing her new gown—the admired "spot"—upon this her first outing into the world,

with much the same feelings that a young lady performs her entrance into the same. "After all there is a great deal of human nature in the world."

"Thee mun just get to Youlcliffe as thee can," said her father sulkily.

"German, thou'lt put off thy kytle * and carry thee sister's things to th' auld mill, I'll be boun?" whispered Lydia. "It shall be thy turn next, my lad," she added; "he wunna gie consent for both yet awhile."

Six miles of the white limestone road, dusty and glaring, made even Cassandra's strong young limbs glad to reach her aunt's door. She had not been to Youlcliffe for nearly six years, as, since the quarrel about the money, her father had never allowed her to go near the place; and it was with a curious feeling of strangeness and knowledge that she made out the little square red house set on to an old grey stone cottage, of which its owners were very proud, with a border of brilliant flowers in front—marigold and stock and larkspur.

Mrs. Broom was leaning over the wicket-gate, and welcomed her niece from afar, loudly and warmly. She was a little round fat woman, with a pleasant

* Kertl—garment, short blouse.

jovial face, adorned with a cap whose ample border, the same width all round, with red and yellow flowers at regular intervals, rivalled a sunflower in magnificence, or even the great sun himself—a relic of the old public days.

"Well, child, and it's hearty welcome thee art, and a long time thou'st been a coming; but I reckon it ain't thy fault; thou'st ha' been rare and glad, I take it, to come out o' yon dull place. And now let me look at thee arter all these years. Thee'st got thy mother's eyes and hair, and a good deal o' her look; but, eh, thee'st a long way off o' her! She were a bonny lass she were, like me, only she were small. Thee hast thee feyther's height."

Other people were of opinion that Cassandra was very much handsomer than her mother, but who ever heard relations acknowledge this? A patronizing shake of the head is all that the prettiest girl ever gets, and "Ah, but you should have seen her mother in her prime." In fact, beauty ought to have died out of the world altogether, in such repeated failures as poor nature is supposed to make.

"See thee, child," said the old woman, proudly doing the honours of her ten feet of pleasure-ground, and taking hold of a China rose; "parson paid five

shilling for it not a twelvemon' back, and gardener giv' me a slip. Ain't it a beauty? But this wind sore daunts flowers, it jades 'um a very deal. An' they'll be wanted Monday for th' 'Well Dressing.' And now come in, dearie, and ma' thyself at whuom."

And very much at home Cassandra began soon to feel as she went up and down helping her aunt in the multifarious preparations of that very notable woman for the feast. She had not been there very long when a tall pleasant-looking young fellow looked in at the door.

"I'm main sorry Master Broom ain't to home. I'd a message for him, and feyther's in a vast o' hurry for to know the answer."

"Sit ye down, Roland Stracey, and bide a bit; ye'll be sure for to see him long o' five minutes or so; he's a sore one for's tea, is th' ould man; he canna abide to wait, can't Nathan. Here's my niece from Stone Edge."

Cassandra gave a little start, and looked curiously at the son of her father's foe. She was a little frightened and a little flurried, but she was only shy, not awkward; and though she blushed she smiled, and though she drew back instead of coming

forward, she did not look the less attractive for that. She was a very pretty picture with her modest beauty and her courteous shyness. A beautiful girl is very interesting to most people (ill-regulated minds, as the worshippers of ugliness now-a-days would say), so is the daughter of one's father's enemy; but to combine both attractions is to be charming, both before and since the days of Juliet; and so accordingly Ronald Stracey seemed to find.

He sat down on the great carved oaken chest which stood just within the door and contained all the treasures of the family, and when Cassie's thoughts returned from the little excursion which they had made as she compared the reality now before her with the ideal "Joshua's son" which she had constructed out of the depths of her own consciousness a few days before, she found her aunt discoursing up and down to him most amicably.

"And so you'd niver seen Cassie! no more you had, and it's queer too, for yer mother was very thick wi' us two when we was all girls together; and iver sin' too, and that's a many year ago. I were very fond o' your mother, Roland—eh, it sims like yesterday sin' she died!"

"Three year come Martinmas," answered he with a sigh.

"To be sure hur were a very great 'ooman for working, hur woold persevere, a woold, arter work—a nice tidy little 'ooman too she war, but hur were a very big Baptist, and that yer feyther never could abide, and it set him again her that did—he didn't like for her to mak' such a rout, he said, about sich things, for a' she were quiet enough! And though he were na such a very deal for th' church hissen, it angered him as she shouldn't think it good enough for the like o' she—but she just took up her cross, poor thing, and were very still—she weren't an 'ooman for much discourse, but I do believe if there's saints up there in heaven, she's one o' 'um."

"Ay," said Roland, his eyes glistening at the praise of his mother, "there ain't a been much good done in our house sin' she went away" (died)—and he turned as he spoke to look on Cassie, with a faint hope that some of the glory of his mother's virtues might be reflected on her son in the girl's eyes, but she was apparently so intent on bringing together the two sides of a rent in her aunt's Sunday petticoat, that there was nothing to be read there.

"And now you just get off o' that ark," said the

old lady, "I'm wanting Nathan's Sunday things,"—and she lifted up the great carved lid and began burrowing among the piles of clothing in that most inconvenient of all receptacles, the delight of our ancestors, who do not seem to have appreciated or invented either drawers or closets.

"And 'tis queer too, everythink as ye wants seems allays to be at the bottom ithstead of at the top," said Roland, looking curiously in. "And as all and everythink has to be dragged out ivery time."

"Here, Cassie," said her aunt, piling up all sorts of incongruous articles on the girl's arms, as she stood by trying to help, while Roland, quite unnecessarily, held the lid carefully up, "here's yer uncle's flannel singlet, and his best coat, and my hood, look as there's no rents in 'um. I like to see as the clo'es is all ready for to-morra; I canna bear to be fashed wi' 'um up o' th' Sabbath morning—and then ye mun set the buckles upo' my shoes. Eh, child, thee dost na mind when thee was bidin' wi' me here last turn; thee wast but a little un, mebbe thirteen or so; thee was fine and bug one day as thee wast to be measured for a pair o' new shoes—and say'st thou i' a whisper i' th' shop, so sharp, 'Auntie, will ye speak to th' cobbler for to put in a penn'orth o' squeak-leather, like

the other girls, for to sound fine as I comes up the aisle o' th' church arter you?'" and Mrs. Broom's hearty laugh rang through the house.

Cassie's blushes were almost painful, they reached up to the very roots of her hair. "What will he think o' me," she said to herself, "for to be so vain and silly like?" How could her aunt be so cruel as to show her up in this unkind way!

Roland, however, did not join in the merriment. He only smiled just enough for civility to Mrs. Broom's little joke, and Cassie, comforted by his forbearance, began to think that her aunt's offence was not irremediable after all.

At that moment, much to Roland's distaste, who had found the time only too short, Nathan appeared at the door. He was a little spare old man, with a rather large head, and fine-cut though not handsome features; his deep-set eyes, shrewd and penetrating, seemed to see through you and a good way beyond, while the lines about the mouth were tender and gentle, and there was at times a sort of quiet appreciation of fun which contrasted curiously with his slow meditative serious manner: it is a combination not uncommon among the northern peasants. "Eh! I'm pretty well in my potterin' way, but I'm a

good deal the worse for wear," he said in answer to his niece and Roland's greetings. "I've a been down to th' miller's for meal for th' pigs; they say a' millers is rogues, but our'n do pass everythink; so I thowt as I'd try old Anthony down your way, Cassie—I wonder as I did na' meet thee—but I think I've got a touch of the rheumatics back agin," observed he, sinking into a "two-armed chair."

"Hast thee carried the hare's foot i' thy pocket as I gie thee?" said his wife, anxiously. "It's a fine thing for the rheumatics," she went on, turning to Cassie. Nathan smiled.

"Eh, but thee said as thee wouldst," cried she, reproachfully.

"I said by-and-by," replied Nathan, laughing. "By-and-by's our answer to 'never,' they says, ye know."

"And that's what's a made thee sae late," said his wife, beginning to set the teacups. "I were right down fashed as summat had come to thee when thee wastna home for tea."

"I ain't sa young as I were, my missis, and it taks me a good bit o' time now to come up th' hill. Ah, I could hop and run wi' the best on ye, my lad, when I were the like o' you. There's a many things

as is better for being ould—an ould friend, and a tree's nowt when it's young, and ould wine they says; but not legs, lad, not legs, nor hair neither for that matter," he added, as he took off his low-crowned hat and wiped the bald top of his head with its fringe of beautiful soft white curly hair.

"'The hoary head is a crown of glory,' as the hair fa's off the sense comes in," said his wife, with much unction. "I dunna think much o' them great heads o' hair," and she looked with rather an injured expression at the rich covering on the two young heads opposite her.

"Eh, but thee didst na think sa when thine awn were a' as thick as Cassie's," answered her husband, with a smile. "See thee," he went on, "I've a brought thee a sight o' fine yarbs; I fund an ould fella i' th' mead gathering 'um, and he gived some on 'um to me, and that's what 'twere made me so long."

"Dear heart, and it is a good job as ye lighted upo' the ould man; they say as he knaws no end about them simples," said Mrs. Broom, examining the weeds of virtue with the utmost satisfaction.

"They say as he comes no end of a way off, and is a cunnen* man about a lot o' things," observed Roland.

* "Kennen," *to know.*

"Here's rue; it's a fine thing for the stomach he said: 'herb o' grace'* they ca'ed it 'cause o' its healin' virtue. Thee'st to make a tea on it. I thowt it might be good for them sways i' th' head as troubles thee. And thae blue buttons as is wonderful for the eyes,—he were fine and pleased were the ould un to see such a lot on 'um growing together. 'I've a seen a many changes,' says he. 'I mind when it were quite a throng place here by the watter where the mine sough comes, but the lead ore's all out, and now 'tis so still; but God A'mighty's flowers,' says he, 'just covers a' the desolate places what man ma'es waste, and they bloom on and mak' a' fair again.'"

"Ay," said Roland, "there were fine fighten in the old time about that mine, and Tommy Goodall welly murdered as thowt to take it from them as held the pick. The poor widder as owned it canna get owt o' them miners as have a took sich a deal o' ore out o' her mead!"

"What folk tak' out o' one hole they puts into another, as the saying is," moralized Nathan. "I dunna know as p'r'aps they's any the better off for their gets; 'tis a'most like gambling is the lead ore.

* "There's Rue for you. We'll call it a herb o' grace on Sundays."—*Ophelia.*

And so ye're come at last, my wench?" the old man went on, turning kindly to Cassie. "Thy aunt will mak' a fine deal on thee for the sake o' them as is gone. 'Tis a long lane as has no turning, but I thowt thy feyther would niver ha' let thee come nigh us."

"He's the okkardest fella i' a' the earth wi' his timper," said Mrs. Broom, with some little asperity.

"Well, 'tis the childer most times owes it to the father, not the father to the childer; t'ain't often as the kitlings bring home a mouse to the ould cat," answered Nathan, smiling; "and hur he's married, I hope she's a wise woman. She's reather young."

"'Twere mainly along o' she as I come down this turn," replied Cassie warmly; "and you said some things were the better of bein' young, you know, uncle," added she, smiling.

"But not womenfolk, child—I niver said *that!*" answered he, laughing. "They're poor vain wisps of things is girls!" The expression of his face, however, did not quite say the same as his words: "but Lyddy were a woman o' God i' that Scriptur' ye mind, so I'm hoping as it's a' right," added he, drinking his tea, which perhaps gave a more hopeful cast to his thoughts.

"Here's a dish for thee, Roland," said Mrs. Broom, handing one to him, which he drank standing, as a sort of protest to himself that all this time he was going away.

"I thowt as ye'd summat ye wanted sore to speak on to Nathan," burst out Bessie suddenly, remembering Roland's urgent messages, and wishing kindly to forward the business.

"'Twas my father wanting to know whether yo kep' them two sheep as is in the croft to joist," said Roland, by no means grateful for the reminder.

"Eh! it's such a long price as he asks for 'um, lad. I canna buy 'um. If he's to ha' an answer now, 'tis no ye mun say; but I'll see thee feyther. There's a calf as the missus wants to get shut a'."

"And, Roland, there'll be room for ye at tea-time o' Monday," cried the hospitable Mrs. Broom.

Nathan groaned; his wife's teas were a burden to his soul.

"Eh, master, ye know as ye said ye shouldn't mind a little 'do' not at Wake time," said his wife with a rather uneasy conscience.

At last, having long outstayed his time, with his father's future reproaches sounding in his ears, Roland got up unwillingly to go. He turned when he reached

the door, and looked back at Cassandra his mute farewell. The evening sun shone on her tall and noble form, and the grand outline of her features seemed to transfigure the little gray old parlour. "She's like a queen," said poor Roland to himself humbly; "what am I that she should fancy me?"

The next day Mrs. Broom was bustling about in her bonnet nearly an hour before it was necessary to start for service.

"'Tis a beautiful Sunday to be sure, and there'll be a good congregation to-day," said she.

"Yes, the fine weather brings all the varmint out," answered Nathan, with a smile, as he prepared to set off in front, alone in his dignity, as the superior sex generally does in ——shire. He sat in the gallery, among the old men, a place of grandeur, while his womankind had a pew below.

"We're main proud of our spire," added Bessie, as she panted up the steep path, and squeezed with infinite difficulty through the narrow stone openings, which serve as stiles, "and it's as pratty a congregation as lives."

As they performed what to Cassandra was now, unlike the pride of her childish days, the awful ceremony of walking up the middle aisle, many a head

turned round to look, and Cassie, in her nervous shyness, took the notice which she excited as a reflection on her bonnet, which she perceived, by the innate perception of millinery (after all only a phase of observation inherent in most women), to be of the wrong shape, and on the rest of her clothes, which she felt certain were of the wrong fashion; and therefore when she reached her uncle's pew, she sat down in a humiliated state of mind and hid her face gladly. By-and-by came the less devout worshippers as the clergyman appeared, and she observed Roland Stracey walk into a seat not very far off, where, however, she could not see him except by turning her head a little, and this only happened once, when her aunt, roused by "the Belief" from a sleepy fit, knocked down her umbrella and her book and her handkerchief and her spectacles, and Cassandra, in a blinding state of confusion at the commotion, and her own grovelling under the bench necessary to recover the property, turned her head the least bit in the world for sympathy towards Roland, and caught his eyes, fixed, probably, on the preacher (her own head and the pulpit were both in a straight line from him), in which case his strict attention did him the greatest credit.

The old church was grander than even her remembrance of it. There were most original old frescoes representing the Apostles, with big staring eyes, and scrolls issuing out of their mouths bearing pious observations, and a great expenditure of blue, supposed to represent heaven, which went sprawling over the chancel arch and roof. She thought she had never seen anything so beautiful. Indeed, except that involuntary appeal to Roland, she never once thought of him, but was absorbed in the magnificence about her and the splendour of the music, where three fiddles, a bassoon, and a violoncello were all struggling for the mastery, screeching madly, while the choir sang with much unction—

> Mercy and justice cheek by jowl
> Do by each other stand,
> While truth and peace and righteousness
> Are marching hand in hand.

"'Twas like a little heaven below," said poor Cassandra to her aunt, with a glow of delight, as they began to move slowly out with the crowd.

"Look, child," said the old woman, clawing hold of her near the door, and dragging her up to a beautiful altar tomb of a recumbent warrior in full armour, with a great two-handed sword by his side. "Yon's

one as belongs to your people, yer know; they call him Warrior Ashford."

Cassandra did as she was bid, but her attention was disturbed by knowing that Roland had come up just behind her. She did not see him, as she had never turned her head; she had not even heard him, for their acquaintance was of too short a date to enable her to distinguish his footstep, and in the tramping of feet it would have been impossible, and yet she knew it as well as if she had both seen and heard.

"It's a very pretty piece of work," said Roland, not addressing her. "See thee how they joints i' th' armour is set, like as if they were natural; I canna think how they done it."

"It's like a many things, if ye set your mind to't you'll find out how, Master Roland," said the old lady, smartly; "and now make haste, Cassie, for I'm clean clammed and drouthed, and I want my dinner. Ye'll not forget to-morrow at tea, my lad? We mun mak' haste and get home," added the old woman. "Nathan's a vera poor feeder, and I want just to toss up summat for un. Go out and see whether ye can fin' a new-laid egg, t'will mebbe 'tice him to eat a bit o' bacon. Nathan," she cried, as he came in at the door, "the white hen have a set

twenty days and hanna hatched yet; the eggs mun be addled."

"Well, ye might leave her a bit longer," answered he, with a smile; "her time ain't o' much account, is it?"

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BROOM'S "DO."

Life would be endurable if it were not for its amusements.
G. C. L.

TEA is a moveable festival, varying according to the latitude of the country and class. "Genteel" tea may be even as late as half-past six; but Mrs. Broom was not genteel, and her guests were expected so soon after two that not a minute of rest had she or Cassandra from her preparations all that morning.

"What for haven't ye crossed the witch out o' the bread," said the girl, looking over Mrs. Broom's shoulder as she thrust into the oven one lump of plum-dough after another.

"Well, 'tis a good sign, as mun do good and none harm," answered Bessie, making a deep cross according to custom; "but Nathan dunna feel sure we needs to be afraid as to what folk say o' the witches."

"Thou'st a lucky hand wi' the butter, I will say

that, my wench," said her aunt, admiringly, as the time went on. "Set out the girdle-cakes at top, and the honey frae yer feyther at bottom."

"'Twas Lyddy sent it, aunt Bessie," said Cassandra.

"And I should like a posie or two while ye're out picking the rasps—them white pinks smells so beautiful. Eh, I havena filled the bough-pot i' th' chimney. As for the pikelets, 'twill be better to throw them and butter 'um as folks want 'um, hot and hot, and the tay mun be set down to draw. To be sure, how dear it do be," the old woman went on, without hearing any tongue but her own.

And in a few minutes after they were ready the little room was as full as the honeycomb itself.

Cassandra was wholly engrossed in serving; indeed it was far more to her taste than sitting grand with her pocket-handkerchief spread upon her lap, pouring her tea solemnly into her saucer. Very deft and handy she was in all her movements, and Roland's eyes followed her up and down, watching the grace there is in doing anything really well.

"You'd be a treasure in the public line," said her uncle, approvingly.

"She'll ha' a farm o' her own, and plenty to do in it, I take it," answered aunt Bessie, with a toss of her head.

At last old Nathan, after his seventh cup of tea, declared "he couldn't swalla a drop more, and that Cassie mun ha' hers, beleddy, mun she" [the curious old Catholic oath of the district]. And she sat down at the corner of the side-table while her aunt poured out the last cup of bitter cold decoction, and Roland, in a shamefaced way, at doing work "which only females ought to," brought her the poor remains of the bread-and-butter and cake; but he was almost instantly called away by the demands of "society."

It was a very unsatisfactory day. He had not exchanged a word with her; and somehow the merry-making seemed dull, and the time-honoured jokes stupid, as he tried vainly to get near her.

Everything, however, comes at last to an end, even a ——shire tea; and presently at dusk there was a general move, and shawling and bonneting, and leave-taking, and elaborate thanks at the door-sill, and again at the wicket-gate.

Roland remained behind the rest: he had provided himself with some excuse of business, to be

"handy" in case of an opportunity, and he now flung out his grappler, and began on Nathan:—"My father says about the cow—" and he fumbled for a letter in his pocket.

"Keep it till to-morrow, lad; I canna do nought i' th' business line. I'm clean done and wored out wi' pleasuring," answered Nathan, yawning.

Roland had emptied the heterogeneous contents of his pocket on a vacant corner of the dresser, and among them lay a white, half-opened rose. A rose does not look the better for being stuffed into a hole with papers and string, and a knife, and a handkerchief; and he looked almost as rueful as his rose.

"I brought it this arternoon," he said, almost angrily, looking at Cassandra, though he could scarcely see her where she stood in the twilight. "And there were so many folk, and it were a rare un, too, as growed o' th' rectory garden-wall."

"Brought the cow! Growed on the rectory wall! Why, the lad's gone clean crazy. Well, well, we'll see about it, sin' wakes is over. Time for all things, man," said old Nathan, who was not in love, and if he ever had been had got over it forty years before; so it was pardonable if he did not interpret its short-

hand, or read between the lines of Roland's discourse. But when he was gone out of sight—not a minute before—Cassandra took up the half-dead rose and hid it in her bosom.

Meantime Nathan and his wife were discussing their party as greater folk have done.

"'T have a been as nice a 'do' as iver we 've a' had," said Mrs. Broom, throwing herself upon the settle quite knocked up, "and the pikelets was beautiful, I will say that, Cassie!"

"What for didst thou have Sammy Goodall's wife?" answered her husband with a groan.

"Why, I've a know'd her iver sin' I were so high," replied his wife, rising up out of her corner in a defensive attitude.

"The more 's the pity; I do think as she's the very biggest fool I knows, and that's saying a very deal. She hangs her head o' one side, and makes faces as she thinks is pretty uns, and as turns my stomich, and then she whines and complains o' everybody, and thinks evil o' folk. I hate a fool," added the old man with much energy. "King Solomon was vera strong agin 'um—sims as if he thowt they does as much harm i' the world as them that is knaves. Yer knows where to ha' a rogue pretty

much, so to speak, but him as is a fool ye canna tell where ye mayn't find un, digging pits mebbe, tho' he may fa' into 'em first hisself."

"Well, but ye wouldn't ha' noboddy," said his wife, "an ye was so petticklar to ha' 'em a' wise to one pattern."

"Well, no more I would; we haven't none on us too much sense I tak' it. I've scarce enou' for to reg'late matters mysel', and set things agate. I canna think how folks puts up wi' fools; ye may bray a fool in a mortar, yet shall ye not cure him o' his folly. Eh, what a silly she is, Sammy Goodall's missis!"

"Good lack, ye munna ha' a' things o' one sort in a puddin'; there's raisins, and spice and eggs, and ye mun ha' flour as is o' no taste, for to mix 'um all together," said Mrs. Broom, skilled in cookery; "but law, thae menfolk dunna understand how things is made good," she ended with a smile, as she got up to join Cassie, who had begun to clear away the remains of the feast; and they washed, and swept, and tidied, and cleaned, and set to rights to such an extent, that Nathan, in self-defence, at last retired to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "WELL-DRESSING."

What, blossoms, were ye born to be
An hour or half's delight,
And so to bid good-night ?—HERRICK.

THE next day it poured incessantly in a dogged manner which is only seen in hill countries; the rain seemed to fall in sheets, the mist to fold in like a blanket, while every watercourse became a little river and every puddle like a lake.

"Eh, dearie me," repeated Mrs. Broom, who was paddling across in it like a duck in pattens, as her husband observed; "ain't it a pity! and it'll spile a' the flowers! It allus do rain at a 'well-dressing,' they says. Good lack, and the folks in their best clo'es, and a' the pretty motters and things!"

Towards night, however, it lulled, and there is this to be said in favour of hill weather—if one is never certain of a fine day, on the other hand you need never despair, hope may spring from the most unexpected quarters: a current of air up a valley may

carry away a storm: the clouds may disperse in a hundred ways; and accordingly, though the next morning was cloudy, "I think 'twill hold, though the weather looks sa vera tickle," was the verdict that met them on all sides.

"Eh, thee lookest as fresh as a daisy, child," said her aunt, inspecting her critically, as Cassie appeared, having altered her clothes a little according to her new lights.

"Well, then, 'tis a red-tippt un," observed Nathan with a smile, as the girl blushed with pleasure at her aunt's innocent little compliment; she had not been at all spoilt by over-indulgence in that commodity; and then the aunt and niece set off up the steep ascent.

The town of Youlcliffe, though considered by its inhabitants as a great city, consisted of little more than one long street, which wandered up and down the steepest "pitches," according to the lay of the hill on which it was set, in an extraordinary fashion. Indeed, in some parts the street was so steep that in frosty weather a cart could hardly get up or down. There seemed no reason whatever why there should have been any town at all in that place: it was singularly out of the way and inconvenient of access, yet it

was the "chef lieu" of the "wapentake," and the seat of the mineral courts, which, ruling by their own strange laws, make wild work of what are considered in more favoured regions as rights of property.

The world was collecting at the old church, which stood high up on the rocky hill just outside the street —its steep sloping graveyard crowded with curious stones heaped pell-mell together, and the tall spire springing up into the air above the heads of the lofty elms which grew all round.

The ceremonies began with a service in church, at the end of which the congregation issued in grand procession with the clergyman at their head.

"There, Cassie," said her aunt, hurrying out of the beautiful little porch overshadowed by a gigantic yew-tree, "we'll wait here a bit. I canna bear a scrimmage—thee'lt see better atop o' the grave." And she pointed to a great flat slab supported by pillars like a dining-table, a common form of monumental glorification in the north.

Somebody gave Cassie a helping hand to mount it, but in her flurry it was not till she was safely landed on her pedestal that she perceived that it was Roland —who, however, did not speak to her, but set himself to protect her aunt from the crowd.

"Eh, dear heart, they rude girls do welly scroodge the breath out o' one's body. I was a'most squoze to death at the door," said she, panting. "See thee, Cassie, there goes thee uncle," the old wife went on with much pride as Nathan passed in the procession among the magnates of the place. "There's none on un looks so nice as he! he's as neat as a new pin. But, law, that jacket and breeches, what a many stitches there was in 'um!" observed she, pointing to his suit of velveteen plum-coloured dittoes; "though I shouldn't say it as made 'um, they do look just well!" added Mrs. Broom, admiring her own merits a little in her husband, as was only fair.

The procession streamed down the gravel path, carrying their banners, and proceeded to "bless the wells," by the Parson reading the Psalms of the day, one at each fountain of brilliant sparkling water which came flushing out of the hidden reservoir deep in the heart of the great hills, and never failed in the driest season—in consequence no doubt of the blessing.

There was a whole chronicle of recollections and transformations in the history of the festival, only no one cared for them; old Pagan rites, Druidical or

other, sacred to the divinity of the waters, to whom the holiday was set aside, taken up and utilised by the Romans into the worship of some heavenly lady, then adopted by Catholicism and turned to honour of the Virgin Mother, and which now, emptied of their meaning, had sunk into something a little better than a club feast, with no associations, religious or other, left in them—only "'t has always been so at Youlcliffe." To such base uses may things come at last.

"Mightn't we go and see the wells now, Auntie?" said Cassie eagerly from her perch, as the crowd passed on down the hill, and Roland with it.

"There's plenty o' time; it won't be such a throng place in a while," answered her aunt, who took the facts of the day much more quietly than her niece, but began at last to follow slowly after.

The wells, which had probably in their palmy days worked many a miracle and been the object of many a pilgrimage, lay in different parts of the town, and were dressed to-day with wreaths and garlands, bowers and arches, and embroideries of flowers, some of them extremely pretty, forming mottoes and holy sentences, stuck sometimes in flat frames of wet

clay to keep them alive. Cassie, as she stood by her aunt's side, who was expounding and explaining the texts and sentiments to her with much unction, kept looking around her with a somewhat divided attention. The water came rushing out into a series of stone troughs—"living water:" one first understands the phrase when one sees its sparkling brilliant flash: it was now running through a sort of bed of flowers, while "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," hung over it in white camomiles on a ground of lilac scabious. "Ain't that a pretty un?" said the girl at last—turning with much more interest to them, for she had seen the top of a head she knew not far off.

"Yes; but I dunna know an that other bean't more noble," replied Mrs. Broom, whose taste inclined to the gorgeous. "See them scarlet poppies in the yalla marigolds: them's out o' our garden, and they've set 'um to the tune o' 'Sun and all creatures praise the Lord.' Dost see, Nathan?" she said, turning to her husband, who had now come up to them with Roland.

"They've a pretty nigh stripped a' the gardens round, I tak' it, for to mak' thae fine things," answered the old man a little cynically. "There's

Bessie's best stocks somewhere i' that lot hung out for to fade."

"And how could I ha' done better anyhow wi' 'um?" cried the old woman warmly.

"I like flowers best upo' their own stalks," replied Nathan; "they're a deal more natural."

They moved on slowly in the crowd for some time together.

"So ye're to play i' th' football match day after to-morrow, Roland?" said Nathan, presently.

"Timothy Tenby's hurt his foot i' th' quarry," answered he, "and canna stand upright, so they've a put me in i' th' stead."

"Yer mother didn't love them plays much," observed Mrs. Broom. "She said there was allus such a deal of drink wi' 'um."

"Well, I arena much for th' drink, but the play's a good play, on'y I ha'na time for't: my feyther's allus so throng wi' the cattle and horses."

"So much the better for thee, lad—kips thee hands out o' mischief and the devil's deeds," said the wise Nathan, smiling.

"I think that's as pretty as any o' the flower-wriggles," said Roland, to turn the conversation, which was becoming a little too personal—and he

took hold of a wreath of forget-me-nots with a bunch of daisies in the middle, hanging where the spray from the water kept it fresh—"it's sa innicent." He looked at Cassie, though he spoke to Mrs. Broom: for, though he had more or less now stood by her side for the best part of an hour, he had not yet found anything to say to her. He was glib enough to the old people; but though he ransacked his brain for topics to talk about to her, somehow all the things which came into his head seemed foolish and "ill convenient"—not to the purpose.

"I saw he was very much in love with her," said a very shrewd observer in a different rank of life, "for he sat by her at dinner and never spoke a word to her the whole time." And Roland gave this proof of his affection very pertinaciously, for he was a modest youth.

"See here comes the plaiting of the ribbons," said Nathan, as the crowd opened and a tall pole with long streamers of different colours attached to the top was carried along, surrounded by young girls singing a sort of chant, and swaying first to one side and then to the other, holding a handkerchief stretched between both hands, with a sort of rhythmical motion in time to the music, almost like a Greek dance.

"Ain't it just pretty," said Cassie, enthusiastically.

At times the pole was grounded in a sort of frame, and each girl, taking a ribbon, moved to and fro to the music, so as to plait the streamers into different patterns, sometimes all rolled in different-coloured bands round the pole, sometimes in plaits of three or five, each keeping her own path as she passed in and out.

"Well, I never did see!" cried the girl in great delight.

"It ain't nigh so nice as 'twere when I were young," sighed Mrs. Broom. "Law, how pretty yer mother, Cassie, did do that wi' the handkercher, to be sure, one year!"

At this moment Nathan quietly eclipsed himself behind the crowd, with a comical look of distress at Cassie, as he saw his old enemy, Mrs. Sam Goodall, coming up.

It was an unnecessary bit of cowardice on his part, however, for the sky grew suddenly overcast, and a premonitory drop or two beginning to fall, Mrs. Goodall rushed away again up the hill, screaming, "Bessie Broom, ye can see the football match o' Thursday from our door an yer niece choose: 'tis the best i' th' market-place."

"Eh, dear heart alive, and here comes the rain," said Mrs. Broom, who could not run. "What a lucky thing 'tis as I brought the rumbereller!" And she began to unfurl a great blue-cotton structure as large as a tent.

"I dunna think as 'twill be anything but a spit," answered Roland, gazing critically into the sky. "If yer stand by th' corner o' th' wall, 'twill soon be over." And he took the big family roof and held it over them both. "Eh, how the folk do skurry about just for a drop or two! 'Tis like as though they was made o' sugar," he laughed, as the pleasure crowd scattered to and fro, the rain coming down with a will.

"Good clothes dunnot grow upo' th' hedge, as yer'll find when ye has to pay for 'um," said Mrs. Broom sententiously. Then after a pause, during which they all stood watching from their shelter the little rivers of rain getting larger, she added with some disgust, "What a deal I do get o' the droppings, to be sure! Cassie, be you a gettin' so wet?"

"No, Auntie," answered the girl in a low voice.

"Roland, ye're not holdin' the rumbereller fair," cried Mrs. Broom, with some asperity, who was short,

and her two companions very tall. "I declare if it ain't cocked a' o' one side!" ("And that not mine," she might have added.)

"I ast yer pardon," apologized he anxiously, his conscience reproaching him for having indeed held the balance very unfairly.

"Thank ye, I'll hold it now mysen," said the old woman, taking it into her own hands. "If ye'd a had the keepin' of it much longer I might ha' squoze* a bucketful o' rain out o' my clothes."

"And by the same token I mun be getting home," said Roland. "My feyther 'll be in a fine way an I dunnot get back to the cattle by now, trampling and trailing about the mead as they does."

Somehow the pleasure seemed to have gone out of the feast for Cassie, though the weather had recovered its temper, and the entertainments went on even when the pilgrimage to the wells was ended.

* We are losing a number of well-declined preterites, for which the awkward affix "ed" is but a poor substitute. "Snew" is clearly the right past for "to snow," still preserved in Norfolk.

"He never shod a tear."—*Sussex.*
"I hot him a crack o' the head."—*Buckinghamshire.*
"He riz such a nice school."—*Hampshire.*
"Squoze, squoke, clomb, shope."—*North Country.*

These and many more are to be found in the old dramatists, though they now only exist in local dialects.

During the rest of the day everybody sat at their door-steps in their best clothes, received company, ate cakes sacred to the occasion, made of honey and spice—on which much learning has been spent, and which are supposed to be the same as were once made in honour of the Queen of Heaven, and connected with the Beltane fires at Midsummer Eve, and which tasted as badly as if they could boast of no such illustrious pedigree. They listened to the band belonging to some company of Foresters or Odd Fellows, who took advantage of the holiday and the concourse, to make their rounds; and, generally speaking, amused themselves.

When they returned home finally at nightfall, Cassie felt almost overpowered with the splendour of her dissipations.

"Well-a-day, how short my pleasure's lasting!" said the poor girl to herself, as she sat on the edge of her bed in the dark, thinking over the day. "To be sure, it's a'most a' gone; and yet it seems ages like sin' I were at Stone Edge. Whereiver's the time gone to!"

CHAPTER V.

FOOTBALL IN THE HILLS.

'Tis our hard-earned pleasures
Breed hard English men.

It was the last day of the feast, and the great match of the district, in which all the villages of the Netherdale took their share, was to be played. The struggle between "Upwards" and "Downwards" grew sometimes so fierce, the kicks so heavy, the passions roused before the ball was "goaled" by either party so violent, that it was put a stop to by the authorities, "with great unpleasantness," some years after. The feuds which arose out of it, indeed, sometimes lasted for years, and many was the old grudge fought out under cover of the fair struggle of the game, in such a manner as to leave behind serious consequences to limbs, and even life.

The ball was always thrown off at noon exactly, from a tall stone cross, battered and mutilated, which stood at the top of a square flight of steps in the quaint, picturesque old market-place, surrounded with

tall grey gable-ended houses built at every imaginable irregular angle up and down the hill, without the remotest notion of a square.

Mrs. Goodall's house stood up on a shelf in the hill-side, and the three or four yards of terrace in front formed a sort of bastion at the top of a high wall, on which grew some ragged flowers—up to which position of vantage Mrs. Broom toiled that morning, followed by Cassie.

"Ye're late," said their hostess; "they'll be off in a crack."

"Eh, how the folk do swarm to be sure," said Mrs. Broom, looking down on the seething crowd below. The lower windows and doors of the houses were all closed and barred: it did not do to risk the rush of such a furious crowd, blind to everything but the game. The upper windows, the tops of the walls and roofs, and every point where anything could be seen, were crowded with spectators.

"Why, look at Joshuay's house," said Mrs. Broom, pointing to one which stood a little back, and where no face or movement was to be seen. "He's allus so close and queer, they say he lets noboddy scarce come into his house sin' his poor wife died."

Cassie scarcely heard: she was too intently looking

over her wall at Roland as he came up among the "Upwards" men, each stripped to his shirt, shorts, and leggings.

The two rival parties—strong, well-grown fellows—now stood facing each other, watching for the first stroke of the great church bell, fiercely intent upon the first toss of the ball. There might be between thirty and forty on either side. The sun shone vehemently down upon their heads, and for a whole minute there was a dead silence, waiting for the sound of the clock.

"The pick o' the country-side they are for sure," said Mrs. Broom, a stout "Upp'ards." "But I ain't certain as the 'Down'ards' don't look the better men. I could wish big Dick o' the forge weren't o' t'other side."

Cassie, holding her breath in her eagerness, leant forward as they all stood like dogs in leash waiting to be slipped, and Roland, looking once round the little "place" in the deep hush, caught sight of her face and recognized her with a smile; but there was very different work to attend to in hand. In another moment came the outburst: kicking, howling, shouting, the crowd swayed from side to side, and seemed to be in all places at once.

"Every man's face looks as fierce as a bull-dog's!" said Mrs. Broom, retreating like the rest of the weaker spectators as the fray grew furious, and there was no knowing where the ball would next be kicked—up in gardens, down in ditches, holes, and sewers: the players flung themselves after it, crawling, running, climbing, scrambling, shouldering, hitting each other right and left, and whooping all the while like wild Indians. At length the torrent of arms and legs streamed down the hill towards the river which ran at its foot. It was generally the most difficult and dangerous, and therefore the most exciting point of the struggle, and a man had more than once been drowned there in its reckless vehemence.

Cassie, wild with excitement, began to follow in a crowd of anxious partisans of both sides.

"You'll see all from the self-stone in yer uncle's close," shouted her aunt after her. "Ye munna go i' a' that riot, Cassie child! ye'll just get murdered! Turn up to the left by the church path—ye'll be in plenty o' time—they won't be there this hour and more!"

As she spoke the ball had taken a new turn and the "Upp'ards" were heading it back triumphantly towards the market-place again.

To and fro, backwards and forwards, the fierce battle went on with varying fortune for a couple of hours at least; but gradually there was no doubt that though the ball was constantly turned, it was driven less and less far each time, and the "Upp'ards" were losing ground. Nathan's green field was a well-known post from which the sight was seen to advantage when it neared the river: pit, stalls, and boxes were all represented in the sloping green emerald turf, the big stones scattered about it, and behind the stone walls. It gave a first-rate view particularly of one great elbow of the stream which ran swiftly among the rocks at the foot of the hill, and was there of considerable depth, the footing very uncertain and always changing among the large stones. There had been much rain in the moors above, and the water charged with peat soil rushed by in great chocolate-coloured eddies, so as to make wading almost impossible in the violent current, while it was hardly deep enough to swim. The banks were high, of crumbling earth covered with immense coltsfoot leaves and flowering weeds, and no man in his senses, who could not swim, as was the case with almost all the combatants, would have thought of risking a staggering leap into the dark foaming,

boiling water. But sense was the last thing that any one dreamt of at that moment. Towards this point the frantic players rushed; "Downwards" was getting the better, and their goal lay below. The struggle grew furious about the stone walls on either side the road, which had first to be crossed. Sam Outram was staggered by a kick which broke the small bone of his leg; Rob the joiner was thrown down and hurt a good deal by the crowd passing over him: football at Youlcliffe was no child's play. The ball at last found its way over the last wall into a little green mead on the banks of the river; the "Downwards" nearly had it, when the kick of a desperate enemy sent it across the stream itself. It lodged among the swaying weeds and leaves, and in a moment Cassie saw Roland plunging in after it almost to his neck in the rushing water. The current, however, was evidently too strong for any one to pass at that point, and he had moreover fallen into a hole, out of which he was trying to stagger.

"I dunna think he can hold his own there anyhow," said Cassie's neighbour, a big red-armed milkmaid with her apron over her head. "That's where Tom Baines was drownded last year," she added, placidly, with the feeling of a spectator at a bull-fight

that the men and the dangers are mere pieces and moves in a game.

Cassie turned upon her like a young lioness.

"Eh," said the girl in angry wonder, "why, what ails ye to look at me o' that fashion?"

But the interest of the sight was too great to leave time for quarrelling. Roland had found it vain to try and cross the river at that point: he had recovered his footing and made his way to a shallower place where the bed was firmer, and having waded obliquely to the other side, was struggling with the steep bank and the soft yielding flowers and weeds which offered no hold and broke away under his gripe. His hand, however, was within an inch of the ball—the war-whoops ringing in his ears from enemies whom he knew must be closing in from all sides—when the gigantic Dick o' the forge, who had followed him across the river from a lower point, came up from behind, and flinging his long arms round him cried, "Somebody catch the ball; I'll hold 'um." Roland was taken unexpectedly and turned to defend himself. "Huh u-u-u!" ran through the spectators—"they're both down together i' the watter." Cassie seized hold of her uncle, who had just come up, and, quite unconscious of what she was doing, inflicted a severe pinch upon his arm.

"They mun be drownded, and nothing can't save un," cried the milkmaid with a burst of satisfaction; "'tis a vera fine sight to be sure!"

But she was doomed to disappointment; other men had crossed above and below. There was great eagerness in the rescue, as the authorities had threatened to put down the games altogether if there were any more deaths. The two men had loosened their death-grip and rose separately: Roland, as he was borne along by the current, clutched at a friendly "oler"-tree hanging over the stream below, whence he was dragged by friendly hands, unusually active in view of the penalty; and big Dick had found his feet at a shallower place, and climbed the bank without help, forcing his way through the enormous coltsfoot leaves, which in that damp climate and on that soil grow sometimes five feet high and more. Some less adventurous partisans meantime were leaning over the bank from above, trying to reach the ball. As the stalks which sustained it were shaken, however, it quivered, went under, rose again, and finally sank, with a groan from the excited crowd.

It was a drawn game.

"But ye made a vera good fight for it, Roland

my boy," said old Nathan, who had contemplated the whole from his croft with calm interest, and now laid his hand on the panting, dripping young fellow, who had come up—his face and arms scratched and bloody, his clothes torn and dirty—so disfigured as to be hardly recognizable, and who must have found his way to the field by instinct, as he could hardly see out of his eyes.

"And now yer go home, lad, and dry yersen," added the old man kindly, "or ye'll catch yer death o' cold."

Cassie stood behind her uncle, with sparkling eyes and a rising colour in her cheeks. She thought he looked beautiful! A woman has generally a keener perception of beauties, moral, muscular, and intellectual, than of the merely physical—more so far than a man. Under the impulse of her admiration she held her hand out suddenly to him without a word.

"Thank ye kindly for caring," said he, taking it in both his warmly.

"Go home; ye'll get no end o' rheumatics in yer bones," repeated Nathan, who had turned away to speak to another of the players. Oddly enough it was Cassie whom Roland answered, and Cassie whom he

thanked, although *she* was showing no amiable desire that he should retire for the benefit of his health, no anxiety for the welfare of his bones; but sentiments concerning the comparative value of glory and rheumatism differ a good deal between seventy and twenty-three.

At this moment, however, Mrs. Broom came up.

"Why, ye're drippin' like a joint o' meat, Roland lad! Yer'd best git back whoum as fast as yer can. Yer silly child, git off wi' yer," said she as he still lingered. "I canna think how ye can be sich a mawkin'." And she drove him away, half laughing, half in earnest, with some very smart corrections from the handle of the big umbrella, which never left her even on the warmest days. Umbrellas were something of a rarity in those times in the hills, and a sign of grandeur and respectability.

> Netherdale born and Netherdale bred,
> Strong i' the arm and weak i' the head,"

repeated Nathan, laughing, as Roland turned away looking not at all grateful for their parental care.

At this moment, however, he heard his father's voice beginning to call him from the crowd in the road below, and who, rather proud of the good fight which his son had made, carried him off to his own

friends, which were by no means the same as those of Roland.

"Mind yer mak' him change hissen," shouted Mrs. Broom.

"Eh, how the folk has a gone trampling and trailing all over the mead, like a hundred head o' cattle!" said Nathan (the love of alliteration is strong in the people's talk), looking a little ruefully at his grass. "But 't have a been a vera pretty play t' year: and only Sam Outram have a broke his leg, and Rob the joiner been stamped upon, and two or three more hurted i' th' arms, which ain't much, all things considered," said Nathan.

"No," observed the blowsy milkmaid. "I likes a smartish bout, where they breaks each other's heads a bit when they are a doin' of it."

That evening there was a good deal of carousing and feasting, in which of course Nathan's household did not join; and so ended the festivities for Youlcliffe, till another year should bring them round once again.

The following morning early Cassie returned home to Stone Edge, without seeing anything more of Roland. The morning was breaking, everything in the foreground sparkled with dewdrops, while

over the steep hill-sides lay an exquisite haze veiling it without hiding anything: it "looked apparelled with celestial light, the glory and the freshness of a dream." But poor Cassie took no comfort in the weather: she looked back with regret to the rainiest day of her visit to Youlcliffe as she went up her hill-side again with a sorrowful longing after the past and a rather sinking heart. Old Ashford was so far right that if his daughter was to live entirely at Stone Edge, it was as well that she should not know that the world contained anything more cheerful than that dreary spot. She had been petted and admired and amused, and the contrast was rather overwhelming. At first it was a great delight to communicate all the new world of life she had seen to Lydia and her brother, though she never mentioned Roland; but as they knew none of the people or places, and could not spur her with intelligent questions, even this pleasure soon failed, and Lydia sighed a little to see how the brilliant spirits in which she so delighted were sobering down.

CHAPTER VI.

A MORNING VISIT.

For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I luve best ;
There wildwoods grow and rivers flow,
And mony a hill between :
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my dear.—BURNS.

THE back of the old Hall was the most cheerful part of the place. Our ancestors, even in these exposed spots, seem to have had a curious fear of heat. The halls are generally on the cool side of the hills, and the living-rooms look to the north. The great old kitchen at Stone Edge, however, which stretched right across the house, was bright and pleasant. One high wide-mullioned window looked out on the remains of the Hall garden, with its ruined yew hedges and a straggling rosebush or two. The other side opened on the straw-yard, surrounded by cattle-pens, where flights of wheeling pigeons, hosts of chickens, wallowing ducks and pigs, lived together

in picturesque confusion, and quite as much quarrelling and oppression and selfishness were to be seen as in the most civilized community. Cassie's pets were without number,—a milk-white calf, a dog which would dart out at command and bring home a chicken in its mouth unhurt, a cat the sworn friend of the dog, and sundry top-knotted hens.

All this was overlooked from a cosy corner in a deep window-seat cut out of the thickness of the great old stone wall, garnished with a faded red cushion, whereon lay two or three tattered hymn-books, an almanac, and Lydia's Testament carefully done up in a handkerchief—the whole literature of the family. An immense open fireplace, large enough to roast an ox, occupied all the middle space, with seats in the chimney-corner on each side, the objects of great ambition—though, set as they were betwixt a scorching heat below and a tremendous draught overhead up the great funnel of the chimney reaching to the daylight above, it was more honourable than comfortable to sit there. Over it, in strange contrast with the strings of onions, the dried herbs and flitches of bacon, were hung a helmet and a gigantic two-handed sword. It must have been worn over "Warrior Ashford's" back, and been drawn over

his shoulders, for there seemed no other mode of using it. It was a most formidable weapon, and the only relic left of the great soldier from whom Ashford was descended,—this, and perhaps the big bones which he inherited, though no particle of gentle blood seemed to have descended with them.

It was about a month after the wakes, and the two women had been hard at work all the morning in the cheese-room. It *is* hard work, but you will see a slight girl turning heavy cheeses—which a man can hardly lift—one after another by a sort of knack.

"You're tired, dear heart," said Lydia, looking anxiously and lovingly at Cassie, as she stood rather listlessly leaning against the open doorway in her pink short gown and blue petticoat: a much prettier as well as more convenient dress than the trailing skirts of the present farmers' wives.

"Nay, I'm none tired—I'm only stupid," said she, lifting her arms, and resting them on the wall as high as she could above her, for a change, while she leant her head against them. We only see in the Roman peasant, or a Greek statue, how much of grace in motion and attitude are lost by our civilized woman's dress, which does not allow the arms to move except in one direction.

The kitchen was spotlessly clean—"redded up"—for it was Saturday: every paver adorned with a pattern in chalk; the tables, the pewter, and the china rubbed up to a sort of sparkling purity, scarcely to be seen but in these upland habitations. There was a heap of mending on the little three-legged table in the corner, and Lydia turned to study an unconscionable rent in German's new kytle, that Cassie might not feel the burden of her watching eyes. The cat rubbed unheeded against the girl—who roused herself in a few minutes, however, with a little blush at her own thoughts. "I'll go and pick th' apples," she said. "Feyther says they fa' and dunna rippen; there's summat ma's bad to th' tails."

But she stopped short, and the blush deepened on her face as a young man walked suddenly in at the open door.

"It's Roland Stracey, what I met at my aunt's, mother," said Cassandra shyly. She had never used the word before, but had always called her "Lyddy," first to show her despite and then her love; and it was strange and touching to see her take refuge as it were from her own sensations under the protection of a "mother."

"My feyther have a sent me to see arter a keow,

and I thought I'd jist look in at Stone Edge on the way," said the young man, shifting uneasily from one leg to the other.

Now Stone Edge was certainly on the way to no place, except perhaps to heaven, and the word made Lydia look up and turn one keen glance on Cassandra, who stood with crimson cheeks in the corner of the room and gave a glowing look of entreaty in return.

Lyddy had never gone through the process of love-making herself, but it seemed to her a sort of holy and heavenly rite, one to reverence and assist in in a serious and earnest fashion, and her grave and gentle welcome made the young man's heart swell as he took the seat offered him, out of which the cat and dog—who were lying in the closest friendship—were displaced.

"She's quite piert is Bessie Broom," he replied, in answer to questions concerning Nathan and his wife which served to break the awkwardness of the party. Presently, to the great relief of all, the boy German rushed in.

"I've broke my knife!" he cried. "Who's yon?" he went on in surprise; but even the unprecedented event of a stranger at Stone Edge could not keep him off his woes, and in a lamentable voice

he went on—"I saw Daft Davie cobbing stones at the new cauf, and I just gi'ed un a shake for to mind un, and a minit arter I sot cuttin' a stick for to take the wapses' nest to-night, when he creeps close, as fierce as a maggot, whips up the knife as I'd jist laid down and breaks un, wi' a laugh like a screech-owl."

"Shan I get un mended?" said Roland, catching at an excuse for coming again. "Ye can ha' mine till it's done," he added, holding out his own.

"Eh, hur *is* a beauty," said German, looking at it with the enthusiastic respect and affection which all men and boys feel for that piece of property. "Could I get one like un?—but it'll cost twopence-ha'penny!" an expression of magnificent meaning in the north. "And I hanna got but ninepence."

"I owe thee for the weskit, lad," said Lydia, "as I took for thee father. I havena saved above thirteenpence upo' th' eggs yet, but there's more coming." And she began to hunt it out, hidden under cups and odd places on the dresser.

"And I've got a new shillin' as my grandmother giv' me when I were a little un," said Cassie, shyly.

"I'll get ye the knife and welcome, wi'out all

that," said Roland, reluctantly taking the money. "Seems all one as I were robbin' ye it does," he went on, looking at Cassie, and putting her shining piece in a pocket separately.

"Why, you're just a makin' the boy's heart leap for joy," said Lydia.

"Wunna ye come and tak' the wapses' nest?" said German in the effusion of his gratitude; "they wunna tang now, they bite the gooseberries so."

"I dunna think as I've a got the time," answered his new friend, without, however, moving an inch. "I mun be going home to Youlcliffe."

"Ye didn't get any hurt fightin' i' th' watter that time at football," said Cassie with a blush. It was the first word she had spoken to him directly.

"Nay," he answered, with a smile; "but we're mostly like wild beasts at feast-time."

"And did ye see the real wild beasts when they was doun at Youlcliffe?" said German, eagerly.

"Nay, I'd a see'd it a time or two before," answered Roland, rather grandly, as a man about town to whom even the grandest sights are common and well worn. "But I heerd o' a finer thing nor that t'other day up at Felton on the moors. They

was a showing a fairy as they'd a caught somewhere up o' th' Kendesley Moss, and they'd a stuffed her. The folk was running miles, they said, fro' all round to see her."

"And what like were she?" cried his auditors with open eyes and ears.

"Well," said he, "I dunna know. I hanna met ony one yet as see'd her."

"Eh, but that does bang!" gasped the boy. "I was feared they was all gone from these parts. I says to the auld Squire's keeper one time, 'Ha' ye iver see'd one yersen?' I thowt as how, being out night and day in a' weathers, he'd more chance nor any man to catch sight on un, an they was still to the fore. 'No,' says he, 'I canna rightly say I iver did; but my feyther once see'd a fairy's funeral.'"

"And how did it look?" answered Roland, a little awestruck.

"Well, he didn't justly see it, as one mid say, for 'twere falling dusk, and doun 'mong the big rocks i' th' heart o' the wood; but he saw the moving among the fern and he heerd the music quite plain, and it were just beautiful, he said."

"Dear heart!" said Cassie, though she had often heard the story before.

"And he were certain as it weren't the birds and things?" observed Roland, with the base scepticism born of town life, but still with some hesitation.

"Certain sure," answered German, with the utmost decision. We are always most certain of the things which we know nothing whatever about.

Roland stayed as long as he dared, and hung silently about the threshold, and at last only went away when German, innocently puzzled by his delays, offered to show him a short-cut back to the road. As he strode down the hill with his hands in his pockets, the *esprit d'escalier* inspired him with all the things that he could, might, and should have said. "They mun think that I hanna a mossel of sense in me," he said bitterly to himself.

When he was gone Cassandra came and put her arms round Lydia's neck and gave her a long tender kiss—real love opens the heart, selfish love closes it to others—but neither of them spoke a word further, and life went on at the Hall as usual.

Lyddy watched and waited. She had naturally looked round for the future of her darling among the unmarried farmers about Stone Edge. There were but few in that thin population,—and one was too

young, and another too old, and the next was silly, and the last drank, and there was no rest for the sole of any foot to be found amongst them.

Twice again the young man dropped in. He had the excuse of bringing German's knife the first time, and the next had not been particular in making reasons for his wooing. It so happened, however, that he never as yet had come across old Ashford.

CHAPTER VII.

TAKING A CHARACTER.

John Anderson, my Joe John,
When we were first acquaint,
Yer locks were like the raven, John,
Yer bonny brow was brent.

ONE morning German was told by his father to take the cart and carry wheat to the mill, when, to his great surprise, as he was driving off, Lydia appeared in her black "shade" (a sort of mantle) and hood. "Why, mother, where beest a goin'?" She smiled and made no answer, but got into the cart. "Drive me a little further, German," said she, when they reached the high-road; he obeyed in silence, till they came to a "toll-bar," which stopped her further progress, as no farmer ever spends a penny in pikes.

The way was long, the road was steep, and Lydia was not strong, so that it was a sore pull, and, to her shyness, a trying thing to inquire out the Brooms' house. She had never worn any but dark colours

since her baby's death, and her tall slender figure and pale face in its black hood had something of the repose and stillness of a Sister of Charity. At last, having found her goal, she walked in at the open door and found the old Darby and Joan sitting with a three-legged table between them, and some non-descript meal in a basin.

"Why, woman, what ails ye?" said both at once; "ye look fit to faint."

"I'm come a good bit o' way in a hurry, and I'm not very strong. My name's Lyddy Ashford, but there's nought's the matter wi' me," said she, as she sank into a chair.

"And we're very glad to see ye, Lyddy," said the old man, as his wife bustled about and made much of her.

"I've just a cum to ax ye what sort o' a lad Roland Stracey mid be. He's after our Cassandra, in and out, out and in; and her feyther's just mad agin his feyther, you know; and there's sore times ahead for 'um, poor things; and if he's a ne'er-do-weel, best stamp out fire at onst; but if he's a good un—and he've a met her in this house, and canna be far wrong," said Lydia, with a woman's tact in her anxious desire to do her best for her poor

child—"I would go through a deal for her sake; for there's none fit for her in our parts, not so to speak."

Mrs. Broom looked aghast.

"Come a courtin' Cassie! Who'd a thought it!" said she. People are ready enough to see anything but what goes on under their own noses.

The old man gave a shrewd smile. "I'd a fancy as there was summat i' th' wind when she giv me sich a pinch at the football, when Roland went down i' the watter; but I niver giv a thought to it agin. Well, 'tis wonderful; thae young uns is just like a lot o' dry hay for to catch fire, once a spark gits nigh 'um."

"Now I mind how loth Roland seemed that day o' th' well-dressing for to quit, and how a came backards and forrards as if ur couldn't kip away, like a mooth round a candle," said Mrs. Broom musingly to herself.

"And about the young man?" asked Lydia, gently.

But Bessie was soaring on the wings of her own recollections far out of hearing.

"Well, to be sure, it seems like yesterday I mind my sister, poor thing! she were afraid o' marryin'; she used to say there was such a many crooked sticks

and drink and tempers i' th' world, and then she took up wi' Ashford! And says she one day to th' babby (that were Cassie), 'Thee'lt be thinkin' o' weddin' too, little un. I hope as thee'lt be better off nor thee mother,' and then she took on sorely."

Everything depended upon Lydia's quick return, and she ventured her question once more, for the flood of reminiscences was evidently only beginning. "But ye was a' sayin' 'bout the young man's character," she put in.

"Well, there ain't nought as any one can say agin it," answered Nathan. "There ain't a bit o' harm in him; even his father can't fault him, 'cept that he canna mak' him go his ways, and that's a good job. He's a queer un, a very uncultivated piece is Joshua, my certy."

"Roland's a very pratty-behaved lad," said old Bessie, "and favours his mother. I knowed her well: she were a very pious woman, and brought him up i' th' fear of the Lord. She'd a sore time on it; Joshua just worrited her to death, poor thing. If it weren't along o' him, I'd be main glad to have those two tied and a livin' near me, and as 'tis I dunna know as she cull do no better."

"I wanted to know that you was agreeable," said

Lyddy skilfully, "and that he was one as did his duty by God and man." And she rose as she spoke.

"Why, woman, you're not come a matter of twelve mile (here and agen) like that, to go like a melting of th' snow! Sit ye down reasonable and eat your victuals."

"I've no' much call for victuals," said Lyddy, "and I've got some bread in my pocket. I mun be off home as soon as may be."

"Set yer down and eat summat. I'll hear none o' such doings," said the hospitable old man angrily.

Before very long, Mrs. Broom had discovered that the marriage was the thing of all others she would like best, and that she had known and predicted it from the very first. "And Cassie shall have sixty-eight punds to her portion o' that money would ha' been her mother's, when I go," was Mrs. Broom's very satisfactory ending; "but I wonna ha' ye talk on it to folk. And ye'd best tell Ashford as she shanna get it wi'out he lets her come down here again for to see us in mebbe a fortnit or so. And 'twill be a deal better as ye dunna say aught o' Roland to un, but let me and Nathan tackle un some

day as he comes to th' market. Won't ye hae a tinety bit more afore ye go ? 'tis a long way for fower legs, let alone a pair."

"Well, if ye mun go, woman, ye mun," said Nathan kindly, "for we shall ha' a drop more rain too, the weather looks so vera tickle. I'll see if there mayn't be a cart as is a goin' your gate."

"And ye'll mind some time along o' German," said Lydia shyly, as he went out and she was left alone with Bessie. "I dunna want him to jalouse his sister; the by's a good lad as lives, sweet as summer when his feyther don't rile him, and he's just mad for to come down here."

"I should like to know where Ashford expects he'll go to, a kipping the childer fro' their own flesh and blood o' this fashion," cried Mrs. Broom, not objecting to an outbreak against her brother-in-law, and convinced by this time that her happiness depended on seeing the boy, whom she had done extremely well without for six years.

In a short time Nathan returned.

"Tim the grocer-man's a goin' to see his brother down i' th' dale, and he'll tak' thee to th' ferry in his cart, and welcome. He'll be round in a matter o' ten minits. Once t'other side the river, ye can up

the back o' the Edge, and so nip home; 'tis longer nor t'other road, but so thee'll do it quicker."

"I'dunna like Tim," said Mrs. Broom energetically. "He'd shave the hairs off a bald man, he's so skinny. For a' we've dealt wi' him a score o' years, I niver was the better o' him; nobbut a candle at Yule and a bit o' cake for wakes."

"Yes, my missis; but d'ye think it's catching, like th' small-pox? He wonna hurt Lyddy for a' that, a carryin' on her a mile o' her weary way."

Notwithstanding the assistance of the cart, it was getting late. Poor Lyddy was not used to such distances, and the tremendous steepness of the new way tried her sorely. As she toiled up with her back to the view, she never looked round, though each step disclosed a fresh sweep of wooded hill. Far below, the river wound through a rocky valley into an open dale, and it was difficult to say which was the most beautiful. Beyond lay a tumbled mass of hills—purple with heather, stretching far off into the north.

But she saw nothing, for all her thoughts were concentred on unravelling the tangled web of the fortunes of those she loved so well. Lydia had one of those natures which in a different age and civiliza-

tion would have led her into a contemplative order of nuns, or to have joined a society of Quietists of some description. She lived in another life, and moved almost automatically through the business of this, which seemed to her like shows and shadows, while her real life, as it were, was spent within. She perceived only through her affections; but her trembling anxiety for the welfare of Cassie and her brother enabled her to see and hear and combine for them in a way which she never could have done for herself.

She almost fainted when she reached the house as the short daylight was fading.

"And what did they say? and did ye see him?" said Cassie, taking off Lydia's bonnet, and making a cup of tea for her, and kissing and fondling her all at once.

"How do ye know where I cum from?" said Lydia, with a smile, as soon as she could speak. "Do ye think there's but one place i' all th' world, lass?"

"There's but one place where ye'd go off so far to, and never say a word; and there's not a many ye'd half kill yersen o' this fashion for, barrin' o' me, I know that," said Cassandra, with a light in her eyes,

hugging her as she spoke. "German's been a watching 'cross the lone moor all arternoon, 'cos we never thought ye'd come by the top o' th' Nob."

"Master Broom sent me back that gate," answered Lyddy. "I couldn't set my mind at rest without axing o' them what sort the young man war, and what they thought on it."

"And ye heerd nowt but good on him," said Cassie, eagerly, in a low voice.

"No, dearie. Please God he's one as a woman mid gi'e her heart to in His sight. But there's a deal to think on yet. I didn't know as thou'dst ha' seen sa mich on him; how often were it, dearie?" said Lydia, gently.

"Seven times," answered she, promptly. "Fust time, just arter I got to Aunt Bessie's, and Sabbath day at church, and at the big tea; and then I missed a day, when there were nought; and then the 'well-dressing;' and next came another empty day; and then when Roland jumped into the watter and was like to have been drownded" (certainly a summary way of describing the great football event of the year), "and three times as he's a been here."

"Thou'st got it a' by heart and in thy heart sure*ly*, child," said Lydia, with a rather sad smile;

"and who knows, even now, what may come on it? Good lack, what'll ever thee feyther say, when he hears as it's Joshuay's son as thou'st took up wi'?"

"Well, thee know'st," said Cassie, philosophically, "whichever way 'twere, and whomsoever it had concarned, 'twould ha' been just the same, he'd ha' faulted it; so it don't mich matter p'r'aps whom it mid be. We can't odds it."

"Eh," said Ashford as she spoke, looming large and fierce at the open door, in the dusk, with a face as black as thunder—"and I should like to know where ye ha' been, missis, a' this arternoon,—the childer said as they didn't know?" And his projecting eyebrows moved wrathfully, ominous of a coming storm, at such an unheard-of piece of independent action.

Lydia rose meekly, but there was a sort of firmness under her extreme gentleness since her baby's death: she had as it were passed through the worst that could happen to her, and did "not fear what man could do to her." "No more they didn't know," said she. "I've a been to Bessie Broom's, and she sends ye word as how she'll leave sixty-eight pound odd to Cassie, when so be as she goes away hersen."

"And sma' thanks to her, makin' a rout about givin' what ain't hers by right," said the old man, doggedly. But still the prospect of money has always a mollifying and cheering influence on the soul; it is best, no doubt, when coming directly for one's own benefit, but still it is something to get it into the family, and Ashford's face relaxed.

"And Nathan and Bessie hoped as ye'd call and see 'um yersen come market-day, and let Cassie go down again as mid be next week;—and, Master," added she—("One may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," she thought to herself)—"p'r'aps German had best go down and say she's coming. He've a growed so as there's no end on him he's so long, and he mun be fitted for a pair o' breeches—as good now as any time. He canna wait much longer anyhow, for he's a'most in rags as 'tis."

"I've a got no money for such fineries," growled Ashford. "There's a pair o' my old uns as ye could mak' into new uns for him an ye'd any sense."

"Well, he might go to-morrow then for an hour, as is Sunday, and not so mich doing," persisted Lydia.

With an utterly unreasonable person it is often as easy to get a good deal as a little. Inasmuch as they

grant or refuse on the mere whim of the moment, the nature of the request hardly signifies at all; and Ashford, evidently afraid of being considered too amiable, only answered by his usual grunt, which he did not seem to think committed him either way, as he settled himself in his three-cornered chair by the great fire.

There was a small pantomime going on, however, behind his back. If life and death had been hanging on his decision, German could hardly have looked more tragic as he came in after his father, pulling off his shoes out of regard to the Saturday night's state of the floor, and listening to the debate with all his ears; but the final grunt seemed to him so favourable that he began executing a dance of triumph as noiselessly as he could, in the shadow of the projecting chimney, to the great delight of the womankind, until his father turned at an unlucky jingle on the dresser, and "order reigned at" Stone Edge once more.

Lydia despatched the delighted messenger quite early the next morning. He was only just, however, off in time: Lydia was out in the farmyard "sorting" the cows herself in his stead, when old Ashford came back from the field on purpose to say, "German, I'm thinkin', munna go to-day."

"He's been gone this half-hour and more, Master, and mun ha' got to the ferry by now." She had sent him the longest way, as being sooner safely out of sight of home and beyond the possibility of recall.

"I think ye're a' bewitched wi' Youlcliffe," stormed the old man. "I canna think what's come to ye a'—ye're gone just crazy," he cried with many oaths; but German was out of reach and Lydia was content to bear the penalty.

From that day, though there were no events to record on the visit, the epochs of the boy's life always dated from the new era. "That were six months before," or "three weeks after I went to Youlcliffe."

On the whole, ill-temper is a very good speculation. All the world bows down before a man thoroughly endowed with it. Few things are worth battling for to risk a real fit of savage ill-humour. Most sacrifices are worth making to avoid it.

The old Brooms had fully intended to take the management of Cassie's love-matters into their own hands. "Sure 'twill be as good as a play," said aunt Bessie, who was soft-hearted and sentimental at times. But as far as the event itself was concerned, Roland was too quick for them. He made out the day and the hour when Cassie might be expected,

and was waiting on the look-out nearly an hour before the time. She had passed through the long village which straggled up the hill, and reached a lonely part of the road, where a great belt of wood swept down the steep hill-side, with white tors of rock rising here and there. It was towards evening and a bit solitary, and her heart began to quake a little when she heard the rolling stones which announced a man coming down a rude path on her right. She turned, however, and saw Roland, who with a very elaborate and futile pretence of coming from some unknown place on urgent business (intended for the passers-by, who were not there), came up to her.

"I'm sure yer bundle's heavy, Cassie," said he. "Let me car' it up hill. Our fathers hate each other, but that's no reason why we should," he added, in a low voice. With which abstract Christian sentiment Cassie thought it safe to agree in an almost inaudible voice. Then, however, as in other sermons, came the practical application, which was far harder.

"I love ye, Cassie, so as I canna put it into words, as a many can. Seems to me when I think on yer as 'twere a shinin' in a dark place, the shadow of a rock in a thirsty land," added he, with a

remembrance of his mother's teaching. "Ourn ain't a comfable pleasant place, Cassie" (a man does not offer the woman he loves his comfort, or his wealth, or his position, even if he has them; he knows better, and he offers her his loneliness, and his distress, and his sorrow, and his work, and his poverty, and tells her she can help him. With all these things will he her endow, and these are the things, flavoured with love, which tempt a true woman to marry. So Roland, with an instinctive if not philosophic knowledge of woman's heart, went on as beforesaid). "Ourn ain't a pleasant place, Cassie. I've had none to care for me sin' my mother died, and a man's a poor creatur' wi'out a woman to love him and see to him. Come to me, Cassie," he said, opening his arms as if to take her in.

She moved on by his side in silence, too much agitated to find words for an answer.

"And there," he burst out with almost a sob, "ye go, as cold and stately as one o' them white tors, and as stony, wi' no more heart for me!"

The gloaming was falling, and it was dark under the trees where they were, but they reached an opening where light came through the branches, and he saw Cassie turning her beautiful eyes, with the

tears shining on their long lashes, reproachfully and tenderly upon him.

"Oh," said the lad, falling back against the stone wall in the suddenness of the shock of the surprise at the revelation he read there—although, as he had gone out to meet her in the express hope of something of the kind, there did not seem room for much astonishment. In another second he had her in his arms, and was kissing her passionately under the next most convenient shadow. They walked on hand in hand.

"Paradise mun ha' been a poor place, Cassie, when Adam was there his lone," said he.

"Afore Eve came to torment him?" answered she, with a smile. "And mend his shirts," she added, as her quick eye caught sight of the torn and buttonless wristband round the hand that held hers.

"Eh, but they've been too nimble for us," said old Nathan, smiling, when the two entered the house together.

CHAPTER VIII.

NATHAN THE WISE.

The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality:
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.

WORDSWORTH.

NATHAN'S little square red teacaddy of a house had been built on—most inharmoniously—to an old stone cottage covered with ivy. In the smart new room in front was a smart green door, with a brass knocker, only opened once or twice in the year in times of great ceremony, and on these occasions it stuck fast, and creaked and screeched and groaned, as if it resented the indignity of so fine a piece of show being required to do any work. Alongside the door that never opened was the hospitable door which was never shut, except in the coldest weather; and at it now stood the old couple. Mrs. Broom's face was radiant with smiles, and though Nathan's welcome was quieter, it was not the less hearty.

"Well for sure, yer haven't lost time, yer two childer," cried he, laughing. "If I iver see folk in such a hurry. And my missis here as thowt she might bring yer togither, and mix and sweeten to her taste, like as if it were a pudden!"

"Dear heart o' me, Nathan," said his wife, "as if I were niver content so I hadn't a finger i' th' pie. It mak's me young again for to see yer two. God bless ye both," added the affectionate old woman, with tears in her eyes, as she dragged Cassie into the room upstairs by way of taking off her bonnet. She set her in a chair, and took the blushing face between her hands and gave it a hearty kiss.

"Yer cheeks is like a red rose, child; I can see that for all 'tis so dark," she said. "Now tell me all about it."

But all she could get out of the girl was, "Oh, Auntie, I am so happy, and it's all along o' you; if ye hadna got me here, I should niver ha' lighted upo' Roland. How could he think o' me?"

"Bless ye, child, ye munna spoil him wi' thinkin' such a deal of him! He's a pretty middlin' lad as men goes; but thee's worth three o' him—a sight too good for such as he. I niver let on to Nathan how much account I makes o' him; 'tain't good for men."

But in spite of this stoical view of his claims, she petted Roland for the rest of the evening with all her heart. The old people did most of the talking, however, themselves. Cassie sat in a corner of the room, silent and quiet in her happiness. Roland was a little more excited, but answered Nathan's jokes a good deal at random. They both, however, agreed in expecting that sudden illumination in the authorities which all lovers in such cases believe must immediately take place: the change in the oldest and most cherished opinions, the vanishing of the most obstinate prejudices in their favour. A new light has shone on their lives, and they cannot conceive how it can fail to enlighten every one else around them. Nathan shook his head at them warningly.

"Well, ye're bold and hopeful for to go dead agin two such as Joshuay and German Ashford, and think they're to dance to yer piping, and mak' friends at your bidding, and a' that, *to* be sure!"

"Eh but, Nathan," said his wife, "they dunna want 'um to dance; on'y to shake hands and giv' um their own way, poor things."

"I mun be going," said Roland, at last; "feyther'll be home by now. He's out to-night at a club-feast. He's none for taking too much as some does;

but he's thowt very good company is feyther," added he, with a sort of pride.

"Well, 'tis wonderful to hear good and Joshuay joined together in one word," observed Mrs. Broom to herself in a loud whisper, not intended for society or necessary for Roland to remark on.

"I wish ye kindly good-night," said he, as he drew Cassie out on the little grass-plat shut in by a high row of hollies, that there might be no more inconvenient witnesses of their parting than the moon and stars—which, as the Irish song says, "were shining brightly, 'cause they'd nothing else to do." There were bright dots of light on the glistening leaves of the hollies and ivy, almost as brilliant as the stars themselves, so that the sky above and the earth beneath seemed to be sparkling with jewels: sweet scents seemed to rise on all sides from sweet-briar and jessamine and southernwood and thyme; the murmur in the still air of a stream dashing among the stones far away at the foot of the hill seemed to add to the quiet hush of the night; a magnificent "harvest-moon" was rising over the mountain in front of them, looking so large and near that it seemed to touch the hill-side itself. In the extreme stillness of the outside world they seemed first to

realize the troubles and difficulties of the path before them.

"I wunna speak to feyther to-night," said Roland. "I'd mebbe best let it stan' over till to-morro' i' th' afternoon. He's mostly riled at market-time; we'll let it be till arter his bargains is made." And then, as a sudden qualm came over him as to the small foundation there might be for his "Spanish castles" —"Come nigh to me, come nigh to me, Cassie," said he, drawing her closer. "Whativer will I do without thee an my feyther an' thine will na hear reason?"

"Well-a-day," answered she, "we'd ha' to bide mebbe a long while; but there's worse things nor waitin', Roland, for true hearts as trusts one another." And her face in the moonlight looked the very ideal of trust and hope.

"Ah! but thou wiltna want me as I shall thee," said he, a little jealously.

"Dost thou think not?" answered she, with a smile. "Womenfolk bides at home and remembers, most times. Menfolk goes about and forgets!"

The next morning, as the excitement in Cassie's mind went off, the light of her joy grew dim, and the fear of her father became stronger.

"Lyddy said as you'd a promised to speak up for us to feyther an it were wanted, Aunt Bessie," said she, anxiously. "Canna yer get him here?"

"Surely, surely, child, your uncle Nathan will tackle him; he's a vera powerful man i' speech is Nathan," said the old wife, with much pride. "There's not a many like him: folks comes fro' all sides for to ask counsel o' him, and orders themselves accordingly."

Mrs. Broom had a profound respect for her husband's wisdom. "My master says so and so," was, in her eyes, a final appeal—for other people; in her own concerns, she preserved a liberal right of private judgment. But against stupidity even the gods themselves, says Schiller, fight in vain; even the wisest man may be worsted without ignominy in a struggle with the main force of brute obstinacy. In theory, it may be easy to reason with a bull as you shake a red rag in his face, but in practice the bull has the best of it; and Ashford was a very perfect specimen of the race. Therefore, though Nathan entered on the operation with the greatest circumspection, beguiled the old farmer from the market, when his work was done, to have some ale, and did not begin on the nego-

tiation till the glass was fairly in his hand, it was not of the smallest use.

"I were thinking what a good job 'twere," Nathan began, clearing his throat, "if Cassie and Roland Stracey was to come togither. They say Joshuay's saved a good bit o' money, and it stanns to reason Roland will hae it all."

Ashford looked up slowly: it was some time before such an idea could at all enter his head. "The son o' yon scoundrelly cheating rogue!" he almost screamed, when at last he took it in. "I'll hear none o' such spoke in my house: d'ye hear, Nathan?" And he rose instantly and turned hastily towards the door—contriving, however, to finish his glass of ale as if in a fit of absence. "I'll ha' Cassie to come back wi' me," he went on, angrily.

"I wunna leave the girl owt o' my money an ye serve her so," said Mrs. Broom, kindling, and unable to resist striking in. "If ye'll let her wed wi' Roland, she shall ha' the pounds an' welcome; but if not, she shanna ha' a penny on't."

"Ye may do yer best or yer worst wi' it," answered Ashford in a rage. "'Tain't yourn at all by rights, an' you knows it; an' anyhow, I'll do what I choose wi' my own child."

"You used her mother shameful; and now yer all one as bad to the girl," cried the old woman, hotly.

"Cassie!" shouted her father fiercely up the stairs, where he seemed to know by instinct that she had retreated, "come down in a crack; ye shanna stay an hour longer to larn such ill things as here. Get ready yer traps and come away, I say." And till she appeared he stood fretting and fuming outside the house, in spite of all Nathan's endeavours to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"What are ye whimpering for, yer silly wench?" said he, as they went off hurriedly. "Why, it's all for yer good. There's fifty better men—ay, a hundred, nor that Roland Stracey, in these parts."

"I want no better," said poor Cassie, in a low voice, humbly, after the example of Miranda.

Nathan looked after them in silence as they went away.

"Tell'ee what, he's like a mad bull when he's crossed is Ashford," said Mrs. Broom, rather apologetically, and not quite sure of the policy of her interference, as she leant her arms on her knees.

"Yes, my missis; but 'twere a pity to set up his back wi' bygones when thee wanted un so sore to do right by the young uns for time to come. Thou

shouldst ha' smoothed un down wi' soft answers as turns wrath, instead o' flouting and rilin' o' him, an' rubbin' a' his hairs back'ards."

"Dear heart alive, and so I should! But thee seest the word allus slips out afore I've time to shut the door o' my lips upon 'um, as thee dost. And I dunna believe as it mattered much," she went on, consolingly to herself. "Ye may wile the birds off the bushes wi' talk sooner nor ye'd drive Ashford where he wunna go. I've knowed him this five-and-twenty year, and never heerd on him doing nowt to please nobody; he's so queerish, and snappish, and hoggish * as niver were," ended old Bessie, as a small relief to her feelings.

The other encounter with the authorities did not pass off much more smoothly. Joshua was as much annoyed as Ashford himself, although not so violent.

"What, the daughter o' that auld fool German? A man as hasna got brass enough in's pouch, nor sense in's yead to keep hissen out of the workhouse," said he, when his son spoke to him.

"But, feyther, won't ye just come down and see her; she's stopping at Nathan's," answered Roland,

* Obstinate.

gently, not knowing that she was already gone. "More by reason she will ha' some brass. Old Mrs. Broom's a goin' to leave her her mother's portion."

"I tak' no account o' thattins at all; them's on'y words, and words is but wind. 'Old' Bessie Broom, as thee callest her, 's younger nor me, and she may live years and years; and more by token she may quarrel wi' Ashford again, and tak' up wi' a' those nieces of Nathan's and leave them her money. There's Martha Savage allus about the place wi' her sharp eyes. And I wunna hae thee marry wi'out money down, and there's an end on't."

Matters were beginning to look seriously with Joshua; he always trusted to his "luck," which had hitherto brought him through, but this time his affairs were turning queerly, and he was very truly in extreme want of money.

"Ye hanna suppered up thae five new heifers as I've bought," said his father. And about an hour after, before his son had nearly finished the work, he looked in again to the cattle-shed and observed: "Ashford have a carried off his daughter home again frae her aunt's. And he were in a rare passion, they said; so ye needn't be after her."

Roland sauntered disconsolately down the hill the

next day, as soon as he could finish his work, to carry his woes to the old couple. He had hitherto had no idea of the strength of his father's enmities.

"I nivir giv it a thought," said he, dolefully, "but my feyther had a been fine and glad for her to come o'er our doorstane, once he'd a seen Cassie; and what a one she were for to make us happy and comfortable, and she so well-favoured too, like Ruth—'tain't such a fine thing for to marry wi' me."

"Then thee wast but a fool, my lad, as to think thee feyther 'ud be so took up wi' a farrantly wench as a' that; auld stomachs ain't like young uns," answered Nathan. "My word, I dunna deny as Cassie's a good and a pretty one, and steps as clean as e'er a fillie on 'um, but what's that to a man like Joshuay, as is as dour as a stone? Ill will is a sweet mossel to them as likes it, as they'll turn o'er and o'er again i' their mouths; and, for aught I see, when ye hae done wrong by a man, ye're a deal more set agin him nor when ye hae been wronged. I dunna know the rights o' all that coil atwixt him and old German, and I wouldna say ill o' thee feyther to thee; but to them as knows Joshuay it stanns to reason (an' it mun be one or t'other) as he's a more like to cheat nor to be cheaten, my lad."

"But Cassie hasna cheaten nobody. She'd hae washed and mended him, and hae kep' the house and him cheerful and tidy too," said the lover—and he was an ardent one too. Indeed, it may be questioned whether this list of qualities was not quite as agreeable and meritorious, and even as likely to promote their household bliss, as those which a Belgravian young lady brings to the common stock. "And we'd ha' loved one another wonderful too: dearly," he repeated to himself in an undertone, as if this part of the business were an extra, not necessary for the opinion concerning the marriage which Nathan was supposed to be adjusting.

"Well," answered the old man, "'whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and an ye light on a virtuous woman, her price is far above rubies,' says the wise Solomon. Seems they was scanty in them days, and I dunna see as they's much commoner now. 'A virtuous woman's a crown to her husband,' says he, and he were mighty petticklar too about 'um were Solomon; and he know'd a vast about 'um too," he added parenthetically to himself as it were. "Therefore I'm none for discouraging thee, but thee mun wait, lad—thee mun wait—thee's nowt but a lad yet."

"I'm twenty-three," said Roland, with some injured dignity.

"Eh! that's not much, my boy. I didna marry till I were nigh upon forty. There's time for a' things—

> For patience is a virtue great,
> Therefore we mun wi' patience wait."

"There thou'st got to thy proverbs agin! I believe my master thinks more o' King Solomon nor a' the rest o' the Bible put together fro' Genesis to Revelations, Kings, Lords, and Prophets put together," said Mrs. Broom, with some slight confusion between the constitution and the canon. She was not literary herself, and credited Solomon with much that would greatly have astonished that sage—particularly all the proverbs in prose and verse which ornamented her husband's discourse. "I dunna think as Solomon knowed much about women either," she went on, "for all he were so cliver. I doubt he'd but a bad lot to deal wi'—that Egyptian huzzie as had the temples and the high places and things."

"Well, I do think a deal on him," said Nathan, meditatively.

"You're very throng to-night. I mun wish you good evening," said poor Roland, in a depressed tone, retiring less comforted by the prospect of possibly

marrying Cassie by the time he was forty than perhaps reason demanded, as the shrewd old woman perceived.

"And dunna ye take to heart so much what thae wise men says about a' that waiting and sich like," said she. "Nathan nor Solomon's not young men, see thee." Mrs. Broom had the greatest possible pride in the extent of her husband's learning and wisdom, but thought it seemly to depreciate them slightly in public, both for "manners" and wholesome discipline to her great man's pride. "An yer true love and you's firm and faithful to each other, 'twill move mountains. 'Many waters will not quench love.' There's a proverb, an he wants one. And ye'll come together, please God, afore long, an ye don't do ill that good may come. Afore you're forty," she added, with a smile.

The young man's face brightened; he turned suddenly and gave her a great hug in his gratitude.

"Nay, lad, fair and softly. I'm not Cassie," she said, laughing—

"No, but yo'r' Cassie's aunt, and her aunt's mine too," he added triumphantly and defiantly as he went away.

CHAPTER IX.

SCIENTIFIC AND ANTIQUARIAN.

Alas ! what eyes hath love set in my head.
Shakspeare Sonnet.

It was towards evening a few weeks after, and Cassie was feeding the chickens, and gazing absently at her father's retreating back as he passed out of the farm-yard, when she suddenly heard a low whistle, and saw Roland in a dark corner of the cowshed opposite, eagerly watching her. In another moment he had rushed out from his hiding-place, caught hold of her, and drawn her in among the friendly shelter of the stacks.

"What hast thee been a doin' all this time? a gettin' drownded mebbe i' some o' them games," whispered she, with a sort of shudder. "When I see'd thee fa' into the watter, I thowt I should ha' swooned."

"And then thee uncle and aunt wouldn't let me scarce ha' the speech on thee," answered he, laugh-

ing, "for why I were sa wet. I were warm enow inside thinkin' o' thee for to kip the outside dry, I know—and I've a seemed to see thee scores o' times in my yead sin' thee went away."

"Eh, what a queer un I'd a made out o' my head as thee father's son mun be ere iver I'd a see'd thee!" said she, with a low laugh.

"How were I like, dearie? happen 'twere like the Deevil upo' th' rain-spout in Youlcliffe church?"

But he got no satisfaction beyond "Eh, thee wastna thee at all—be asy."

"What a time it is sin' I have a see'd thee!" said he. "I thowt I niver should ha' got here t' year," he went on. "My feyther wouldna let me stir—he watches me like a cat does a moos. He lets me go a bit, and then's down wi' his foot on me happen I go a good yard out o' th' town. I shouldna ha' been here now, but he sent me wi' a message to Amos Young, and I chanced on un at the turn o' th' road, and so nipped up the Nob."

"My feyther's altogether as savage wi' thee and thine," answered she. "What would he do an he were to see thee here? He says thy feyther telled un as how there were a lass wi' money down to her portion, as he were a keepin' on wi' a long sight o'

time back for thee," said Cassie, looking shyly and anxiously into his face.

Roland whistled incredulously. "I dunna know o' any lass as is a waitin' for me, but I know the lass as I'm a waitin for," he went on, putting his arm round her.

"How long wilt thou wait, dearie?" said she, with a shy smile. "Thou'st not a good one at waiting at all, I take it. My feyther's back were scarce turned afore thou whistled—an he'd a come back where would we ha' been?"

"Dost thee wish I should be so particular patient as a' that, a waitin' for to see thee? But I bided there a smartish while i' th' cowshed afore thou see'dst me; —a mortal long while," he repeated energetically.

"A cock's stride, as folks say," answered she, laughing, as she pointed to the big cock who had followed them among the corn-ricks. "It makes believe as it takes a long step, and 'tain't nothink at all! I take it thou'st but a make-believe too, Roland," said she, fondly, "when thou say'st an thee'll bide any time for me. Thou'lt forget me afore I shall thee, wi' all this coil o' troubles."

It took so long for Roland to rebut these calumnies and to prove his unalterable faith, that the

gloaming fell, and he was obliged to leave her before the subject was anything like finished.

"I havena said half o' what I'd a got to tell thee nayther," he ended, sorrowfully.

There was a light in Cassie's face as she came into the house that told only too plainly what had been taking place outside. Lydia shook her head lovingly at her.

"Thee must tell un not to come again, dearie. An thee feyther finds un he'll be that mad angry he'll half kill us all. Bid Roland bide awhile, till this storm-time be overpast. Mebbe thee aunt will do summut for him whiles, by nows and thens."

As Roland came out of the farmyard gate, with eyes in the back of his head instead of in front, he fell full upon old Ashford, who had returned home earlier than usual. The height to which the untamed passions of those who habitually yield to them can reach, the effect of irresponsible power and unchecked temper in secluded places where public opinion does not come, is something terrible:—when men live in communities they are forced to give and take, and education and civilization, though they do not do much for us, teach us at least to restrain, or at the worst disguise their violence. The horror inspired

by the deeds of the feudal lords in France show to what this sometimes amounted. The wild-beast state of fury to which Henry VIII. was said occasionally to have been roused, has few modern equivalents; though there was a great official not long ago who has been seen to sweep the table-cover of a drawing-room on to the floor, breaking and destroying its miscellaneous contents, in a fit of rage, at one fell swoop.

Ashford's fury was fearful to witness. After venting his passion upon Roland, he turned into the house, knocking down the chairs as he passed, upsetting the tea-table in his blind rage, and striking at the women, who slunk terrified away. "Oh, Master, remember about the poor baby," said Lydia, pitifully, but the appeal only seemed to add fuel to the flame; while Roland, who felt that his ill-timed visit was the cause of it all, hovered round the door, not daring to go in, lest it should aggravate matters. The noise at last brought up German.

"Is there nowt to be done to bring him out?" said Roland, seizing him by the arm in a great state of agitation. "Hearken, it's all one as if he were mad: he'll strike the women next."

"Turn the pigs into the potatoes, or the barley

mead's best,—it ain't sheared yet," said German, readily. "I've on'y just shut to the gate. Feyther left it open, and the pigs is a' in the lane handy." And while Roland ran off to make good the fact, German walked in at the door and said, without raising his voice—

"Feyther, the pigs is in the barley mead, a doin' no end o' damage, and I canna get 'um out wi'out you."

The first effect of the interruption was only to divert the stream of wrath on German's head; but in a few minutes the old man hurried off, and the excitement and fatigue of the pig-hunt created such a diversion, that when he came back out of breath it was just possible for Lydia to make him understand that the crime should not happen again, though his savage ill-humour for the rest of the evening made all communication like walking on live coals.

The next day he was "down" in a tremendous fit of rheumatic gout. Whether the fit of passion brought on illness, or the illness the passion, the women had a hard time of it, and his temper was terrible to bear. They hardly knew what to do with him, when one evening old Nanny the carrier came in at the door. Nanny Elmes was an important

institution. Outwardly, she was only a hale, wiry little old woman, who carried about a basket containing tapes, buttons, needles and pins, and such small ware; but in fact the functions of post-office, electric telegraph, railroad and shop, culminated in her. As writing was a rare accomplishment, communication was chiefly verbal in the district, and generally passed through Nanny, who never forgot or mistook anything. But then she had the great advantage of not being able to read and write: and what says Plato? "Write nothing, for what has once been written is sure to disappear from the memory." And Mrs. Elmes (no mean authority) agreed entirely with Plato, and always held up to scorn "them as trusted to their finner-ends ithstead of to their brains." I wish, among the scores of essays on the "advantages of education," some one would write on the evils attached to reading and writing: how memory decays and independent thought diminishes under its baneful influences. The difficulties and expense of writing with a waxen tablet and a style, or whatever Mr. Grote may settle was the custom, must have prevented most Greeks from infringing Plato's precept; and the population generally of Athens evidently trusted to talk for their information, and

memory for its retention: yet no one ever denied the intelligence and high culture of that sharp-witted people. Nanny Elmes was so far like an old Greek (a Rhapsodist shall we say?) that her memory seemed able to contain anything she gave it to keep, and that she went from house to house, always welcome to her bite and sup, and a warm greeting besides, bearing to all who chose, in a poetical though not perhaps exactly rhythmical form, the news of the district, the doughty deeds of the community.—How Tommy Young, working at a mine of his own sinking in the "king's field"* of the mountain opposite, had smoked out Sammy Goodall, who had been brought "to grass" for dead—the said Tommy having suspected Sammy of hitting on his own particular vein of lead ore; and after all "it were only a working of the old man"—the mysterious miner of the ancient times. How the quarrymen had set fire to a "blast" a bit too soon, and poor Willy, who was weakly, would surely have been killed, an his uncle hadn't rushed forward and dragged him out, though his own leg were broken by a big stone. And these things are much more graphic as given by word of mouth, with

* King's field is ground where every man may dig a mine at his pleasure, without any appeal from the miserable proprietor of the upper soil.

look and gesture, than in cold print. Nanny was also esteemed as wise in all ways, therefore the women rejoiced greatly to see her.

"Eh, Nanny," said Lydia, "but ye're welcome as flowers in May! Where ha' ye been this ever so long? Here's the master so bad he canna hardly stir; wunnot ye think o' summat to do him good?"

"For what dunna yo' try a charm, Master Ashford?" said old Nanny, setting down her basket and standing with arms a-kimbo in a determined way opposite him. "They're fine things whiles. I tried one when my Johnny were sick with th' chin- [whooping] cough, as they telled me of. He were to be set back'ards of a donkey and to ride nine times round an ash-tree, and a did un a deal o' good."

"But I thowt Johnny died o' th' chincough," said Lydia, humbly and anxiously; with no touch of scorn, but an earnest desire to ascertain her facts before she entered on the interpretation of the law of this peculiar mode of medicine.

"Ay, he died for sure; but they said 'twere because I couldna get the ass up till mebbe a week afore he were taken. Anyhow, all the while he were ridin' 'twere wonderful how quiet the cough were, and he were a very puny child."

"But I hanna got the chincough," said Ashford, sulkily.

"Nay, but there's charms and charms. Some folks thinks a deal o' a necklace of coins fro' the communion money, but I arena much for that," answered Nanny, who was a staunch Dissenter, with a touch of pride. "It may be all very well for Church folk, but them as is brought up i' the light o' truth dunnot hold by such ways."

"I wonna be worrited nayther by physics nor charms," growled the old man, doggedly. "Where hae ye bin to all this while? tell me summat."

"I've been up i' th' Dales to Stoney Tracey. I allus goes there by nows and thens. Flour's up again, I heerd say," said Nanny, as the boy German came in with a sack on his head; "sure it's an uncommon price. Ye mun tak' heed to the Hobbthursts."

"What's them?" inquired German, with much interest, as he came up behind her, hoping for a "tale," while Cassandra turned round from washing her pans to hear, and even Lydia paused in her spinning to listen.

"Hast thee niver heerd," said the old woman, "o' the big boggat as robs the mills up i' th' Dales, for a' the doors be safe locked?"

"And how does he get in?" asked the boy, with round open eyes peering eagerly into the old woman's face.

"They say giant Hobb * hath ever a little un alongside o' him, a dwarf like, as he puts through the window o' th' mill to tak' the meal. And the butter, too, ain't safe; but how that mid be I canna say, for they're all 'fraid to look out when he comes."

"Nay," said old Ashford, "I wunna ha' my lad telled such a pack o' nonsense tales a' thattins, a kippin' him frae his work. There ain't no such things in nature, not a bit. And the Hobb niver was knowed to come beyont the Dale," he added, conclusively in authority if not in reasoning.

"Well," replied the woman, "anyhow there's Squire Rivers been a pokin' and a diggin' into things as he'd better leave alone. I doubt the Hobb will be arter *his* meal anyways. He's been into the cavern they ca' Ludchurch, and t'other hole, where the Hobb has his lodging they allus say."

"Dear heart, what fools there do be in th' world," said Ashford, oracularly. "There were a queer little fella wi' spectacles on's nose, as comed here speerin' questions up and down, mebbe a twelvemonth back.

* In other places he is given his title "Hob" (goblin).

'And what's them figures upo' th' house?' says he. 'I dunna know; I beant booklearned,' says I,—short like, to ha' done wi' un. 'And how do ye ca' this, and what do ye ca' t'other?' he goes on, none daunted. 'And what's the name o' yon little hill nigh there?' 'Lose Hill,' says I. 'And that other t'other?'

"Ah, that'll be Win Hill he'd mean," said Nanny, much interested.

"'Yes,' says he. 'I've a heerd tell o' that. There were a big battle here atwixt the Danes and them as were o' th' country-side. And an this be Lose Hill, where were the folks buried as were killed i' th' fight? What's yon mound?' he says, peering wi' his head o' one side, and his sharp eyes and barnacles. 'What, thattins? do ye mean Deddun's Mead?' says I. 'That's it,' he goes on. 'Dead man's Mead' (as if he know'd a deal more o' it nor I, as had lived on it man and boy all my days). 'Ha' ye never digged nor found anything i' th' "lowe?"'* I cum down sharp on 'im: 'What would there be? Gold, man?' 'Nay, friend,' he says, 'nowt but dead men's bones, and pikeheads, and cracked jugs mebbe.'"

* Burial mound.

"And what for should ye fash yersen wi' thattins, I wonder?" put in Nanny.

"Well and that's just what I says to un. 'I want na bones, nor cracked jugs; there's eneuch o' them, and porringers too, i' th' house, wi' a' the lads and lasses break!' Wi' that he laughed right out —ye could ha' heerd him right over the hill. 'Mebbe ye're in the right there, my man; they wouldn't be o' much account to you!' and a looked so queer out o' his eyes; and I heerd arter as it mun ha' been Squire Rivers from that side country! Well-a-day, what maggots them quality does tak' up wi'; 'cos they hasn't nowt else to do, I take it! But if I'd ha' know'd it were the old squire I wouldna ha' made so free."

"Well, ye'd the best on him about the jugs anyhow," said Nanny, cheerfully.

"Ay, that had I; hadn't I?" repeated the old man, much pleased. "I tuk the change out on him there, I did."

After all, Nanny *had* brought a charm with her, and approved herself a good leech. Ashford improved from that time. She had amused him, and listened admiringly to him, two of the best sedatives known in any pharmacopœia.

CHAPTER X.

FERN-CUTTING ON THE DRUID'S HILL.

> And fare ye weel, my only luve,
> And fare ye weel awhile,
> And I will come again, my luve,
> Tho' it were ten thousand mile.—BURNS.

IT was a beautiful day late in October about a month after. "German," said his father, coming wearily into the house, "we mun ha' more bracken cut for fodder down i' th' Parson's Lot. Ye mun go down to-day, or it'll be too wet. I do b'leeve there ain't the kip o' a single heifer upo' the whole lot. I mun get what I can out of it. I were a fool to promise thretty shillin' a year for't,—the meresmen said as how it werena much above three acre. The old mare can git with the cart as far as the gate. I canna go, and Cassie'd better go i' th' stead to help thee."

German knew that it was much too late in the season for cutting bracken, but nothing was ever done in time at Stone Edge; and he and his sister took their sickles in silence and went down as they were desired. Nothing, in fact, could be less re-

munerative or more beautiful than the ground in question. It lay some distance from the farm, where the shelter of the warmer valley began. The steep hill-side was clothed with sweeps of wood, amongst which the grey piles of rock appeared; the soil was so shallow indeed, and so broken with stones, that one wondered how the tall trees found nourishment of any kind. Here and there were open spaces covered with heather and bracken, which in this autumn time had ripened to a russet brown, diversified with brilliant yellow and green patches of rushy grass, the whole rich in colour beyond description. Slender white birch-stems and pendent mountain-ash, hung with a wealth of scarlet berries, grew in groups here and there. A strip of this unprofitable beauty had been allotted to the parson in some primitive distribution of the unenclosed soil; and a scraggy heifer or two belonging to Ashford now gained a scanty living on it, with an immense amount of toil. It was chiefly valuable to him for the fern, which saved straw, and German always rather enjoyed the expedition. Any change is pleasant to a boy, even to a hill-side a mile off; and he drove his old mare down the hill, with his sister by his side, shaken to pieces, but both very merry. German unharnessed the mare

and tied her up, and Cassie wandered on with her sickle in hand. Over all passed the shadows of the great fleecy clouds overhead, which sailed across the blue sky, throwing a changing shade here and there over the woods and hills, making the sunlit portions still more lovely in their autumn dress. Presently she thought she heard voices in the little grassy lane, which ran on the other side of the small stream at the bottom of the hill, and she leaned against the ruined wall, overspread with ivy and beautiful creeping plants, and hidden in a covert of honeysuckle and fern. Presently three men came out of a field on the other side of the lane. Joshua was warmly debating the value of a horse which he had just been trying, with its master, the miller.

"I tell ye the nag's ten year old an she's a day. She ain't worth five pounds," shouted he.

"She's worth more nor any horse you ever had," retorted the miller. "You might ride her to Youlcliffe without her turning a hair."

Roland, little interested, stood holding his father's horse and his own, and looking sadly up the valley which led to Stone Edge—so intently, that Cassie felt sure he would miss seeing her, and yet by moving she was afraid of drawing his father's attention. At

last his eyes caught sight of German in the fern high up on the hill, and came eagerly down in search of her. There was a small close and a tolerably wide brook, and the wall on the bank between them, across which they stood looking at each other. His father and the miller went on gesticulating and arguing within a couple of yards of him, screaming, swearing, appealing, defending, while Roland, half hidden by the horses, gazed across the intervening space, and sadly said most eloquent things in that unvoiced conversation; and Cassie from her covert, masked by fern, under the changing shadows of the birch and mountain-ash, answered him again in the same language. At length Joshua, in the necessary and proper passion, all in the way of business, turned suddenly round, seized his horse's bridle out of his son's hand, and rode off saying, "Come, Roland, I'll none waste *my* time with such roundings."

He was very sharp-eyed was Joshua, but a bargain is a bargain and an absorbing occupation, and he was watching the changes on the miller's face, not the unprofitable quivering of mountain-ashes. Luckily the miller's last words were long. "We'll halve the difference. You'll think on it again," was thrown backward and forward fiercely. Roland could not

leave Cassie thus without a word. He took his chance, passed his horse's bridle under a stone on the wall, vaulted it, leaped at the brook, stumbled on the muddy bank and slipped with one leg into the water, sprang up the other side, and seized her by the hands with the greatest difficulty as he clung on to the wall.

"Oh, Roland!"' said she, bending down from her high estate, and looking like a Druid priestess with her sickle under the oak-tree. "Thee father will be just right down mad. Go off, my lad. Lyddy bid me tell thee thou mustna come again till thy feyther and mine agree."

He had no time for remonstrances. In another moment he had cleared the stream and the wall again, had leapt on his horse and followed his father, carefully riding on the off-side of him to conceal his wet leg. Joshua was in high glee at getting the cob a few shillings cheaper than it was worth, and chatted on cheerfully to his son without perceiving his pre-occupation. Cassie stood listening to the sharp sound of the horses' tread on the limestone which followed the unseen line of road far down the valley, till at a bend in the hill-side it stopped suddenly, when she turned round with a sigh.

"Well, I niver!" said German, laughing, behind

her. "And that sharp un, Joshuay, not to see a mossel o' it right under his very nose! We shanna get much bracken tho' at this rate. Thee mun help me to stack what I've got intil th' cart, or we shanna get home to-night."

The winter passed on and they never met again, while neither German nor Cassie were suffered to go down to their uncle's at Youlcliffe.

One market-day, however, the old man's rheumatics were so bad that he summoned German to take the old mare and go down with a sample of oats in his stead.

"And I shall go and see my aunt," said the boy, stoutly. His father was grunting a refusal, but Lydia interposed, and his wrath was diverted on her devoted head.

"Feyther keeps her there argufying an it were her fault he's got a rick in's back," said German to his sister, who came with him to the door.

"Here's the kitling as she axed me for a long time back. How wilt thou carry it?" answered she.

"Gie it me in here," said German, opening his waistcoat, and the kitten was dropped into rather

dangerous proximity to his skin, but apparently quite satisfied with its situation.

"Thou'st main good, lad, to dumb beasts," observed Lydia, admiringly, who had come up. "'Tain't a many as 'ud dare to ha' a cat's claws so nigh their flesh."

"See Roland an thee canst, lad, and bring me word o' him," whispered Cassie in her brother's ear, as he mounted the long-legged beast with his burden before him.

"And get me twal shirt-button," cried Lydia, as he rode away.

Having arrived at Youlcliffe, put up his horse, and done his business, without seeing any signs of Roland, he betook himself to his aunt's, whom he found sitting jovial, cheerful, and red with heat, near a tremendous fire on a very hot day. In the abundance of coal in that district, it is thought bad manners and hospitality ever to let down the fire, however much suffering it may entail on oneself and one's friends.

"Well, German," said she, "and I'm very glad to see yer. Yes, I'm purely, thank ye, only I canna get shut o' the peen in my yead. By times it's enough to drive a dog mad."

"I've a brought the kitling, aunt, and it's a black one Cassie bid me say she had a chose," said he, as he drew forth the little woolly bundle and set it on a chair, where it stretched itself after its close packing, and contemplated existence in a grand way very deliberately.

"Dear heart alive, but it's a pretty un! They tell me it's good luck to bring a black cat to a house, but I dunna set great store by a' them things folks says."

"Thou'lt be fine and hungry, lad," said his uncle. "You young uns can eat your bellyful a many times over i' th' day. Thou'st nigh clemmed, I take it. The air's very strong and healthful at Stone Edge.

"Here's wheaten bread and cheese," said the old woman, "while I warm the bacon and broad beans left fra our dinner; there's nobbut a bilin' o' 'em left, I take it. And how's Cassie?" she inquired, standing over the boy and hospitably heaping the food on his plate. "I take it as very hard as I canna see her. One's own niece is a deal more to one nor one's husband's; leastways when hur's like Martha Savage."

"Thee niver canst abide Martha, my missis," said old Nathan, smiling.

"She've a tongue like a nutmeg grater, and she's as sharp as a ferret."

"There ain't a mossel o' harm in her," answered her husband; "but she do talk, there's no denying that."

"Talk!" replied Mrs. Broom, energetically. "She'd talk a horse's leg off! And she were the ugliest baby as ever I set eyes on," continued the old woman, in this rather miscellaneous catalogue of Mrs. Martha's crimes.

"'Fou' in the cradle, fair in the saddle,' they say, you know," said Nathan, laughing.

"Nay, there ye're quite out," answered his wife, triumphantly; "that saddle wunna fit, for she ain't fair, and she's never been upo' a horse's back in her born days; but thou lovest them proverbs so as thou'lt fit 'um upo' a' heads."

German meantime was doing full justice even to his aunt's Benjamin portion of food; his mouth had hitherto been too busy for talk, but there is an end even to a boy's appetite.

"Thank yer kindly, aunt, I'm full," he said, at last, in answer to her renewed entreaties to eat, as he rose.

"And how's yer father?" she began. "He's

very nasty-tempered. I've no patience wi' him for's ways. His head's as full o' maggots [fancies] as an egg is o' meat."

"Hush, wife," said Nathan, who took the side of the authorities. "Ye mustna say that afore his son. He's a bit westy by times is Ashford, that's a', beleddy, is it!" *

"What, when he keeps Cassie mewed up wi' his tantrums, and won't so much as let her own aunt ha' the view on her! And here's my own sister's son as I ha' hardly set eyes on sin' he were growed up!"

"Besides," said Nathan the wise, "correction's good for childer." And he went on chaunting, in a grave sonorous voice,—

> Solomon said, in accents mild,
> Spare the rod and spile the child;
> Be they man or be they maid,
> Whip them and whallop them, Solomon said!

"I dunna see as man or maid either's the better for cuttin' into," answered German, meditatively, as he put the finishing stroke to a stick-head which he was making for his uncle with his beloved new knife. "I ain't a bit of wood, as he should carve me into what fashion he fancies. Here's yer stick, uncle, and

* "By'r lady shall she."—*Sec.* Capulet: *Romeo and Juliet.*

long health to use it, and I wish I was where the stick will be—along with yer."

"Thank ye kindly, my lad, and the same to you, and dunna ye be in too great a haste wi' your life. There be a deal o' pride i' th' world wants felling."

"I bean't a learnin' nothin'; it's just muddlin' and milkin' and wabblin' i' th' mud arter plough-tail. I'm like the little donkeys in the lane, I canna addle [earn] nought." The burgher blood from his mother was stirring curiously in the lad. "Roland would ha' learnt me to write and cipher, but feyther wouldn' let me nigh him. Well, good-by, uncle, I must go; the minits runs as fast as rats down here."

"I want ye for to go to Amos Young's, up your way, German," shouted his aunt after him, "and get me some pills. My inside's very tickle for to fettle, and I mun hae 'em from him. 'Tis odd as I ain't better. I've a took everythink as everybody telled me on, and as all the neighbours gave; horehound and wormwood and rue and dark soap and a'!"

"I raly believe as she've a took a'most too many things," said Nathan, half aloud to himself, but evidently uncertain in uttering so audacious a heresy.

"I'll go and welcome; but I didn't know as he'd a knowed owt o' doctoring," answered her nephew.

"No, but he's a very pious man," said Mrs. Broom, convincedly.

As he went out of the door he fell upon Roland, rushing eagerly after him. "I can see Stone Edge from Win Hill above our close," said he, "for all there's two dales and three shoulders o' the hill betwixt us. Tell Cassie if she'd go up to the 'Stones' wi' you, and make a fire o' weeds, I should see the white smoke plain, and take it as a sign she ha'n't forgotten me. Tell her I shall go up every evening till I see it."

With which injunctions German rode home: prices for his father, buttons for his mother, and this primitive love-token for his sister.

Stone Edge overlooked the whole country. In one direction the Dale stretched far up to the purple moors in a pale distance. About it the mountains were tumbled into an extraordinary variety of peaks and shoulders, with precipitous valleys huddled in between, while beyond the long slow ugly ascent which lay behind rose other hills and valleys far and dim. On the extreme summit stood the stones of some great Druidical work, remnants of forgotten worship. Two great uprights still remained, and a rocking-stone. They must have been a most poetic-minded

priesthood: their temples are placed in the finest situations for effect of natural scenery that can be chosen. Stonehenge, with its almost illimitable horizon of plain, with something of the same grandeur as the sea, the Cornish rocking-stone on its stern granite precipices, within hearing of the never-resting dash of waves, the Northern remains, are each perfect in its kind.

The Edge must have been seen far and near, and the signal-fires—which were no mean substitute for telegraphs—could have been transmitted from such a centre with almost electric rapidity. Still there were other hills near, apparently as good for their purpose, and nothing but the keenest sense of the majesty and grandeur which such a position would add to their ceremonies, could have induced men in those pathless mountains to spend so much labour as was required to raise the vast stones on such a spot,—the worship of the beauty of Nature, which we are now taught to think came into the world only with and since good roads and "convenient post-chaises" gave people leisure to look about. No doubt it was a different feeling from what prompts a young lady to put her head languidly out of a carriage-window and say, "Look, papa, what a pretty mountain!" The old

Druid believed in his everlasting hills with a deep reverence mixed with fear. The earth-god had been at strange work in his wrath here, he probably thought; and those scarred cliffs and rifted mountains—(no pastime as now for a smoking, flirting, noisy, draggled pleasure-train)—were the signs of an offended God, propitiated probably by some fearful rites on that solitary peak of "earth-o'er-gazing mountains."

And there the young girl went up the next day and lit her signal-fire. The thin blue smoke curled outwards and away, and seemed to bear her thoughts with it. Even such communication, however, was a comfort to her, as she watched dreamily the answering beacon from the other hill.

CHAPTER XI.

CROOKED WAYS.

> And still to love though pressed with ill,
> In wintry age to feel no chill,
> With me is to be lovely still.—COWPER.

"THE cranberries are ripe," said German one day to his sister.

"Be they?" said she. "Then I'll out and pick some, and send 'um to my aunt by Nanny Elmes."

Nothing can be more charming in the rare fine days of that rainy region than the upland moors in their unspoiled beauty. In July and August they are a gorgeous carpet of flowers—the dwarf yellow furze, mixed with three kinds of heather in their various purple gradations, making a perfect sea of bloom. Growing among these are rare vacciniums, with their lovely pink and white waxen bells, cranberries, whortleberries, blueberries, bilberries; while the red-leaved sundew, cotton-plant, and yellow asphodel, mixed with wonderful green mosses, cover the wetter spots. It is a rich garden for

those who care for it, and for those who do not there is a fresh, soft, balmy lightness in the air, as if it were too delicious for Nature to give it in common use to her children, and she therefore kept it only for rare occasions and places difficult of access. Cassie was out on the cranberry moor very early in the next morning, and as she came and went among the flowers, not with any sentimental purposes towards them, but simply picking her "berries," she threw off her hat, and the delicate bright breezy-scented air made her young blood light within her heart, and she sang to herself as she went; the beautiful fresh young face looking even brighter than usual, for she felt as if all must come right.

> The summer flower is to the summer sweet,
> Though by itself it lives and dies unknown,

says one of the Shakspeare sonnets. I hope, therefore, that the summer enjoyed its human flower also, for there was no one else to do so, and it was a pity, for the sight was a very fair one. She turned home, having filled her little can and gathered moss to pack the fruit in, picking a bilberry here and there as she went, and putting it into her mouth as she smiled at the recollection of the many scrapes which she and German had got into on this very part of the moor

—playing truant from work, their little mouths, blackened with the stains of the tell-tale bilberry, revealing their iniquities—when in the distance she saw Nanny Elmes coming up the green lane leading to the old Hall.

It was so short a time since the old woman had been with them, that a cold chill of fear came over Cassie that something must have gone wrong, and she hurried forwards anxiously.

"Your uncle sends ye word, my lass, that your aunt ha' had a 'plexy stroke, or it mid be a fit o' the parallels I was to say; and ye mun come down as fast as mid be an ye would see her alive. I were to ha' letted ye know last night, but I were so late, and I darena come up the lone moor by night, for 'tis a very boggety bit," said Nanny.

Cassie gave a little cry; her flowery visions seemed to melt away as under a frost, and then her conscience reproached her that her next thought should be, not of her poor aunt, but the personal one that if she went to Youlcliffe she might see Roland again.

Ashford was sitting in the kitchen, much "put about" by the news, and therefore as obstinate as possible. He seemed to take pleasure in declaring

that Cassie should not go, a sufficient number of times to prevent her thinking him too kind. And he probably would have held to it, but Nanny Elmes was an authority and came to the rescue.

"She's struck for death, and Cassie mun go quickly or she'll never see her again. Go and put on thee bonnet, child," said she, as if it were a matter of course—which carried the day, and Cassie set off for Youlcliffe on her sad errand with a strange mixture of joy and sorrow in her heart.

Meantime Joshua, the shrewd and wary, had happened to hear of Mrs. Broom's illness before his son. He was standing on the high stone steps leading to his door that same evening when a small boy appeared at the foot.

"What do you want, little un?" said he, looking down superciliously.

"Where's Roland?" replied the small messenger. "Bessie Broom have had a fit, and the doctor's away to Hawksley they says, and Nathan thowt that mebbe Roland would ride over for un. Eh, if there isn't the doctor come home hissen, so it don't matter now!" said the boy, who had not hurried himself with his message. "But you'll be sure and tell Roland, as Nathan was very petticklar for him to know."

Joshua immediately determined to get his son out of harm's way. "For to be sure, Cassie'll be down to see her aunt d'recly," said he to himself.

After his fashion he was proud and fond of his boy. He had given him some education: Roland could read, and write, and cipher—at that time not common accomplishments, of which his father made much use. He had a sort of general notion of his son's making a grand marriage with money, to "help the trade," which was all carried on in a sort of gambling way, losing one day what he had made the one before, so that as he himself said, he "could scarce tell by times whether he were rich or ruined." He determined to make a great effort, and he went down to Roland, who was hard at work in the sheds behind the house "suppering up" and "littering down" the cattle, safe, as his father saw, from all chance of hearing the news. He came close up to the heifer which Roland was driving in, pinched it scientifically, and said,—

"Ye'll tak' her betimes to-morrow to Farmer Stodge's, as I promised un when he were this way; and then I was a thinking, Roland, as 'twould be a good job for thee to go on to t'other side York, to Mitchell's, as sould me the last lot o' runts, and see

and manage about not paying the money. And there's a horsedealer, Jackman, as worries me sore about a heap o' things down there. Nobody can't manage it but you, Roland," said his father, who had a persuasive way with him when he chose. "I canna go mysen. I mun pick up summat i' th' way o' nags at the big fair at Hawksley; but if it can be done, you'll do it, and things is out and out bad wi' me this time."

Joshua had always kept his son in the dark as to his affairs; but his uneasiness this time was real.

"There's Martha Savage had a very tidy portion left her," he went on, "when her husband the miller died; 'twould be very convenient now. Couldn't ye tak' to her, Roland? She's a pair o' smartish black eyes, and hur's a rare un to manage a house, and nimble o' foot."

"Ay, and wi' her tongue, too. But ye'd best leave yon alone, father. I'd not wed wi' her an she'd the Bank o' England to her fortune, and were as pretty as Queen Esther in her royal robes."

Joshua was beginning to feel that there was a certain point beyond which even he did not dare to urge his son, "quiet" as he thought him to be, and he hurried him off very early, before Cassandra could

reach Youlcliffe, going with him himself the first few miles for better security.

"I'm not particular to a day or two about your coming back, Roland; 'tain't often ye get an out," he said at parting to his unconscious son.

"It's all for his good," he said to himself, as he returned slowly home alone. Whenever we do anything particularly selfish and ill-natured, we always find out that it is all for somebody's advantage. We so far pay homage to the good within us as to tell it a lie. It is not quite so silly as to believe us, but it is a little stupefied.

He was quite successful in his plans. The unsuspecting Roland was leaving Youlcliffe by one road as Cassandra approached it by another.

When she at length reached her aunt there was little consciousness left. The old woman lay in a sort of sleep, painless and quiet; and although she often spoke, the bystanders could not be sure that she recognized them. Pleasant, kindly words they were which she uttered, like herself, but the unseen world seemed to be closing round her. She talked, but it seemed to be chiefly with those who were gone,—her father, mother, and sister, who had been dead for years.

It was a gentle dismissal. As Cassie sat in the dimly lighted chamber, watching the waning life ebbing slowly away, she involuntarily looked towards the door, and started at every fresh voice downstairs, hoping to see Roland, longing for a word or a sign. It was many months since the meeting under the fern on the steep hill-side, and she began to have the cold shiver of doubt which absence brings with it under such complete separation; but she watched and waited in vain, no Roland appeared. She reproached herself for thinking of anything but the solemn scene before her; but the tide of life was too strong within her,—she was too young to live in the past,—and her heart sank within her as she heard and saw nothing of him.

The old man wandered about in a lost way, which was very pathetic, and refused to be comforted.

Eh," said he, " she were ailing long afore she spoke; she niver took to her bed, and she said sudden like one day, 'I think I'll send for Cassie an I'm going to be bad.' And I said, 'Eh, lass, but ye mustna talk like that, to want a nuss! Thee'st on'y a bit low; bide a bit. What'll iver I do an thou'st sick?' And she laughed out so merry, and says, 'Eh, men's but poor creeturs wi'out women to

look after 'um!" And I wouldn't b'lieve there was much amiss, and she aye so cheerful like. And last Saturday, afore she were took for death, there come one o' thae Methodees as owed her a bit o' money for summat o' 'nother, and arter she'd paid her, I heerd her say, 'Well, now I've squared matters wi' ye here, Bessie Broom, and I hope, too, you've a made your accounts right wi' God; for it's like He may ca' ye soon to Himself an ye be so bad.' And such a turn it giv me as niver were; for yur see she'd niver said nowt, and I couldn't bear to think she were real ill, nor as she were going away from me. And I'm right down mad wi' myself now as I didn't send for you d'recly, and the doctor too before, but she never could abide doctors."

"I'm sure you did a' you could for her, uncle," said Cassie, affectionately.

"Nay, lass, but I didna; that's where 'tis. I were a thinkin' o' my own comfort,—I were right down took up wi' mysen,—that's how 'twere; and she, she were allus thinkin' for other folk, and niver giv in till she were took for death."

"She were a happy wife anyhow were aunt Bessie," said she, "and thought no end o' you, ye know, uncle Nathan."

"Yes, my wench, but that was her goodness, not mine."

At last came the end: a bright light passed over the old woman's face—the light of the rising, not the setting—and then she passed away so peacefully that neither Cassandra nor her uncle could tell the moment when the breath ceased: that strange moment, which changes the man made after the image of his Maker into something less valuable than the clods of the field. Her father had made her promise that she would return immediately after the death, clenching it by saying that German should not go to the funeral unless she came home, so she prepared honourably to keep her word.

"Well, child, it's a sore thing for me to part wi' thee," said her uncle, rising out of a "brown stud" as she came in with her bonnet on. "I didn't hardly mind as thee wast goin'; I think I've forgotten everythink wi' my troubles. Eh, didn't Bessie say to me one night, a sittin' i' that very chear, as she'd forgot summat—'I'm very sorry,' said she, 'I haven't a got no memory now, but I mun just leave it to the Lord, he don't forget, he'll put it right.'"

"Good-by, Cassie," he went on, as he parted with her at the little garden-gate. "She were main fond o' thee, lass, were thy aunt Bessy. Her have a left thee the sixty-eight pund odd. 'German,' says she, 'will hae his father's farm.' We mun trust to him to do rightly by thee and Roland now. Ah, and thae flowers," said the old man, going back to his own thoughts, and passing his hand affectionately over a bush as he went along, "how fond she were o' thae roses! She made 'um a' for to stand o' one leg. She said they werena so bothersome about the bottom, they didna hae so many rucks. And there she didna bide wi' us sa long as the flowers! she were a fair wench, and so seemly and neat a' her days. How hur did knock about to be sure!—summer and winter hur was allus a doing. She hadn't a lazy bone in hur body. She were a very endeevouring woman she were; and we niver had a word together for nine-and-thirty year!"

As they stood at the wicket they saw Joshua walking slowly away, having apparently just passed the house, with an affectation of not looking round.

"I wunna speak to him," said Nathan. "Bessie couldn't abide him. I wonder Roland hasna iver

been to inquire after her, she set great store by him. And he know'd she were ill, for I sent up to him. Joshua gives it out as he's made a very deal o' money; happen he's grow'd too grand for such as we. And there's a farmer nigh to York where he's dealings in the cattle line, and where Roland does a deal they say. That's where he is now I take it. I wonder whether there's any females in the house there as he's after?" said the old man dreamily. "But a should ha' come and seen his auld friend a should, afore he went; a thing prizeable is an old friend, and she were allus one to him."

It was with a weary heart that Cassie went home that day; unknown "females" danced before her imagination. What if his father had schemed Roland into marrying some York beauty? "What shall I care for the money then?" said the poor girl to herself. At first she had been glad of her dower: "but I've lost aunt Bessie as loved me, and now there's Roland going too; what good will money do me?"

As she turned off the high-road out of the broad Dale, she saw a storm of rain come travelling slowly up the valley: each fold of hill was slowly blotted out one after another; before it all seemed fair and

glowing, behind it the beautiful details of rock and wood vanished as under the sweep of a brush of dark colour, the outlines were blurred, the beauty effaced as its finger touched them. When she reached Stone Edge, the skirts of the cloud had broken over her; she was wet to the skin; the beauty seemed to have been wiped out of her day, the cloud to be slowly gathering over her life.

CHAPTER XII.

BESSIE'S BURYING.

Many ways we wend,
Many ways and many days,
Ending in one end.

MACDONALD.

THE boy German was the only one of his family who attended old Bessie's funeral. Ashford at the last moment declared that he was obliged to obey a summons from his landlord, who lived at a distance and only visited his estate in the hills from time to time on business, and was now at the old manor-house for a few days.

"Th' auld squire have a sent for me to see him punctial some time to-day at the 'Knob house,' and I canna go to Youlcliffe; ye may tell 'um a' down there. And you mind to be home betimes, German, or you'll catch it," he called out as the boy went off.

The friends and neighbours collected for the "beryin'" looked upon this message as a mere

excuse, and public opinion declared itself strongly against old Ashford.

"Sure ill will should ha' died wi' death," said one; "and hur a leavin' sich a lot o' money to his daughter, too."

"'T will hurt nobody but hisself; his room's better nor's company any time is Ashford's," said another.

The world was likewise scandalized at Roland's absence. "She were like a mother to un," said society; "he should a strove to come home for to do her respect; he know'd she'd a had a fit, Nathan says."

The old woman was buried under the shadow of the spire which she was so proud of. "'Tis a cheerful pleasant place, like hersen," said Nathan to his nephew as they came away together down the steep path, "and hur will be close to the pathway where her friends can come nigh her, and alongside o' her father for company like, till I come; 'twon't be long first. I've a ordered a headstone," ended the old man sadly, "and it says,—

> All you young men as passes by,
> Throw a look and cast an eye;
> As you is now, so once was I,
> Prepare to live, as you must die.—

for to learn 'um how they're here one hour and shed

the next, like a poppy-head," sighed he, picking one as he passed. Then, as German was taking his leave, he called him back. "The money for Cassie is a lent to Jones, and I shall put in her name immediate and mak' it all right. Anyhow 'tain't mine, and I wunna ha' thy feyther cryin' out like as if he were burnt, and going about 'callin' o' me and saying as how I'd choused Cassie. But ye may mak' as though I'd ha' said it shouldna be done till such times as he'd gied his consent to her marrying wi' Roland. If yer aunt hadna been tuk so sudden as there isn't a mossel o' paper about it, I'm sure she'd a left it so. It's queer, too, about Roland," the old man went on. "I canna think what ails him to kip away so long. I've got it set in my mind it's about thae York lassies, for young uns is wonderful soon took up wi' a pretty face,—and they fa's into love and out again like as if it were a pond.—And 'tain't allus such a clean one either," moralized Nathan; "a lot o' muck they picks up whiles. Therefore I dunna mak' sich a stand-up fight for Roland as I mid ha' done a while back till I sees my ways more plain. Man is but flesh, and flesh is wonderful weak by times," said Nathan the wise, skilled in human nature, "and you'd best say

Cassie's to have him as she wishes to wed wi', an she's to get her aunt's money."

German returned home big with the importance of his mission, and entered the house with a sense of dignity as the protector and arbiter of his sister's future. He found to his great relief that he was beforehand with his father, who had not yet returned from the squire; the kitchen was empty and he passed through to the garden on the other side, where he found the women busy hanging out the last results of a great wash. The ornamental ground of the old hall had all been dug up and planted with vegetables, but there still remained a sort of raised flagged terrace at the upper end, sheltered by a great yew hedge, flanked with what had once been pyramids and "shapes" cut out in yew, which had grown all awry and deformed, for nobody at Stone Edge had any time for garden decorations. And here German betook himself directly to deliver his unaccustomed budget of news and give his opinion on family affairs of moment.

"Well-a-day!" said Lydia, sadly, "it mun ha' been a sore sight to see yer aunt laid i' th' ground, and hur took so sudden. 'Tis a solemn thought—there's a something a comin' to take us all away—one's only got to be right for't; but she were a well-livin' 'ooman

as ivir were, and set her trust and her heart steadfast i' th' Lord. She'd a found her Saviour, she hadn't to look for him not at the last, but just only to lie there and be still."

"To be sure she had," replied the lad. And after a pause he went on, "'T were a gran' dooment anyhow" (he was very fond of his aunt, but he could not help enjoying what, to him, had been a great entertainment). "There were a sight o' vittles and drink to be sure, and heaps o' folk was there to do her respect; and Martha Savage (as uncle Nathan had in for to help) a takin' on herself and wagging her tongue as uppish as mid be! 'And dunna ye sit there,' and 'Dunna ye bide so long there,' says she, catching everybody up like anythink. I raly dinna know the place, and aunt Bessie, who'd iver the welcome i' her face and the welcome i' her hand, and now she lay there so quiet, and couldn't so much as say a word!"

"And how did uncle Nathan abide Martha's taking on herself so?" said Cassie, rather indignantly.

"I dunna think he see'd or heerd owt as were a goin' on, he were so sore put about to have lost her as was gone. He sot there i' his chair quite lost like

when they'd a' left but me, and then he telled me about Cassie's money. He wouldna let me go, but he says, 'Bide wi' me a bit, my lad; ye was her nevvy, and she held to ye both at Stone Edge a very deal.' And when Martha put in her word, he just tuk his hat silent, and come on wi' me a bit o' the road home out o' the way o' her tongue."

At this point in the discourse Ashford's loud harsh voice was heard; he had just come home, and was calling on his womankind. "I'll go in to your feyther," said Lydia; "thee canst stop and hear all and about it."

German had climbed, parenthetically as it were, during the interval, on to the top of a high wall, whence his long legs hung down as a sort of fringe. He went on: "Arter a while uncle Nathan talked wi' me a deal about Roland, Cassie—what for had no one see'd him this ever such a while? and that he'd a sent up a purpose for to tell him as aunt Bessie had a fit afore he went away. And Rob the joiner and the young man from the forge would ha' it Roland was agone courtin' down to York, and her name it were Mitchell, and she'd such cows and pigs to her portion as niver were." (Indeed rumour, assisted by Joshua, had worked so hard that it was

only wonderful that Roland was not married already in public report to "the lass t'other side York.")

Cassie was silent, taking the dry clothes from off the line. "And Dick laughs and says, 'Ah, Roland's a deep un; he's just kippin' away till he sees whether yer uncle gie's Cassie her aunt's money or no.'"

"I dunna believe that," said Cassie, with rising colour. "It's no more like Roland than as a fish can fly."

"And then another he says as Roland were summat changeable, and that ye must not trust to his father's son," said the lad, insisting on his point, and quite unconscious of the sharpness of the thrusts which he was driving into his sister's heart.

"I'm sure we've no reason for to think him changeable," answered the poor girl, turning away as she clutched an armful of linen spasmodically to her breast.

"Ye dunna know nowt about it, Cassie. How should ye? They says as how one time he were all so much for short-horns and sich like, and now he's all for them heifers from Durham. Thee hastna seen him this age; how canst thee tell?" said the lad, with an air of superiority, from the top of the wall where he had perched him-

self, and picking off little bits of stone and mortar, which he shied with great justness of aim at an old sow in the straw-yard commanded from his lofty position. "I hit hur that time i' th' left ear," added he, in an undertone, with a satisfied nod of his head.

It irritated poor Cassie's nerves to that degree to have her fate, as it were, and Roland's principles, discussed in the intervals of the sow's complaints, that she could not contain herself any longer. "You've a tore poor Roland's character to rags among ye anyhow," she said, as an old shirt of her brother's came to pieces in her hands, which she had taken off the line more vehemently than its age and circumstances demanded. "And I wunna stay for to hear ye ballaragging one as has iver been kind and true to us all." And she went hurriedly back into the house with her load of linen, her lips quivering and her eyes flashing, and with the greatest difficulty restraining a great burst of tears.

"Well, surely," said the boy, wonderingly to himself, as he came down from his throne. "Whativer have she a took that so queer for? I've a said nowt she should take amiss, on'y warning of her like, and telling of her what they thinks at Youlcliffe,

as is my duty. How's she to know what's what, an her brother doesna look arter her when feyther's no good at all?" soliloquized German to himself with much dignity, striding across the cabbages with his hands in his pockets, and kicking an unoffending head of "early sprouts" from him as he spoke.

Still, though Cassie opposed outwardly a firm front to the enemy, she was cut to the heart within, and her confident trust sank when she found herself alone. The strife seems so unequal when you have only a conviction in your own mind to oppose to facts and general public opinion; it is like drawing supplies out of a single well, when your foes have the command of a whole river. Her very modesty concerning herself made her feel doubtful as to her claims upon Roland.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW IS THE RENT TO BE MADE?

My wind is turned to bitter north,
That was so soft and south before,
The sun that shone so sunny bright
With foggy gloom is clouded o'er.

A. H. Clough.

Although there was no doubt that Ashford might have gone to his sister-in-law's funeral if he had been so minded, his excuse had been so far a true one that he had really been sent for to speak to his landlord.

The present "squire" had inherited the estate towards the end of his life from a spendthrift nephew, who had died after running through everything but the bare acres; and in his old age he had not cared to leave his comfortable square stone house in the capital city of the county—which in those days was a sociable place, frequented during the winter months by most of the aristocracy thereabouts—to come and dwell among those inhospitable hills. He

treated the property as a thing to get money out of, and having been very comfortable, not to say rich, upon his small annuity, was now persuaded of his extreme poverty on coming into a large estate. He killed off the deer, cut down the timber, and would have let the old house itself if he could; but as no one could be found to hire its somewhat dreary halls, he had turned it into an additional farmhouse, only reserving a couple of rooms for himself when he came there on business.

Not a word, however, did Ashford vouchsafe to his family concerning the interview at the great hall when he returned that evening. Ever since the rent-day he had been even more moody and sullen than his wont, snapping at his wife and snarling at his children; but to-night his visit to his landlord seemed to have brought things to a crisis. Everything that was said and done served only make matters worse, and at last he became so insupportable that one by one they all took refuge in the cheese-room under some pretence or other. The cheese was kept in the "Bower-room"—the apartment of ceremony at Stone Edge—which in its time had evidently been beautifully fitted up: the oak panelling still remained on the walls, and a great projecting chimney-piece with coats of

arms and twisted monograms supported by griffins, and "Lux tua vita mea" engraved round a rude emblematic picture in the centre, set round with rays of the sun, and a man standing beneath it in point of art much like the forked radishes in *Quarles' Emblems*. Not a particle of furniture remained in the room. An old pillion lay in one corner, on which Cassie's mother used to ride behind her husband to Youlcliffe in happier days (Lydia had never reached such a pitch of dignity, or even desired it), while the floor was strewed with cheeses in different stages of perfection.

Lydia stood close up to the window, trying to catch the last gleams of the fading light on the great blue stocking which she was mending, while Cassie sat near her on a low cricket (a three-legged stool), which she had brought in with her, and repeated sadly what German had told her, pondering grievously over his words.

The secluded home in which she dwelt gave her so little clue to the circumstances in which Roland's life was passed, that her imagination almost refused to follow him among the perils of deep waters in which he seemed to her to be engulfed. Right and wrong might be quite different in the great world, as

she thought it, in which he lived, as she put it modestly to herself.

"Seems as if p'r'aps they mid ha' a different pennyworth nor ourn down i' th' town," she explained; "like as they has for pot-herbs and cotton-thread. What's worth a deal to us they think nowt on, and what they'll pay money for is like weeds up here."

A woman is hard driven before she will allow even to herself that her "friend" can be in the wrong. She will far rather accuse herself and her own expectations as unreasonable.

"Nay, dearie," answered Lydia, "I canna think that. Right's right and wrong's wrong anywheres and anyhow, I tak' it. There's them letters and things upo' th' chimbley. When the auld Squire Tracey, as yer feyther talks sa mich about, were here t'other year, he read out and 'splained what they was. I canna well mind the words, but the meanin' was as how God's light were to shine in our hearts for 'um to see plain, like as the sun on one's path to walk right; and 'twould nivir do an the light shined crooked and telled one man one way and another different. It mid be a' right as Roland should wait for father's leave, but if it's as they says at

Youlcliffe, I tak' it he should mind and be clean off wi' thee, dearie, afore he's on wi' another lass. That's what I should say to German an he were so minded."

She smiled sorrowfully at the boy, who (fortunately for himself) had not yet reached the age of love troubles. He had followed them into their retreat, and now sat down on the floor near them, with his back against the wall and his arms round his knees. He did not add much, however, to the enlivening of the company, for he fell asleep almost immediately. The women went on talking in a low voice.

"And how iver am I to know what he's thinkin' of now my aunt's dead as could ha' axed me down to Youlcliffe? I've got such an ache in my heart wi' niver hearin' a word," said the poor girl, leaning her head against Lydia, who put down her stocking and stroked her shining hair in silence, as she revolved all sorts of combinations for their meeting in her head.

"And then it's so far for him to get here," Cassie went on. "It's like as if I were the cock upo' th' top o' Youlcliffe steeple. I mid a'most as well be there or i' th' moon for seein' or hearin' owt about any one."

"Sure thy uncle will be main glad to have thee, my darlin', afore long; and thy father canna well refuse him, and them so kind about thy portion. We'll send in German happen in a bit to see what's stirrin'."

The lad woke up suddenly at the sound of his name.

"I think as I'd be a'most as well abed. I'm as weary wi' my out as if I'd been shearing corn a' day. I mun go back to father, though. I havena telled him yet what uncle Nathan bid me. I'd mebbe best do it at oncst now, though he's uncommon queer to-night. I canna think what's took him. It mun be summat as squire have a said."

The old man sat alone in the kitchen in sullen, moody misery. It was a pathetic sight, all the more because his isolation in his distress (whatever it might be) was the doing of his own temper. Man seems to think it absolves him from the burden of his pity to his fellow, to say it was his own fault, as if it did not aggravate the wretchedness tenfold.

German stood at the door looking in at the dismal picture. He was much afraid of rousing the sleeping lion, but it was better to have it over; there was

nothing to be gained by delay, and at ast he walked straight up to his father, and delivered Nathan's message in the fewest possible words. To his surprise, Ashford made no observation whatever upon it. He simply lifted up his bloodshot eyes and great overhanging eyebrows and fixed them on his son. "Say that again, lad," he said, sternly. German repeated the words. His father listened intently, and then rose and went off to bed in silence without an additional syllable.

All night, however, his mutterings kept his poor wife awake, bursting out sometimes into a rage of words. "I wunnot go, I tell 'ee. I've more right nor he; puttin' my own intil the land for so many year!"

The next morning the trouble came out. "Cass," he said, as she looked in from the dairy, "I want to speak to ye. Stop the noise o' that wheel d'reckly; I tell ye it'll drive me cracked," he added, turning to his wife, who was spinning. "Hear, both on ye. Th' auld squire" (with an oath) "have a told me I shanna keep the farm arter Lady-day. I that have a been on the land longer nor he, and am a better man nor he, ten times over."

"But why, father?" said Cassie, in a low voice. "He wouldn't do it not for nothing."

"I've a bin a bit behindhand i' th' rent now this many year. I've never got over that time wi' bad harvest as Joshuay choused me, and we've a had two bad year sin', ye know. And now we mun go, bag and baggage, out i' th' wide world, unless you give me that sixty-eight pound, Cass. By right it were yer mother's, and I ought to ha' had it afore. I'll pay ye the interest all right, and I'll gie my consent for yer marrin' o' that fool, the son o' th' knave, sin yer uncle Nathan says he wunna let yer hae the money without, if so be ye choose it. If he'll take ye wi' nothing," he added with a fierce grin; "for it's my opinion he's only lookin' arter yer brass."

"He know'd nought about it when he ast her," said Lyddy stoutly, treading the wheel of her spinning mechanically as she spoke.

"Nay but he know'd Sally Broom's niece weren't likely not to come in for summat good out o' th' pot. It ought to ha' been her mother's, and it's mine by rights," he went on repeating violently, as if to mask his own deed to himself.

"But it's Cassie's now, and she ought to hae it for her housekeeping when she marries," said Lydia, boldly.

Old Ashford glared on her angrily.

"Ye shall hae the money, father, whether or no," put in Cassie, gently. "I'll risk Roland takin' o' me."

To accept a favour gratefully and gracefully is a more difficult thing than people fancy. It is to be hoped that it will be taught together with all other good things in our new and perfect system of education. To receive an obligation heartily requires humility and generosity both. Old Ashford was neither grateful nor graceful, neither humble nor generous, and a grunt was his only reception of his daughter's gift, though he knew and she knew, and he knew that she knew, that she would never see the money again.

"Ye mun go over, German, and see what's come o' Roland. Surely he'll be back by now, and yer father canna fault ye after what he's said but now," said Lydia, as they left the room, moved by the trembling of Cassie's lips, though no sound came from them. "'T would be poor work for thee to wed wi' one as had his eyes on thy pocket instead of upon thee, dearie; but when all's said, 'tis nowt but folks' talk as we've a heerd till now about un. We dunna know a bit what he'd say for hissen, poor lad."

"Anyhow, no one can't say he's lookin' after his world's goods an he comes up to me now," said Cassie determinedly, though her lips were very white.

German was sometimes now sent by his father, as his bones grew stiffer, to do his business, and he made his way over to Youlcliffe as soon as he could, with the best desire to do his sister's pleasure. He rode boldly up to Joshua's house in the market-place, and hammered for some time at the closed door, but he had been late in starting, and although he heard that Roland had returned from his journey to York he somehow could not hit upon him. In answer to his inquiries Roland was always "on'y just gone past," or "he's mebbe turned the corner, he were here a minit back." Old Nathan was also absent, and there was no one with whom he dared leave a message. Altogether his mission was a failure. He had done his best, however, so that it was mortifying to see Cassie shrugging her shoulders and twisting her hands together, though she did not say a word, and even the implied blame of Lydia's reiterated questions was trying. "What, ye couldn't find 'im anywhere i' th' town? nor yer uncle neither,—and ye couldn't hear nowt about where he were gone to?"

"Thae women allus think they could ha' done it handier themselves," he muttered to himself, "and it's very aggravating, it is, to a chap!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ONE-EYED HOUSE.

Meet never. Ah, much more as they,
Who take one street's two sides, and say
Hard parting words, but walk one way,
* * * * * *
Ah joy! when with the closing street
Forgivingly at last they greet.—A. H. Clough.

A day or two after old Bessie's funeral Roland returned to Youlcliffe. He had been working his heart out trying to sound and set right that bottomless pit (to an honest man) his father's affairs; and he found on his return, after little more than three weeks, that his dear old friend was gone, and he had not even been present to pay her the last respect. He now felt sure that his father had purposely sent him on a fool's errand while Cassie was with her aunt, and he resented doubly the being treated as a child, kept from home under false pretences, taught to believe that he was doing his father a service when he was only helping to break his own heart. He was more

angry and hurt than Joshua could have conceived possible, and the annoyance did not go off. What might not Cassie think of his absence, of his having allowed himself to be kept away at such a time?

He went down to make his peace with old Nathan, whom he found sitting dismally by the fire. As he looked ruefully at the vacant chair on the other side, he seemed ten years older.

"Nobody can't tell how bare and lonesome it is," said he, "now she be gone. I've got a sorrow down my back-bone wi' thinking o' her." Then after a long pause: "I want Bessie, I want my wife!" said he with a loud and bitter cry. "What iver will I do wi'out her!"

"You'll mebbe overget it, Master Nathan, after a bit. She were a well-livin' 'ooman, yer know, and for sure she's gone to glory, and all happy and comfortable by now," observed Roland, with the best intentions towards consolation.

"Ah, lad, you see it ain't you as have a lost her, it's easy talkin';—the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and it's him as wears the shoe as is hurted by it. It's all day long and every day as I misses her; and then ye comes and tells me as she's gone to glory all happy and comfortable up there i' th'

clouds! I'm sure she ain't," said the old man with great energy. "I'm sure as how she's a thinkin', 'What's my old man a doin' wi'out me? and how's he a getting on all his lone?' and that'll fret her and worrit her; and 'tain't reasonable to tell me she've a forgotten a' about me, as she were allus fettlin' for and bustlin' about and humouring, any more than I has about her. That's what I think," ended Nathan, passing the back of his hard horny hand over his own wrinkled face, as a solitary tear, more pathetic than a whole bucketful from younger eyes, rolled slowly down his cheek.

Roland was silent; and there are cases when silence is the best speech and the truest consolation: there are deeper and more eloquent expressions of feeling than any that words can give. Nathan was soon placated by it.

"Why wast thou not at the burying, lad?" he said kindly, after a bit. "My Bessie thowt a deal about thee. Thee shouldst ha' made a shift to get back for't."

"'T weren't by my own will, Master Nathan. My feyther 'd a sent me after no end o' cattle and debts and coils and things t'other side York; and he somehow kep' it from me as he'd heerd she were ill that day

afore I went away. I niver know'd nowt till I come home."

"'T were just Joshuay all over," answered the old man. "It's a kittle thing for to deal wi' such as he. I'd a took it into my head as it were along o' some sweetheart thou'st a found i' those parts, thou wast biding such a time away; thy father went on telling sa mich about Mitchell's daughter. I wish as I'd a know'd thou wast a' right, I'd a made more o' a struggle for thee along o' Cassie's portion. I've a set it down now in her name. But I'd no power for to bind Ashford; and 'twill hardly help thee wi' him, he'll be so cockey now, whativer it may do wi' thy feyther. You've got your handful with them two, Roland. I were in too great a hurry mebbe to pay the money; but I couldn't abide as any one should say I kep' what weren't mine. My Bessie used allus for to say I took too much account o' what man could say o' me. Hur were a very wise 'ooman were my Bessie," said the old man, shaking his head sadly; "much wiser nor me as sets up for it sa mich."

Roland went moodily home to his father's house, which stood back in a corner of the irregular, uneven old market-place. The dwelling part was over a sort of low stable opening on to the cattle-sheds, which

had another entrance from the close behind: a deep, dark stone archway led into them, by which he could bring out his beasts to market when he wished. The three rooms which the father and son inhabited were only approached by an outside stone stair, making the house into a sort of fortalice, which no one could enter without notice; and this suited Joshua. There was an unused garret lighted by a large round unglazed lucarne in the tall gable, which looked like a great hollow eye. Two of the windows below had been walled up to save window-tax, as the rooms had a look-out behind; and altogether the place had a grim closed-up look, and went by the name of the "one-eyed house."

Joshua was standing upon his steps as his son came up.

"Well, Nathan have a kep' the money for 's life now, haven't he?" said he, eagerly, hardly leaving room for Roland to pass.

"He set it in Cassie's name at Jones's yesterday," answered his son, shortly, as he turned into the house, scarcely looking round.

Joshua started with a long whistle; it was so unlike what he would have done himself that he could hardly believe it even now, and went hastily

away. He began to think that he had outwitted himself. In his extreme dislike to the marriage he had determined in his own mind that Nathan would never allow the money to go away during his lifetime. His own affairs had reached such a pass that he would willingly have obtained such a sum as Cassie's dower even at the sacrifice of his own ill-will and temper, and now he had himself put his son out of the way of securing it! Moreover, he disliked the sort of armed peace of their intercourse: it deranged his selfishness, if not his heart, it made the house gloomy and uncomfortable, and he did not like being uncomfortable.

Having smoked the pipe of reflection in the little public he returned into the kitchen about an hour afterwards. Roland had fetched in water and coals, and done the various little household "jobs" as usual; for since his wife's death his father had resisted the entrance of any other woman inside his doors. "We do a deal better by ourselves," he always said whenever the subject came up; "I dunnot want any woman to come potterin' and dawdlin' and gossipin' about. Roland's very handy." And he did not spare his son.

The work out of doors had soon been finished;

there were but few cattle now in the sheds to look after. Some rude sort of cookery for his father's supper was going on, and Roland sat moodily with it over a pretence of fire, considering his woes. Even if Joshua gave his consent, Ashford, now that his daughter was an heiress, was less likely to allow the marriage than before in her poverty. Chewing the cud of his bitter thoughts, and ingeniously tormenting himself with all the possible chances against his love, he sat with his head in his hand, thinking sadly of his mother, of whom he had been extremely fond. "She wouldn't ha' let feyther serve me so," he said to himself. The poor woman had led a sad time of it with her husband: she was a "strivin', pious 'ooman," and a most tender mother to her only child; and as long as her life lasted, in spite of her baptismal heresies, so obnoxious to Joshua's strict orthodoxy,—who was very intolerant, as is often the case with people who believe little or nothing—her influence had done something to keep him straight. She had now, however, been dead three years, and Roland knew that the downward course was going on apace. His father's affairs began to weigh very heavily on his mind. Until the journey to York he had been kept almost entirely in the dark concerning them,

but he could now tell how serious they were. There was particularly a tangled skein concerning Jackman the horsedealer, which he could not unravel. Debts, bargains, "set-offs" and loans were all mixed together in Joshua's version of the affair in inextricable confusion. He had vainly tried to come to some arrangement with the fellow, and remembered particularly the unpleasant look on his face as he said,—"You may tell your father as I shall come over soon for a settlement with him. I won't go on not no longer o' this fashion."

"See thee, lad," said his father, coming up behind him suddenly and taking him gently by the shoulder. "Fair play's a jewel. Sin' thy mind is so set upo' this lass, if you choose to go in for her and ma' her lend me this money her aunt left her gin yer married, I'm game—tho' it's a poor creatur's daughter to wed wi.' Sammy Ellot's been here again outrageous for's brass, and I dunna know where to turn for some."

"What, refuse Cassie when she'd nought, and offer for her fleece like as if she were a sheep!" said Roland, fiercely, in a tone which he had never used to his father before. "I'm none so base!"

"Well, ye may please yersen—it's your matter

more nor mine. The business and a' will fall through an this goes on ; but I'm getting an old man, so p'r'aps it dunna sinnify. Why, I'd wed wi' the Devil's daughter if so be she'd money, and bide wi' the old folk an I were you, Roland, and wanted brass as we do now!" said his father, with a grin. And then, a little sorry to have shown his cards so plainly, he went on, "And ye was so sore set upo' the lass a while back, and thought no end o' her for a' the fine things under the sun when I were t'other way, and now when I'm come over, ye're so contrairy, like a woman as doesna know her own mind!"

He went out of the room as he spoke, and let the temptation work. It is a very good plan to treat concientious scruples as if they were mere marks of weakness and indecision : few can help being influenced more or less by the look which their deeds bear in the eyes of others.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DRUID'S STONES.

Alas ! how easily things go wrong,
A word too much or a frown too long,
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again.—MACDONALD.

FOR a few days Roland was firm against the idea: at the end of that time, however, he heard that German had been inquiring for him. He dared not go up to Stone Edge with his bad conscience about him, poor fellow. "She's a rich 'ooman now," he muttered; but he thought there would be no harm in lighting a fire on the rock. "Who knows whether she mightn't look out?" The first time nothing came of it, no one had seen his sign: the next night the wind blew out his fire; but the third time German, as he drove the cows home, saw the little pale blue column rising in the still evening air, and went and fetched his sister and lit the return fire. The original signal was suddenly trampled out, and German, as he watched it, pointed this out, and said, with some compunction for his doubts as to

Roland's good faith, "He sees ourn, lass; I shouldn't wonder if he'll be here afore long."

Restless and uneasy, Cassie hurried down to the house again to tell Lydia.

"Sit thee down, dear child. Even if he be coming, he canna be up at the Stones for this hour welly an he had wings."

"Dunna stop me, dear, I canna bide still: let me go up there and wait a bit; 't will do me good even he dunna come. I feel as if the room were stiflin' o' me." Lydia said no more, but followed her up to the summit.

It was not often that the winds were still on that exposed point, but this evening there was hardly a breath stirring, as the shadows gradually sank over the magnificent view at their feet. Folds of hill, deep clefts in the rock, open dales with the blue river tracing out its own course, and catching golden reflections on its windings here and there; beyond all, the purple moors, rich with a wonderful bloom like that of a plum, which stretched without a break, it was said, right on over the border into Scotland.

At the foot of the great dark stones which had seen such strange sights in their youth, grim, grey, and terrible in themselves and their recollections, sat

The Druid's Stones.

the two women, in perfect silence. Cassie had clasped her arms round her knees and laid her head upon them, till Lydia, in the dumb pain of seeing such self-concentration, lifted it up without speaking, and laid her own head there. The movement broke the spell of silent grief, and she burst into tears.

"Suppose it should be as father and they all says?" she sobbed. "One 'ud think if he'd cared he might ha' come back frae York or sent a' that time I were wi' aunt Bessie, and she dying; he mun ha' knowed I should be there."

Lydia soothed and petted her. "I'm hoping as he'll soon be here, my darlin', and once ye can see intil each other's eyes mebbe all will be plain." And then in terror lest old Ashford should miss them from their work and come out after them, she whispered, "I'll send German to thee," and went off in haste.

The shadows fell darker and darker as the afterglow departed, but a great bank of magnificent fleecy clouds, heaped in masses many thousand feet high and tinged with gorgeous sunset hues, moved in stately procession across the valley. The sun set, the earth grew dim, but their lofty eminences caught the rays long after the world was in shadow, till at

last their splendid tints died away into a hectic paleness like that of Mont Blanc himself when left by the sun's light.

It was so striking that Cassandra's attention was diverted, and she watched the death-like change as a sort of omen with a deep sigh, when behind her she heard a motion and turned suddenly—for "the Stones" had a bad name as an eerie place, though she was fearless of such things at that moment. It was only Roland, out of breath with his rush up the hill.

She sprang up and he seized both her hands, but somehow the thought of the mean bargain he was sent there to drive, threw a constraint over his manner which Cassandra saw immediately and felt keenly.

"I wanted to see yer—to tell yer"—she began, constrainedly too. "Have yer heard, Roland," she added, more naturally, "that my uncle have a paid me the sixty-eight pounds? and I wanted to say that th' ould squire will ha' his back-rents, and so feyther mun take it to pay him wi'. You know it were my mother's by right, and so he ought to ha' had it before," she repeated mechanically. "But he'll gie his consent, happen you'll take me without it," said the poor girl with a tearful smile.

"Oh, Cassie! and my father's sent me up to say I may marry thee an thou'lt lend *him* the money!" groaned Roland, leaving hold of her hands.

The poison of mistrust had entered into poor Cassie's soul, and she shivered within herself: "I mun let my own father hae what I hae got," she said aloud gravely.

Nature had endowed Cassandra with a most imperial presence, not at all matching the tender heart within, and as she turned away with her majestic manner, repeating, "There's no one else has a right to't," poor Roland's soul sank within him. He had no courage to explain that he knew he could not and ought not to leave his father. It was not so much that it was quite impossible for Joshua to get on at all without some one he could rely on to look after his affairs, and attend to the cattle and horses as they were bought and sold, but that deep in his heart was the conviction that the love of his son was the only tender point in the unscrupulous Joshua's character, and that it kept him from some evil things. Yet such a house could only be bearable to Cassie if she came with his father's full consent; he could not even think otherwise of asking her to live with them. All this trembled on

his lips, but found no expression: it sounded to him too bald and cold to put into words, even if he could have found any, for the inevitable sacrifice of her welfare to one so little worthy; there are so many things which explanations can never explain; and poor Cassie, after waiting a moment for him to say more —for the word which she had predetermined must vindicate him from her father's taunt—turned away with the outward self-control which her life of trial had taught her.

"Ye'r' not goin' to leave me so?" said poor Roland passionately. She turned irresolutely for a moment, and he seized her in his arms and kissed her hands, her shoulders, everything but her lips, fervently; but she drew herself away, when still he said no more, and moved quietly towards German, who was standing waiting for her by the rude stone-wall which fenced in the wild bit of moor-land where stood the Druid's temple, and went off silently into the grey evening.

"She haven't even looked round," said the poor fellow, flinging his arms over his head and turning headlong down the steep hill-side.

Cassandra went straight into the house with a fixed expression in her face which frightened Lydia's

anxious heart; but words there were none, and she seemed glad to occupy herself by obeying her father's impatient demands for bread-and-cheese and beer. Only once, as she and Lyddy met in the dark passage that led to the kitchen, she whispered in answer to a loving pressure of her hand,—

"His father sent him to chaffer for the money hissen."

"Not for hissen!"

Lydia's incredulous tone was balm to the poor girl's heart. Later, when each had retired to rest and all the house was still, Lydia crept quietly to the upper chamber where Cassie abode. She had thrown herself, half kneeling half sitting, on a low box at the foot of her little bed, her face hidden on her outstretched arms. Lydia knelt down by her in silence and put her arms round her waist.

"And that he should ha' cared for me only so long as he hoped I'd brass to gi'e him," she said with a quivering sob.

"I dunnot b'lieve it," answered Lyddy.

"Then why didn't he say he'd marr' me, pounds or no pounds?" replied poor Cassie, anxious to be contradicted.

"Dear heart, I weren't there, I canna speak to it.

Mebbe he canna manage other wi' that old rogue his father. But he'd surely not ha' come nigh thee now an it werena false about the Mitchell lass—and we wunna give up one as has a been good and true till now an we ha' more knowledge nor this. And now get to bed, my darlin'. I munna ha' thee sick." And before she left her she had seen her laid in her little white nest.

But in the middle of the night Lydia rose gently and went to see how her child fared. Her tall white figure looked so spirit-like, in the light which the late moon poured through the low window, that Cassie gave a little cry as she entered.

"Oh, Lyddy dear, I'd a been prayin' so hard that God A'mighty would make all straight and bring us thegether agin, that I'm sure it'll come to pass; it seemed to me as though I'd wrestled and won, and then I thought thee wast the angel happen come to tell me so. Dost thou not think we get what we pray for with all our hearts?"

Lydia's mild eyes were clouded, and as Cassie urged her again, she answered,—"Yes, I believe that God gives his blessing on all earnest prayer. Sleep, dearie—take thy rest now."

"What's come o' her sweetheart?" said the old

man surlily to his wife, the following morning, and as she hesitated for an answer, "Ain't it just as I said?" he went on triumphantly; "he wunna take her wi'out the money?"

"Joshuay says to his child as Cassie's feyther have a done to her," replied Lydia, roused to a sort of meek defiance: "'You shanna wed,' says he, 'an I dunnot get the portion mysen.'"

"And more shame for him, he's a rogue," answered Ashford; "the money's mine and I ought to ha' it; and not hissen noways."

All the next day Cassandra was apparently cheerful and relieved: she went about in the triumph of her belief: but the day after her spirit flagged again, and a restless depression came over her which struck deep into Lydia's heart. In the afternoon, as she sat before the never-ending heap of mending which she generally took on herself—as Cassie "never could abide" sitting still—the poor girl went in and out in a sort of aimless tidying of what was already spotless neatness, as if she could only keep her mind quiet by perpetual motion of her limbs. At last she came and leant over the back of Lydia's chair, so that she might not see the working of her face.

"Lyddy, you b'lieve in prayer?"

"Yes, dearie, or I should lay me down and die."

"Nay, I dunna mean that. I mean as how if we pray fervently we git what we ask," she repeated anxiously.

"Dear lass, t'other night when thee spok on't, my thoughts was like this skein—tangled, and I couldna speak what was in my heart. I think it's o' this wise: but we're poor creeturs to understan' Him as the heavens cannot contain. Mebbe thou didst na heed last Sabbath, i' th' churchyard, Farmer Jones, as is new churchwarden, said as how he'd put up parson to hae a prayer for fine weather—for, says he, 'My sister throwed it at me as they was a prayin' for it at Hassop, and I don't see but how we've as good a right as they has to a prayer.' And young Eliott he ups and says, 'Oh, they're prayin' at Hassop for fine weather, be they? that's because their hay's down. I was wi' my uncle at Toad-i'-th'-hole last Sabbath—'tain't a mile off t'other side the road—and they was a prayin' for rain, 'cos theirn's up, and they're such farmers for turmits. How's God A'mighty to serve 'em both, I wonder: rain one side road, shine t'other?' And I thought to myself that even He'd be rare put about to do this and not do it i' th' same place as 'twere. And that it were more like as how

He'd just gi'e 'um what was right for 'um, wi'out mindin' what they axed; that what they had to pray for was to be content either way. Seems to me wi' my own baby I'd ha' gi'en him what was right wi'out waiting to be axed, and if he prayed and cried ever so I wouldn't gi'e him what were wrong for him, and that he ought to trust me to do right by him. Dear heart, don't He know much better nor we what we want? 'His will, not mine,' said even the greatest. Suppose he gi'ed thee what thee wanted because thee axed, thou'st be 'sponsible as it were, not He. Would thou dare to take thy will so?"

Cassie was silent.

"I've tried it, my dearie, and found what stubble before the wind 'twere. I prayed God for another child—oh, Cassie, how I prayed, and the more I prayed the more miserable I grew; and one morning before light as I sat up in bed and wrestled like Jacob, I saw the words, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' writ up as in fire i' th' air (they'd been i' th' chapter I'd read last thing at night, but I didna mark them), and I knew my prayer were answered; but 'twere by the resting of my longing heart, the bendin' o' my will to His, not His to mine."

The girl looked down on the pale upturned face

and knew that these were no words, but the experience of one purified by fire of affliction; the face was rapt like a saint's. "But then I'm so much older than thee," she added, with a sad smile.

And Cassie seized her in one of her impulsive passionate embraces and went off without a word. It was difficult indeed to believe that there was only three years' difference between the two: the one with all the overflowing life, the impulse, and rich hopes and imaginations of youth; the other with every wish and thought chastened by sorrow and under strict control. But the greatest contrasts often make the strictest friendships, so long as one is as it were the complement of the other.

Cassie was quieter and better next day, and went about her cheese-making—no doubt cheese is a great help when one is crossed in love. It is much more so, for instance, than lounging in an arm-chair with some ugly worsted-work, and then taking "an airing" in a carriage; but still, though this was a consolation in which old Ashford was not likely to stint her, the breaking of her love fell heavy on poor Cassie's bright and sunny nature. In youth one thinks that no such misfortune has ever happened to any other human being before, and it therefore seems strange

to be marked out for peculiar suffering. Later in life one realizes the woes of others in a wider range of sympathy, and the personal grief, though no less painful, seems less bitter as a drop in the vast ocean of man's suffering. She wandered often up to the great grave old stones, as if she could collect there the lost pieces of her broken happiness. The wind was sharp and the cold nipping, as the winter drew on, but she seemed to find a sort of comfort there.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARKET-DAY AT YOULCLIFFE.

That light ye see is burning in my hall ;
How far that little candle throws his beams !
Merchant of Venice.

OLD Nathan was so indignant when he heard what Cassie had done that he sent her word by Nanny that he would not let her come near his house. "She shouldna ha' had the money to waste un so, an I could stop it," said he. "What's the use o' thrift I'd like to know? And to ha' a' them good pounds as me and Bessie have a spared these long years just flung away like as if they was dirt, along o' Ashford's muddlin' ways, it's enough to make one mad. They might all one hae been throwed into the bury-hole for a' the good they'll do him too. A fool and his money's soon parted."

Indeed the universal disapprobation was so great, that it seemed as if the poor girl had committed some great fault in giving up every halfpenny she had in the world and her hopes of happiness with

it; and Ashford was more intolerably cross even than usual, when she came down with him to sign the paper necessary for her father to get the money. But gratitude is a capricious instinct—which must not be overladen, or, like the camel, it will refuse to move at all. If you give up your life or your fortune, ten to one the burden is too heavy, and its reply is poor and grudging, while a handful of flowers or a bunch of grapes will produce an extravagant amount of thankfulness. Wordsworth indeed declares that "the gratitude of man has oftener left him mourning" than its reverse. But people are grateful in proportion to the pleasure they receive; not according to the value of the gift or the sacrifice to the giver. It is as in the great scheme of the world: mistake, failure are punished quite irrespective of "good intentions." The universe has no time for good intentions.

So though poor Cassie was giving up her all, old Ashford knew that it was pouring water into a sieve, and did not feel in the least grateful. Only in her case she did it with her eyes open, quite simply, as the only thing possible, and expected neither gratitude for herself nor much good for him.

Her father had taken her down to Youlcliffe on

a pillion behind him. "That's how yer mother used to go afore ye," said the old man. He was not quite sure himself, however, whether this mode of progression was in order to do her honour, or to ensure her safe return without any dangerous meetings. Let him have the benefit of the doubt. The old mare objected, however, so much to the double burden, and went so slowly, that by the time they reached the beginning of the lone moor it fell dark. "Ye mun walk, Cass, while I lead the mare," said Ashford. As she stumbled along the deep ruts of the track across the dark and desolate moor, she saw the little glimmer, like a glowworm, of the candle which Lydia had set high up in the front window of the old Hall to help to guide them on their road home. It shone steadily, though faintly, on their dreary way.

"There ain't as much hope in my love as 'ud make the light of yon candle," said the poor girl to herself; "but it ain't quite dead either. How far it do shine, for sure!" she added gratefully for the omen.

There was no communication whatever with Youlcliffe possible for either Cassie or German during the next two or three months. Ashford's rheumatism was better, and he insisted on going there him-

self whenever there was anything necessary to be done.

The time for paying his rent came on only too quickly for the old farmer. It always took place just after market-day, for the convenience of many of the squire's tenants, and German drove down some sheep and a calf to Youlcliffe early in the morning, the sale of which was to make up the rent along with poor Cassie's money.

It was a stormy black day, with gusts of sleet and drizzle at intervals which promised to become worse—cold, dark, and disagreeable as was Ashford's temper that morning. He rode down himself, and sent his son home as soon as the cattle were safe in the market.

Everything seemed to go wrong with him: when he went up to receive the money belonging to Cassie, the lawyer through whose hands it passed greeted him with, "So you're taking your daughter's portion, I hear?" As he came out of the door, thrusting the notes into his pocket and swearing terribly, he almost ran against the hated Joshua—who, however, turned quickly up an alley, as if to get out of his way; and Ashford went back to the narrow irregular old grey market-place, where at that moment a great

brown mass of cattle, sheep, and pigs were swaying and surging hither and thither, lowing and bleating and screeching in every variety of sound of fright and distress, to which no one paid the smallest heed.

In the midst rose the tall mutilated stone cross, set on its high flight of steps. The unobjectionable shaft was all that was left: the arms had been broken off by pious Puritans, apparently that their protest against all the cruelty and suffering that was going on below might not be seen. The gospel of mercy to beasts has hardly yet been preached. The Church of Rome did her best for them, most unsuccessfully, by giving them a saint all to themselves to look after them, and appointing a day for their blessing at Rome,—with what effect the Catholic cruelties of Spain and Naples show. In England the Puritans almost took the other tack: the infliction of pain was never wrong in their eyes; and, as Lord Macaulay says, they objected to bull-baiting, not because it gave pain to the beasts, but because it gave pleasure to the men. We have been no better than our neighbours, and it is curious how entirely we have forgotten that cock-fighting and bull-baiting lasted well into this century. But however this may be,

market-day at Youlcliffe was not a pleasant sight. A great drove had come in from Scotland, which added to the confusion and press. From time immemorial they had always been driven across the moors, camping out every night without paying anything: but the cultivated land had gradually encroached on the waste; and the drover, in a loud, harsh, Scotch accent, was declaiming on his wrongs,—how, where last year was open heather, he had found stone-walls enclosing fields, and, horror of horrors, had had to pay a pike! He evidently thought the ruin of a country which enclosed its moors must be near at hand.

"It's a real shame," he shouted, "a spoilin' o' puir honest bodies ganging o' their lawfu' traffic."

"I dunna see why we should spend our brass a makin' rowads for you to mar un, and kip yourn in your pockets," said a shrewd local. There was much to be said on both sides in such a cause.

The bystanders were listening to the dispute. There was a greater abundance than usual of stock of all kinds, and Ashford did not get the attention he thought he ought or the price he expected for his sheep.

"Why, Joshua Stracey have a sold two in the

last hour, and got more nor *that*," said an ill-looking fellow, a sort of horsedealer, who stood by.

"He cheated me, and he's like to ha' cheated you," shouted the old man.

"That mayna be althegether the same thing," said the fellow, tauntingly. "Ye may hoodwink the craw, but hardly the kestrel; but it werena me that bought un."

Ashford threw him an angry answer, and went on.

But the negotiations for the calf were quite as stormy with the next purchaser. They were only haggling over a few shillings, but the stranger stood by, and managed to throw in a dash of bitterness which delayed them when they were nearly agreed, and the quarrel grew more and more furious.

"Well, come in and let's ha' a glass of yale, and ha' done wi' it," said the buyer, at last wearied out. "It's getting quite late; it's nigh on four o'clock, and coming on for stormy."

The public, with its sanded floor and great old open fire-place, looked very tempting, though a wet circle of rain stood round every new-comer. The fire-light shone on the pewter pots and gleamed on the rows of plates on the dresser, and there was a fiddle going at intervals: an unorthodox innovation,

over which Nathan, who had formerly been the owner, shook his head severely whenever he heard it mentioned. "It warn't nivir so in my day, and comes to no good," said he.

Within this charmed circle the company sat, "o'er all the ills of life victorious;" and the dark night and cold gusts of rain without seemed to grow less and less pleasant to face as the time went on.

Moreover the dear delights of quarrelling, for those who enjoy that exercise like old Ashford, are not easily foregone. Even the mollifying effects of ale and the money for the calf did not put an end to it. The horsedealer would not let Ashford alone, and the old farmer went on doggedly drinking glass for glass and answering taunt by taunt.

"I'll bet ye anything ye please you'll not sell that lot o' heifers for nothing like what ye give for 'um."

"And what business is that o' yourn, I'd like to know? they're as good beasts as iver was bred, and 'll fetch their money anywhere."

"Arena ye coming, Ashford? ye mun make haste; it's coming on to blow, and 'twill be a dark night," said Buxton, who belonged to the farm nearest Stone Edge, and had arranged to ride back with him and a

third farmer. "Three's better nor one along that lonesome road; you'd best come home wi' me and Antony."

"I'm old enough to know what's best mysen," said Ashford, on whom the ale began to tell.

The horsedealer went on baiting him. "And how much did ye get for the dun cow? Twenty pund? No, nor the half on it: them cows here is of a very poor breed."

"I canna wait any longer, Ashford," said the farmer; "we mun be going."

"I'm comin' arter ye; get along," said he angrily, and by this time half-tipsy. "I know well enough what I'm about. Ye won't catch old Ashford tripping," he added with drunken pride. "I'll catch ye up afore ye're at the Windy Gap," and he returned to his quarrel and his beer.

At this moment Joshua looked in at the door and asked for a glass of gin—then, pointing with his thumb at Ashford, who sat with his back to the door, made signs that he would return. "There's been rowing enough to-night," he said in a low voice; "a body canna speak wi' him i' the road. I'll come back for 't when he's flitted."

In a few minutes the horsedealer got up and went

out to fetch his horse, saying, "The cob will ha' hard work to get to Hawkesly; 'twill be an awful night for man and beast."

And old Ashford suddenly seemed to bethink himself how the short twilight was closing in, that he had a large sum of money about him, and six miles of lonely road before him. It seemed to sober him at once. Buxton had not been gone above a quarter of an hour, when he rose and hurried to the stable for his horse. He was a long time fumbling over it, however. The bridle was mislaid; he swore at the ostler, but it was several minutes before it could be found, and nearly dark before he started; and then he waited a few minutes more for a man who was going part of the same way: the road, however, forked off a mile or so from the town—his companion took the other turn, and he rode on alone.

"I were the biggest fool i' th' market, muttered Ashford to himself, as he felt for the roll of notes in one breast-pocket and the bag of sovereigns in the other, and rode on in the increasing darkness. The sleet was driving in his face and the wind rising—the old mare going slower as the weather grew worse and he urged her more.

"I shanna catch them up nohow. How could I

be such an ass ?" thought he. He was still a strong man, and his cudgel was heavy, but his bones were growing stiff, as he knew. The old mare went sliding on through the thick mud and the streams which poured down the road, and at one place came to a dead halt. He listened, and thought he heard horses' steps ahead, and pressed on, hoping it might be Buxton, but his progress was slow.

He had reached a dark part of the road, where the trees, leafless though they were, shut out even the little that remained of the dim evening light. The mare stumbled over a big stone, which must have been placed there on purpose, in the bed of a watercourse which crossed the road, and over which the torrent was rising. Before he recovered himself he had received a violent blow from behind on the back of his head. He turned stoutly to defend himself, but his foot had been jolted out of the stirrup with the stumble. A second blow disabled his arm; and in another minute he was dragged off his horse, while the cudgel was descending a third time.

CHAPTER XVII.

WATCHING ON A WINTER'S NIGHT.

He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro' thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.
The Two Voices.

"MASTER BUXTON'S been back this two hours and more," said German, coming into the kitchen at Stone Edge dripping wet from the farm below, where his father had told him to meet him for company across the lone moor.

"He says feyther were a sitting drinking when he come away and couldn't be got off nohow. He kep' on saying he'd be arter 'um in no time."

The women looked aghast.

"Thee'st been o' thy legs a' day, German—thou'st like to be drowned, my lad," said Lydia, sadly. "Dost thee think thee couldst go to th' Mill and meet un? An he's in liquor he'll ne'er get back safe, wi' all that money too. Seek to keep him there an thee canst, and come on i' th' morning.

Tak' my cloak about thee, and a sup o' elder wine."

The lad took a lantern and the cape, and went off on his doleful quest. When he reached the valley, however, no one had seen or heard of Ashford at the few houses near the road, and it was nearly ten o'clock when he reached the toll-bar.

"Nay, I've seen none of thy feyther, more shame for him. Come in and dry thysen," said the man. "Thou canstna miss him here. Why, thee'lt melt away to nothing, thee'rt so wet!"

German looked wistfully at the warm fire within —he had been on his feet ever since five that morning. He pulled off his wet blouse and trousers, which he hung up before the fire, and then lay down on the settle while they dried. In a moment he was fast asleep.

Meanwhile the two women watched and waited. The ruddy light of the fire played over the wide old kitchen, touching a bright point here and there, and making a Rembrandt picture with all the interest collected into the warm brilliancy of the centre, and black depths and dancing shadows gathering mysteriously in the further corners. They sat and span, and the whirring of the wheels was all the sound

that was heard in the house. It is surprising how few candles are used in farmhouses and cottages: unless there is needle-work to be done, fire-light serves in winter, and in summer they go to rest and rise with the sun. The wind rose as the night went on and the fire sank. At last even the spinning stopped, and Lydia and Cassandra sat on in the gloom. But few words were exchanged between them; death and misery, and care and ruin, were hanging over them by the turning of a hair, and they were bracing themselves, each in her different way, to meet them.

"Dear heart o' me, it's a fierce night both for man and beast," said Lydia at last. "I wonder where German's got to by now a struggling through the mire."

"I'd reether be him," answered Cassie with a sigh; "it's harder work to ha' to sit still and hear the wild winds shoutin' round us o' this fashion."

"The storm is tremenduous to-night, surely. We mun look the candle ain't blowed out towards the moor," observed Lydia. She had put up her little lighthouse as usual in the front room, sheltering it carefully from the blasts, which were almost as violent inside the house as without, by a fortification

of pans and jugs, and its welfare required from time to time looking after. The great fear that underlay everything in their thoughts was put into words by neither of them. The winter's wind howled and sighed, and moaned and struggled round the house with a sort of fitful angry vehemence. A storm easily became almost a whirlwind on that exposed spot, and shook and rattled the unshuttered casements till it seemed as if they would have been driven in. There seemed to the women to be wailing cries sometimes in the howling of the blast, which shook the door and the windows with the sort of pitiful fierce longing to get in, which makes it seem almost like a personal presence. It is an eerie thing to sit in the dark in a lonely house on such a night, when all the spirits and ghosts and powers of the air of early belief seem to be natural :

> Those demons that are found
> In fire, air, flood, and under ground

appeared to be all abroad. We have nearly forgotten the awe which Nature inspired when man struggled weak and alone with her mighty powers, and was generally worsted as it seems, in the days of cave and lake dwellers, and makers of flint weapons. We judge of her, beaten, cabined, and confined, as we see

her and use her in cities and civilized places, and we have lost the terror of her which formed so large a part of the religions of old.

"Didst thou not hear the dog howling a while back?" said Cassie, anxiously, in a lull of the wind. "They say as that means a death for summun as is not far off; and there's the boggat thee knowest at the turning nigh th' auld mill, where the man was drownded, as long Tim was a tellin' of me he see'd a while back; and Gabriel's * hounds was heard t'other night i' th' air over the Dumble, as comes when folk is nigh to death," added the girl, beginning to pile up one terror on another in her restless misery.

"I dunna think as I should much mind meeting them as is gone," answered Lydia, gently; "and some on 'em I'd give a deal to see again, in the flesh or out on it. They canna do us any hurt as I can see."

"But them ill things as is mebbe about now i' th' wind?" whispered poor Cassie, in an awestruck voice.

* "Gabriel" is condemned to follow his hounds at night, high in the upper air, till doomsday, for having hunted on Sunday. It is the "Wilde Jagd" of the Hartz mountains. Low unbelief suggests that the flocks of wild swans fly sometimes so high that their very peculiar cry is heard when they themselves are out of sight.

"Dearie, I tak' it God A'mighty's more cleverable and strong nor all the devils put togither: they're but a poor lot to strive again the great God as rules the world, and I'm not afraid, nayther for them we loves nor for oursen. Wilt thou not get thee to bed, dear child? I think the storm's going down, and thee'lt be wored out wi' watching," said Lydia, as the clock struck twelve.

"What, and leave thee in the dreary night thy lane!"

"Then lie down o' th' settle, dearie." And she began to prepare a place for her; but almost before she could look round, Cassie had dragged down pillows and blankets for both from upstairs. They lay in silence for some time.

"How strange 'tis, that some folks' lives is just wait, wait, wait, and it's so weary," said Cassie, with a sort of impatient sigh. "An I were in my grave I couldn't be farther off hearing o' Roland. I mid a'most as well be dead; I'm a no good to nobody," she ended, drearily.

"How iver canst thee talk o' that fashion? what dost thee think I should do wi'out thee?" answered Lydia, sadly.

The girl drew her closer to her side on the

"sofee" without speaking. "To-night's the very pattern o' my life; I'm like a sheep caught in the thicket, as canna stir ony way," she said at last.

Lydia had never heard of Milton, but her answer was much the same as if she had known him by heart. "The Lord has different ways of serving Him, dear heart; 'tis sometimes the hardest work He gives us for to be still. Please God 'tain't for allus wi' thee; there comes a stormy time and sunshine to all. 'Lo, the winter has ceased, the rain is over and gone,' says the wise Solomon in his song; and 'tis true both for man and weather. Sure the wind is lulling even now."

She got up as she spoke and looked out into the night: the storm seemed to have blown itself away, and the moon was shining high in the heavens, with nothing near her but masses of white fleecy cloud careering at a great height from the ground in the keen north wind which had risen.

"The winds and rain pass over our life, but the moon and stars are shining steady behind the clouds for a' that. An our feet are fixed on His rock we shanna be moved. 'Wait,' says the Psalm. But then it ain't waiting bare and cold like; doesna He put the comfort after it? Wait, I say, upon the

Lord," ended Lydia, solemnly. And then they lay down in each other's arms and slept for two or three hours, worn out by their long vigil of constant expectation, than which nothing is more trying.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT WAS FOUND UNDER THE TOR.

They bear of life the good and ill
As a plain fact, whose right and wrong
They question not, confiding still
That it shall last not overlong.
* * * And later
The mysteries of our life as given,
Leaving the time-worn soul to slake
Its thirst in an undoubted Heaven.

The Patience of the Poor.

"GATE!" shouted a carter before the closed toll-bar. The moon was nearly at the full, shining very brightly. German sprang up and huddled on his things. It was almost four o'clock; he could hardly believe that he had slept so long. "There's been a murder, they say, up th' dale; they'd a fun' a body lyin' in the road, and was a goin' for summat to bring it in," said the man. "But I daredna wait for to see un—I'd got coals for to fetch. I thought I mid be back though, an I made haste."

The lad gave a loud cry: he felt sure whose body it was.

"Why, what's come to the boy?" said the carter, as German set off at a run.

"It's his drunken feyther, he thinks, most like."

"What, is yon young German Ashford frae the lone moor? He mun hae his handful an they speak true on his feyther."

There was a sort of small hamlet gathered round a public-house a little further on, and the lad ran panting through. Early as it was, women's faces were looking out of the windows, and the boys were coming out like flies. Any excitement is pleasant in a village, and a murder best of all.

"They say 'tis just beyond the big Tor," they cried, as the boy slackened his pace to inquire.

He came up at length to the place, about a mile beyond. The great perpendicular rocks jutted out like fortress towers at a turn in the narrow valley, apparently blocking all further passage to the road. The moon was shining on the broad white face of the limestone "T'or," out of which grew a black yew from a rift near the top, and seemed to hang almost in mid air. The dale below lay in the deepest shadow, except where through a gap in the steep walls of rock the light shone on the stream—turbid and swollen with the late rains and flowing rapidly across the road

—and on the face of the murdered man as he lay close to the edge of the water, near the stone over which he had been thrown. The old mare had been found grazing not far off, and two men who had come up, after vainly trying to lift the dreary burden of her master upon her back, were putting him into a sort of barrow, which they had brought with them. "He ain't dead," said one of them, compassionately, as the boy pressed panting up.

"But that's pretty nigh all you can say. He'd take a pretty deal o' killing would old Ashford," said the other, without any intention of being unkind.

Meantime, German was striving to raise the head and chafe the hands.

"You'd best take un to the 'Miner's Arms,' my lad. The wimmen and the doctors mun tak' him in hand; ye canna do noething," said they kindly, and began to move. German looked round on the place. The marks of the struggle, if there had been one, were hidden in a sea of mud; there were a few spots of blood where the head had lain—nothing more was to be seen.

"I've a searched all round," said the man, in answer to his inquiring glance, "and canna find owt but the cudgel that must ha' smashed un's yead,

and this bit o' broken pipe. Is un yer father's?" said he, as the boy walked beside him leading the horse.

German shook his head. "He'd a long sight o' money wi' him as he were a bringing for's rent at the squire's; but I s'pose a' that's gone."

"Him as hit yon hole in un, wouldna ha' left the brass alone," said the man; "but you'd best look i' his pockets yersen." German did as he was bid, and the doleful little party moved on. Presently they were met by all the available boys in the place, and many of the men too.

"Won't one o' they chaps leave looking and go for the doctor?" said German, wrathfully, though in so low a voice that the men could hardly hear.

"Go off, young un, and tell Dr. Baily as there's been a man murdered; he'll be here fast enough."

Another little messenger was despatched to Stone Edge, but the late dull winter's dawn had risen before Lydia and Cassie could arrive, although they came down the hill as quickly as possible, bringing with them the little cart to take Ashford home; but the doctor would not allow him to be moved.

There was scarcely any help possible for him

however, now, either from the women or the doctors: he could neither move nor speak; the tough old frame was just alive, but that was all, and they could do nothing but sit by watching the fading life ebb slowly away in the little low dark bedroom of the "Miner's Arms."

"Poor feyther," repeated Cassie, as she leant against the post of the bed looking sadly on, while Lydia sat silently by the dying man, bathing the head according to the doctor's directions, with that sort of unutterable sadness which yet is very different from sorrow. The personal character of the man had, however, as it were, died with him, and nothing seemed to have remained but the relation to themselves. "It" was their father and her husband: all else had been wiped out by the pitying hand of death. German came restlessly in and out of the room, tormented by the ceaseless questionings and suppositions and surmises below-stairs, and yet feeling of no use in the chamber of death above.

"To be sure what a turn it giv me when first I heerd on it! Ye might ha' knocked me down wi' a straw," said the landlady—who looked like a man in petticoats, and whose portly person nearly filled the doorway as she looked in with kindly

intentions of help. "And ye can't do nothin', doctor says,—and all the money gone too, I hear? You'd a sore hantle wi' him bytimes an all tales be true; but for a' that it's a pity to see a man's yead drove in like a ox's. I'm a coming," she called out for the fifth time. The little public was doing "a middlin' tidy business," as she said, that day; liquor was at a premium, for curiosity is a thirsty passion, and the landlady's duties were thick upon her. But she found time continually to come up and administer appropriate consolations.

"Yer'll bury him decent and comf'able," said she another time. "I were like to hae died Janawary come a twelvemonth, and I were so low and bad I could ha' howled, and my master he ups and says so kind, 'Now don't ye take on, Betty; I'll do a' things handsome by ye. I'll bury ye wi' beef!"

In a few hours all was over.

The world must go on, however, whether life or death be on hand; cows must be milked and beasts fed. "We must be back to Stone Edge," said Lydia, with a sigh. "There's nobody but Tom i' charge, and he's but a poor leer-headed [empty] chap."

"German mun stop and bring the body up home arter the inquest. They say they'll get it done afore

night, else we shanna get him home at a'. There's more storms coming up, and the snow'll fall when the wind lulls," added Cassie.

"Sure it 'll be here afore morning; the wind's uncommon nipping," said the landlady, as the two women walked silently away.

It is more mournful on such occasions not to be able to regret. Not to grieve, not to suffer loss, was the real woe, as they wound their sad way home in the chill bleak winter's day, with a dull sort of nameless pain at their hearts.

The absence of complaint is very remarkable in the peasant class: they mostly take the heaviest shock quietly, as coming immediately "from the hand of God," and bear it quite simply as a plain fact whose right and wrong they do not question. Heaven seems very real and near to the best of them.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MIDNIGHT "FLITTING."

As when a soul laments, which has been blest,
Desiring what is mingled with past years;
The yearnings which can never be exprest
By sighs or groans or tears.—TENNYSON.

THE backs of all the houses on one side the single street of which Youlcliffe was composed opened upon lonely fields, and Joshua's was particularly well adapted to his wants. The one-eyed front stood at a corner of the grey old market-place, not too much overlooked, yet seeing everything. Alongside the dwelling-house opened the deep dark stone archway which led into a labyrinth of cattle-sheds and pens, beyond which lay a small croft for the use of his beasts, abutting on a blind lane which led to the high-road into Youlcliffe. Walls in this district are built to clear the fields of stone, and the stones had been so abundant here that a man passing along the path in the lane was completely concealed by the high walls. His comings and goings

were therefore almost as free as if he had lived in the open country, his beasts were brought in and let out behind the house at his pleasure and no one was much the wiser, while the wide gate under the archway was always kept locked. Through this back way in the drenching rain Joshua passed out on his "affairs" that evening, and through it he returned. He was alone in the house, for he had sent Roland away upon some pretext; he was wet through, and he changed everything, and went out again into the town. It was not yet above six o'clock. "A' that in such a little while," he went on saying to himself with a shudder—"such a little while!" He looked in at the public, got his gin, and inquired for the horsedealer. He went to the chemist's and bought a ha'porth of peppermint, as he said he had the colic, and then home, where he sat quaking—"with cold," as he told himself. When his son came in he went to bed, saying that he was ailing, which was perfectly true. Roland could not make him out at all. The next morning he came back in great agitation to the kitchen, where his father sat moodily stooping over the fire, half-dressed, his kneebreeches undone, his velveteen jacket unbuttoned.

"They say as Farmer Ashford were robbed last

night o' all that money as were Cassie's, and welly murdered too ; they say 'twere the horsedealer drinking wi' him as done it. I ha' been up to the turning i' th' road for to see the place ; but they'd ha' fetched him away afore daylight. There were his blood about still, though," he said, pityingly.

It was close to the place where he had asked Cassie to marry him ; but he kept this in his own heart.

"What, he's not dead?" said Joshua, looking up at his son for the first time. It seemed to take a weight off his mind. "I'd a heerd tell on it afore," he added, in great confusion.

A horrible dread flashed over Roland's mind. He suddenly remembered that he had heard a stranger's voice the day before quarrelling with his father among the cattle-sheds as he himself was going out of the house into the market-place with a beast which was to be sold ; he fancied that he knew the voice, but he could not at the moment recollect to whom it belonged, and a quarrel for Joshua on market-day was too common for it to interest him much. He now felt sure that the horsedealer Jackman had been there, and he remembered how his father had come to him hurriedly later in the day and sent him off on an errand concerning some cattle to a village

several miles off, without much apparent reason —evidently, he saw now, to get him out of the way. He turned off in his agony down into the yard: when he came back the kitchen was empty. Joshua had dressed himself and gone out into the town. He went straight to the centre of all news, the public. A group of men stood round the door discussing the murder.

"There were an ill-looking chap as were quarrelling wi' him best part of the arternoon," said one, "a strivin' to keep him late."

"It were that horsedealer as they said come from York; I never seen a worser. Then Ashford were so contrairy like," said another.

"I hadn't the speech o' him a' yesterday, nor for weeks back," said Joshua, which was quite true, and then he went home. He was a singularly active man for his age: he had been a celebrated morris-dancer, and famous for feats of strength and agility in his time, and boasted much of his powers; but now he seemed thoroughly worn out. Roland found him fumbling among the things on the dresser. "I want some tea," said he, "wi' my gin," and his son knew things must be very bad; his father took refuge in tea only as a last resource. As he

turned to the fire he let drop the teapot from his trembling hands, and it was broken by the fall. Joshua almost turned pale; it was a bad omen. "And it were yer mother's," he said, looking guiltily at Roland.

Later in the day he went out again and inquired anxiously after Ashford: he was dead, they thought, and had never spoken after he was found. Joshua returned to his house and sat on silently with his head on his hands by the fire; at last he gave involuntarily a sudden groan. Roused by it he looked aghast at Roland, who stood moodily by the window before a row of half-dead plants which had belonged to his mother and always reminded him of her, and which he had never allowed his father to throw away.

"I suppose you know we're ruined, lad?" he said, with an attempt to put his agitation on that head.

"Yes," said the young man, without looking up.

"Eliott, and Amat, and Buxton, all on 'm together—no man could stand it. I canna pay. I mun sell and go." Roland was silent. "I think we mun go to Liverpool—there's a many things I could do there wi' the cattle frae Ireland—or to th' Isle o' Man." Roland never stirred. "Ye'll go wi' me, boy?" said his father anxiously. "Ye wunna desert me?"

"No," said the poor fellow, in a choking voice, with a deep sigh—almost a sob.

It was strange to see how his father clung to him: it had always been the one soft place in Joshua's heart; there was a sort of womanly tenderness in Roland, which he inherited from his mother, after which his father yearned in his trouble with an exceeding longing.

That evening the coroner's inquest was held on Ashford's body. Joshua attended it, for the coroner was a friend of his, and he trusted to him not to make things more unpleasant than necessary. The few words he uttered only turned on what every one knew to be true, that the old farmer had been delayed by the horsedealer till his friends were all gone. Other evidence showed that the man had said he was going to Hawkesly, after which he had been seen leaving Youlcliffe by the other road. The bit of pipe was identified as his, by a drover who had noticed the carved bowl.

Lastly, the old woman at the turnpike farther up the valley bore witness that a man on a dark horse had thundered at the gate (her man was ill she said, and she went out to open it herself with a lantern). "She had no change for a shilling which he offered,

and he swore violently at her for the delay, and threw a silver 'token' at her with an oath: 'he could'nt wait no more,' he said, and rode on as the Devil sot behint him." The man to whom Ashford sold his calf remembered that a similar piece had been amongst the money which he had paid to the old farmer.

The evidence was all against the missing horseman, and so the verdict bore. But though all had gone off satisfactorily at the inquest, Joshua felt that strange looks were cast upon him. One man had heard him speaking to the stranger earlier in the day, another had "seen a back uncommon like yon ugly chap's" turning into the blind lane which led to Joshua's house. In former days, too, he was known to have boasted of his acquaintance with a horsedealer at York. No one seemed to care to be in his company; he felt under the shadow of a great fear, and hurried on measures for his bankruptcy, talking rather loudly of his losses and his miseries, till poor Roland once or twice went home and hid himself with shame. He had desired his son to keep their destination a profound secret, but Roland was determined in no case to be dependent on his father, and knew that in a strange place there was small chance of his obtaining work without a

reference. He watched, therefore, for Nathan, who was almost the only person whom he could trust: he felt ashamed to go near his house, where Martha Savage and her dreaded tongue were said to be staying; but at last one day he saw the old man in his close and went sadly up to meet him.

It was a cold, raw, comfortless day with a keen wind, and the whole valley looked more ugly in the grey atmosphere than one could have thought possible with such beautiful materials.

"I'm come to bid ye good-by, an ye'll shake hands wi' me, Master Nathan. Eh, do ye mind that day o' the great football fight," said the poor lad, looking sadly round. "What a time ago it seems, to be sure, and it a' comes so fresh to me up here." The old man shook his head sadly. "Is there ony place out a long way off where ye could help me for to get a livin'? I've heerd ye say as ye used one time to hae dealin's at Liverpool along o' Bessie's father as is gone. Ye know feyther's ruined and goin' away—he says he dunna know where. Would ye gi'e me a recommend an we go there, and say nowt? 'twould be no end o' kindness to one as wants it sore," said the poor fellow, sadly.

The old man looked straight into his eyes.

"I'll not tell on thee, poor lad, and I'd gi'e ye twenty recommends an 'twere for thysen; but wi' that drag round thy neck how can I certify to folk thou'st all right, boy? But," he went on after a pause, "I wunna see thee life-wrecked for that neither. There's an old Quaker man I knows there. I'll tell him thy father's uncommon shifty, let alone worse, but that thou'st as honest as the day, and then mebbe, wi' his eyes open, he may do summut for thee. And, Roland," added Nathan, gravely, "the Devil gives folk long leases betimes, but he tak's his own at the end. 'Better is little with the fear o' the Lord, than great treasure and troubles therewith;' but I doubt it ain't much riches as thy father'll win: it'll be the promise nayther o' this world nor the one after an he goes on o' this fashion. It's ill touching pitch and no to be defiled, or to shake hands wi' a chimbley-sweep and not dirty thysen; and it behoves thee to tak' double heed to thy ways."

The young man wrung his hand in silence.

"And ye'll mind, my lad," the old man ended affectionately, "as yer mother were a pious woman and one as loved ye dearly; and there were my Bessie as cared for ye a'most as thou'dst been her own; and it would grieve 'um both sorely and put 'um out—

ay, even where they're gone to—an ye took to bad ways."

"I'll do my best," said Roland, in a low voice, with a sigh.

"I'm thinkin' o' goin' away for a bit," said Nathan, after a pause. "'Tain't lively livin' here my lane, wi' nobody to fettle me and the cow; and my niece Martha she just worrits me to come to her to try. I've a had one cold atop of the other as I could hardly stir wi' the rheumatics, and she says I shall be a deal better in her house, as it's warmer."

"Hav' ye seen owt o' Cassie?" said Roland with an effort, noticing that he avoided speaking of her.

"She come down when her father were a dying to the 'Miner's Arms' for to see the last on him, but I didn't set eyes on her. I'd hurted my foot and couldn't get down. You'd best not think o' her, my lad, belike; what can there be atwixt her and thee now?" And so they parted.

The next night Joshua and his son made a "midnight flitting" through the back lane. There was a horse still left of the old man's former possessions and a rude little cart, in which they drove forth together into the wide world. All was still as Roland looked his last at his old home, still and cold; there

was little light but the reflection from the snow, and familiar objects look doubly strange under the cover of starlight and mantle of white snow. He looked up at the hills and down the valley towards Stone Edge with a cold grip at his heart as the old man drove away as rapidly as the horse would go, with a glance over his shoulder as they went, "fearing though no man pursued." The crunching of the snow under their wheels was all the sound they heard; still and cold, on into the dreary night they drove. "Shall I never see her again?" Roland moaned in his heart, but he did not utter a word.

CHAPTER XX.

A FUNERAL FEAST IN THE SNOW.

Men's evil manners live in brass, their virtues we write in water.

GERMAN had remained at the little public till the inquest was over, to give evidence and bring home the body afterwards to Stone Edge. The night was falling and the snow had begun, as wet and weary he toiled up the long rough moorland road with his dismal charge.

"Did aught come out as to who could ha' done such a thing?" said Cassie, anxiously, as he came into the house at Stone Edge.

"It must ha' been summun as knowed he'd so much money about un," observed Lydia, sadly.

"They all knowed that pretty much i' th' market," said the lad, a little impatiently; "but they made it out upo' th' inquest it were a horse-dealer man as were wrangling wi' him best part o' th' arternoon."

"'Tain't nobody in these parts as would go for to

do such a wicked thing, I'm main sure o' that," put in Cassie, warmly.

"There were a deal o' talk about Joshua, however, for a' that," answered her brother, reluctantly; "but the Crowner he says says he, 'When ye hae got a man, a foreigner like, ready to yer hand as 'twere for th' murder, what for would ye go worriting and winnowing for to drag another man in as is o' the countryside?'"

The women looked thunderstruck—no one spoke for a few minutes—Lydia glanced silently at Cassie's white face, and they then went about their dreary tasks without a word.

"Ye mun be bidding the folk for the buryin', and gettin' in a' things for to be ready, German," said Lydia, with a sigh, later in the evening. "We ordered flour at the miller's as we came up the moor. I doubt it'll tak' a score to fulfil* un all; and we mun be thinking o' the burial-buns to-morrow."

The preparations for a funeral feast in the hills are a serious matter, demanding much thought and labour, which kept both the women for the next few days from dwelling on the past. "Yer feyther settled his bearers, and the beer, and the spirits,

* "Fulfil"—in this sense used in the Communion Service.

and all, and runned over them scores and scores o' times to me," said Lydia. "And he left the money for it another time (for a' he were so pushed) i' a hole i' the garret where he telled me: for he said he'd like for to hae his buryin' comfable, and the grave dug north and south; so ye'll see to it, German," said she, most conscientiously desirous to accomplish the old man's wishes. There was not any great difference between his ideas of a future state and those of the ancient Briton whose bones reposed under the cairn on the further hill, with a drinking-mug on one side and the bones of a horse on the other interred with him.

A "burying" at Stone Edge was a tremendous operation in winter. There was no graveyard at the solitary little chapel below, and the bodies had to be carried nearly five miles across the lone moor—down a hill on the top of which was a cairn, and which was almost like a house-side for steepness—where the path, covered with "pavers" probably existing since the days of the ancient Britons who raised the monument, was too precipitous and too narrow for a cart. Relays of bearers, and consequently relays of beer, were required the whole way. There was a great fall of snow, but on the day of the "buryin'" the sun shone out and the glitter was almost painful. There

was something very solemn in the immense expanses of sweeping hill wrapped in one vast winding-sheet, the few uncovered objects looking harsh and black by contrast—the enforced stillness and idleness, the earth like iron under your feet, the sky like steel above. The company collected in the great old kitchen,—they are a stern race in the hills, tall and staid,—and they looked like a band of Covenanters with their fierce gestures and shabby gear, as by twos and threes they wound their way up through the snow. Methodism was rife in those outlying upland districts—indeed in some places it might be called the established religion fifty years ago: the church in those days was neglected and indifferent, poorly served and worse attended, and the stern Calvinism of the Methodists suited better the rather fierce manners and habits of the population.

German received them quietly and modestly—"wi' a deal o' discretion for such a young un," observed the company. The responsibilities which this terrible break in his life had brought upon him seemed to have turned him into a man at a stride; and his mother and sister accepted him as such and as the head of the family at once. Every one came who was asked. Ashford was not popular, but to

have been murdered and robbed of a large sum of money was evidently considered on the whole a dignified and interesting if not an honourable mode of exit by his neighbours.

They discussed the deceased, his circumstances and his shortcomings, in an open way, very unlike our mealy-mouthed periphrases; and Lydia and Cassie, as they came and went, serving the company, could not help hearing comments which no one seemed to think could pain them, being as they were perfectly true—though in other places the truth of a libel is only supposed to make it worse.

"He couldn't keep off the drink couldn't Ashford. He mid ha' bin home safe enow an he'd come back wi' us," said the old miller Antony.

"He'd a wonderful long tongue to be sure, and quarrelled wi' a very deal o' folk up and down. He'd had an upset with Joshua Stracey this dozen year or more," observed his neighbour the master of the little public.

"We shall hae a baddish time gettin' across the Moor," said a third, helping himself liberally to a large supply of "vittles."

"We're but poor soft creeturs now-a-days," answered the miller. "I've heerd tell how in th'

auld times they used to run stark naked, across the snow, foot-races for two or three miles, wi' the bagpipes for to gi'e 'um courage."

"Well, nobody couldn't call Ashford soft, nayther in his temper nor in hisself: he were a hard and heavy un enough, so to speak; and yet they say as his yead were cracked all one as a chayney jug," put in his neighbour.

"There was wonderful little blood for to be seen," observed a farmer; "nothing would serve my missus but she mun go down and see the place, and she have a bin stericky ever sin'."

"There was a sight o' wimmen went down," said a cynical old bachelor who lived in the valley, "and they've all a bin stericky ever sin' an all tales be true! I b'lieve they likes it. They're greatish fools is wimmen most times; they's mostly like a cow, as is curis by natur', and when by reason o' it she's put herself i' th'way o' harm, then they loses their yeads."

Suddenly a tall miner arose,—he was a very handsome man with fine regular features, large grey eyes, and soft light hair; but his cheeks were sunken and his eyes glittered with a sort of far-seeing look—the temperament which sees illuminations and signs, and dreams dreams.

"Dear friends, shall we part wi'out seekin' to improve the occasion? Here were a drunken man—one as had lived wi'out God in the world—cut off wi'out a moment's warning, struck down in the midst of his sins, like King Herod, Acts 12th chapter and 23rd verse; or like Absalom, 2 Samuel 18th chapter and 14th verse; or like Sisera, as is told in Judges; and shall we not ——?"

"I mun speak my mind, as German's nobbut a young un," said Farmer Buxton, a good-natured giant, who stood six feet three in his "stocking feet" and was broad in proportion,—circumstances which add no little weight to one's arguments. He lived at the farm close to the little chapel below, and therefore took it as it were under his protection. "I dunna see, considerin' German Ashford were a good churchman, and allus come to church (leastways when he went onywheres), as the Methodees has any call to be improvin' on him, and takin' o' him up and callin' him" [*i.e.* abusing him], "when he can't stand up as 'twere for hissen. We've a smartish bit of road to go, and 'twill be a sore heft to carry will Ashford; the days is short and it's bitter weather, and the sooner we're off the better."

There was a burr of agreement in the company

and a general move, and in a few minutes the funeral procession had streamed from the door, German leading the way. The sudden stillness which fell on the house was almost startling after the noise and confusion. Lydia, quite worn out, sat down in the great chair and leant her head against the chimney; Cassie was still looking out of the door to see the last of them.

"'Yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil,'" said Lydia, half aloud. "God is more mercifu' nor man, my darlin'," she added, as Cassie knelt down by her and hid her face on her knees, while she kissed the girl's head fondly; "'for as the heavens are high above the earth, so is the Lord's mercy.'"

"They're a' so hard," said Cassie, sobbing.

"Man sees but a little way and he's very hard. God's a deal more tender than a mother and he sees everything—yea, we will put our trust in the Lord."

The old woman who had come in to help now returned into the house after watching the train depart with extreme enjoyment. "To be sure it have a been a very fine funeral," said she, "and now we mun begin for to straighten things a bit."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST OF THE OLD HOUSE.

A thousand suns will stream o'er thee,
A thousand moons will quiver ;
But not by thee my steps shall be
For ever and for ever.

THE next day German received a message from the squire to come to him. He was a little wizened old man with a shrewd business-like way of doing things, and very intent upon improving his property—a most unpopular proceeding in those days as tending to raise rents. Indeed he was by no means so well liked as his spendthrift predecessor, who had "had a pleasant way wi' him and a kind word wi' folk, and very open-handed" (with other people's property as it turned out, but this was forgotten). "But this un is so close-fisted, and as sour as a bit o' stale oat-cake." The manner of doing a thing signifies generally much more than the matter in public estimation: as far as a man's reputation is concerned, it is almost safer to injure great interests than to wound small feelings. And there is that amount of truth in public opinion,

that the small feelings turn up every hour while the great interests are perhaps years in coming.

German was ushered into the fine old room reserved for the squire when he came to collect his rents. There was a curious mixture in it of ancient stateliness (though his predecessor had hardly lived there) and present thrift. A beautiful panelled ceiling, and a carpet to match, only torn and threadbare; three or four chairs wanting a leg or otherwise maimed, their red damask covers hanging in tatters about them, leaned helplessly against the wall; a great settee, with the crest of the family carved on the back, stood on one side the fire, and two rush-bottomed chairs on the other. The old man himself, with one of the last queues left in England on one end of him, and short and blue stockings on the other, was sitting before a mass of papers at the table. After all, however, he was the squire, and German felt a certain "awe" as he entered.

"Well, Ashford," said he, as the young man came in and made his 'obedience,' "how did you get over the lone moor yesterday with the funeral? It must have been a sore pull for you all."

"They thought they shouldn't hardly ha' got through at the Old Mare's bottom," said the lad.

"And now what's to be done about you, my man? It's a great misfortune, a very great misfortune indeed. I'm sure I feel it—the rent and the arrears all gone. They say your father got the back-rent in his pocket too?"

"It were my sister's money," said German in a low voice; "she'd gived him every penny she had."

"And quite right of her too, but most unfortunate; why didn't he take it to the bankers? Then, you know, if anything had happened to your father, *that* would have been safe. And I can't afford to lose back-rent and present rent, and arrears for soughing * and all, I can tell you." And the old man began to walk irritably about the room. "What do you and your mother intend to do?" he asked at last, as German remained silent.

"We should like to keep on the farm, sir: we've had it now, father and son, this two hundred year, they say. I think we mid mak' a shift to get on, if so be ye'd be patient with the rent."

"But I can't afford to be patient," said the old man, fretfully. "You've no capital and no stock, I hear. You'll just ruin me and the farm and your-

* Draining.

selves all together. It's out of the case, I tell you. You won't do yourselves a morsel of good; the sooner you go out of the farm the better for everybody."

German's colour rose; he went out of the room, his blood boiling. "'Tother squire wouldn't ha' done it," he said to himself; but there was truth he knew in the old man's unpalatable words: he could not farm properly, and it would be starvation to attempt to pay the future rent, let alone the past.

The two women sat waiting to learn their fate in the stillness of a house where a death has lately been. He flung his hat angrily down on the ground as he entered.

"He wunna let us hae the farm; a' talked o' his back-rent. A black curse be wi' him;—he's a very having man," said he.

Neither Lydia nor Cassie uttered a word: they took their doom in perfect silence. There was a pathetic sort of leave-taking in the way they looked round on the old walls, and then they turned to their work again.

Towards evening Cassie, having thought it over and over in her mind, felt indeed that on the whole it was a relief to go. The intense isolation was almost more than she could now bear; she felt as

if she might "hear something" if she were more within reach of the outer world.

"Shall thee mind very much flitting, Lydia?" said she at last, suddenly.

"I mind thee and German being turned out i' th' cold world as it were."

"Then dunna heed it, dearie, for me; I think I'd be best down where there's a bit more moving."

And Lydia's view of the matter altered entirely from that moment. German indeed felt the change much the most of the three.

As they sat at the bare board that evening eating the remains of the funeral feast, and calculating in a sort of family council how little there was left to them for bare existence now that everything saleable had been sold, Lydia observed,—

"Dostna think, German, that 'twere best done at once an we are to go? Thee'st better leave the squire all and everythink, and get thee a quittance. He canna say aught an he have it a'."

"He'd a squoze blood out o' a flint, I raly do believe, if it could ha' been done anyhow," said German, angrily. "I canna bear a leavin' the old walls, as we've a held such a many year i' th' family; but an we mun we mun," he ended, with a touch of

the resigned fatalism which forms so large a part of the wonderful "patience of the poor."

"And ye mun hearken for a cottage, German, up and down i' th' town"* (it was the smallest possible hamlet). "Thou canst axe the squire for so mich. Surely he'll make a bit o' a push to gi'e us one, so be he has one empty, and he turning of us out here just to fight along for oursen. I heerd 'um say yesterday as old Sammy were dead; mebbe his widder 'll be wishful to get shut o' that place up the steps."

"I canna think what for we havena heerd owt o' yer uncle," said Lydia; "and he as allus thowt so much o' ye both."

"They say Martha's gone for to be with him; and she's one as would be sure set upo' kippin' him to hersen and lettin' nobody else hae speech nor business of him. I saw that when I were there," returned German.

The next morning the old squire was a little surprised when German called to say they should be ready to go whenever convenient. He had not expected so ready an acquiescence. "On ne peut pas tondre un pelé qui n'a pas de cheveux," however, and his best chance was for a share of the stock

* Town—an inclosure from the waste.

before the inevitable smash—so he took heart and began to make the arrangements necessary.

German suffered a good deal: he had a sort of feeling for the old place which made it as distressing for him to leave it as if the land had been his own patrimony. The day of their moving came; the little cart stood before the door which was to do its last office for its masters that day in removing their bits o' things. Lydia was sitting on a bundle of bedding—everything was packed in the dismantled kitchen—while Cassie wandered round the place taking a last look at all. The last time!—it has a dreary sound, even when it is a little-loved place.

They were waiting for German, who was going once more round the farm-buildings, delivering up the place to the man put in charge by the squire, when old Nathan appeared at the door.

"I've a had a sore bout and been so bad in bed as I couldn't get up this long way afore now, and I never thought as you'd be off so soon. I'm a'most glad yer aunt Bessie ain't here for to see the like o' this," said he, looking grimly round. "She never could ha' beared to think ye was turned adrift; it's a dolesome thing to see ye going out o' this fashion. Ye'd as pritty a look-out as any lad or lass i' th'

county, both on ye, one mid say, half a year agone," added the old man with a groan. "Misfortines is very hasty o' foot, and comes most times in swarms like bees."

"I'm hoping as you're better, Master Nathan," observed Lydia, rising from her bundles with her usual quiet courteous greeting, while Cassie set the only stool that was left to sit on. "Matters is mostly packed by now, but Cassie 'll be fine and pleased for to get ye a sup o' summat an ye'll think well to tak' anything arter your long toil." And she did the honours of her empty kitchen like a true lady. Some of the best manners in England are to be found among those we call "the poor." After all, manners are the expression of the nature of the man: and consideration for others, quiet self-possession, tact and courtesy, the essentials of a gentleman (which is indeed our shorthand expression for these qualities combined), are to be found among them often to perfection, particularly in the most secluded districts. Education indeed can only give a sort of imitation of them if the material is not there—it cannot supply it.

"And where are ye a going to bide?" inquired the old man as Cassie meantime unpacked the only

bottle of elder wine which was left, which he drank out of a broken teacup as he listened in silence to the answer.

"We've a took the old grey house i' the Dumble, where the masoner died. 'Twill make us a nice quiet home after a bit, we're in hopes. 'Tis nigh to where German mun go to work, and we wants to be to ourselves like . . . . We heerd as ye had Martha now to live with ye, uncle. I'm in hopes as she makes ye comfable?" said Cassie, at last, as he still sat on without speaking.

"Well," said the old man, rousing himself, "I thowt on it; she's coming next week for to stop a while wi' me. She's a bit over petticklar, but she's wonderful industrous; and 'tis so dull wi'out a woman for to bang about and to fend for me. I want to speak to thee, Cassie," added he, drawing her into the empty cheese-room, which looked drearier than ever, with its riches swept away.

"I were hard on thee, child, t'other time. I dunna know as thou couldst ha' done less for thy feyther but lend him the money when he'd all that coil. Arter all he were thy feyther; and so now wilt thou come and live wi' me, and be a child to me in my old age, and I will leave thee a' I have when I go?"

"I wunna leave Lyddy," said Cassie, stoutly. "Thank ye kindly a' the same, uncle. She and I is one. I'll not return from following arter her; where she goes I will go, and where she dies I will die," said the girl, with a passion of affection that made her voice tremble, and her rich brown cheek warm with colour and her eyes bright with tears. It was beautiful to see her, and even the philosophy of Nathan the wise was not proof against it.

"You'd make a rare loving wife, my wench, you would," he said, admiringly.

The poor girl's eyes filled with tears as she murmured something about not being any man's wife, and then asked some unintelligible question about Roland.

"No; I hanna heerd nowt about him sin' I giv un a recommend for Liverpool, but ye munna tell where to, as noboddy was to know. He went off wi' that old raskil Joshuay; but thee's better forget a' about his father's son," said the old man. "Well, good-by, my lass, and ye'll come to me an ye be in trouble. I'd ha' liked sorely for to ha'e had thee for my own," he added, clearing his throat. "Good-by, Lyddy. I shall come and see yer again once ye're settled," he called out as he passed through the kitchen once more. "Eh, dearie me, *to* be sure, who'd ha' thought

it? It's a sorry sight!" repeated Nathan, shaking his head dolefully as he went out at the door again.

"What did he come for, Cassie, all in such a hurry?" said Lydia, anxiously, as the girl came slowly back.

"Axe me no questions and I'll tell thee no lies," answered she, with a laughing caress.

"He came to axe thee go wi' him?" Lydia went on. "I know he did, and thou hast given it up because o' me, my darlin'. Think on it agin. I can fend for German, and belike too he may marry. Why shouldst thou fling away what's for thy good wi' thinkin' o' me?"

"I was na' thinking o' thee one bit," said Cassie gaily (it was the first time Lydia had seen the poor girl smile for months). "I were just a thinkin' o' mysen. Martha Savage 'ud be a sore un to live with. Sure life's better nor house or land, and 'tis life to live wi' thee and German. Thou shaltna get shut on me so," she added, with a kiss.

Lydia shook her hand lovingly at her, and said no more.

The little cart was soon laden: the old squire had been substantially kind to them, had found a small cottage in the valley below, and given them any

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furniture they chose to take away, the old cow and a pig. The melancholy little party set off, German in front leading the horse, the cart built up with the "bits o' things"—which look so pathetic—of an uprooted household. Then came Cassie driving the cow and carrying a basket with her own particular laying hen; and lastly, Lydia, with certain brittle articles which the ruts made it impossible to convey otherwise in safety. It was a dull, gloomy day: a thick mist almost blotted out the landscape, and was nearly as wet as rain. Silently they turned away from the old pillared gateway and the old grey house, which looked as mournful as if it felt the desertion, and the only sound heard was the squeaking of the little pig in a hamper at the top of the cart, which lamented its departure with loud squeals, answered from the farmyard by the cries of the bereaved mother growing fainter and more faint in the distance. Not a word was spoken by any of them till they reached their future home in the small scattered hamlet below. It stood apart on the side of the hill, in the space formed by a little quarry, out of which the house had been built. On the other side was a steep terraced garden supported by a high wall looking down to the green croft in which it was set. Before

... of the Old House.

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the door grew two or three sycamores—the tree which flourishes best in these hills—the tops of which are mostly bare and ugly, while vegetation creeps down the valleys following the course of the streams.

"And thou'lt set slips o' things and have a garden, dearie?" said Lydia, looking round. "Sure 'tis a nice quiet pleasant place."

The two women got work to do at home from one of the small mills which were beginning to take the place of the home-spinning, and to rise on even obscure "water privileges;" and German easily found a place as cowkeeper to a farmer near. It was a peaceful life. The descent in dignity fell heaviest on poor German, the women scarcely felt it at all; they hardly dared to acknowledge, even to themselves, the relief it was to live under their own roof-tree with none to make them afraid. Still as time went on, with no tidings of Roland, Cassie's heart grew sick with a longing desire for a word or a sign, and her cheeks grew pale with watching and waiting in vain.

CHAPTER XXII.

'TIS JUST THE WAY O' THE WORLD.

> And sharper than a two-edged sword
> The light words that we utter.
>
> A. PROCTER.

ONE Saturday afternoon work was done, and Cassie had gone down to the mill to be paid. It was a still evening, and Lydia sat on a broad stone outside her door, with her Bible on her knees; but she was not reading, only looking intently up at a little sunset cloud sailing over her head. There is a woman in front of Guido's "Massacre of the Innocents" at Bologna, with a dead baby at her feet, and her eyes fixed on its angelic semblance in the sky above. Lydia's face had the same expression. "Their angels do always behold the face of their Father in Heaven," she whispered to herself. It was the only luxury in which she indulged, to sit in perfect stillness and think of her child,—"gone back again," as she always called it to herself. She was roused by the click of the little garden-gate, and turning,

met the keen grey eyes of old Nanny Elmes fixed upon her. Nanny was leaning over the wicket, clad as usual in a long grey great-coat, the tails of which reached almost to her heels. She now put down her basket and came and sat on the low wall. "I've been a' watchin' o' ye ever so long, Lyddy, and ye stirred no more than the stone babby in the church. I didn't know as how ye could read," she added, looking suspiciously at the book.

"'Tain't but a very little. I learnt * mysen a bit afore I married. There was a little maid o' Mrs. Goose's as were a rare un for her book, and she learnt me my letters, and fund the places i' th' Bible when parson was a readin', and so I cum for to know the words when I see'd un in their own places—when they'se at home as 'twere. And it seems," she went on, after a pause, "when I gets at the words, like as if I were a hearing my Saviour talk to me; and whiles when I'm my lane, it seems to me as if He cum in at the door and say'd thae gracious words to me His own self."

The old woman listened intently, with her head on one side like a bird. "Well, it's wonderful for to

* Why not? "Oh, learn me true understanding."—*Ps.* cxix. "My life and education both do learn me how."—*Othello*, Act i.

hear ye: ye'r' like Mary i' th' story; but then you've your bite and sup certain, and you've time for faith and your salvation, and a' them things. I as has got my old body for to kip my own self, must just gi'e tent to my feet, and ha' eyes i' th' back o' my bonnet (for the childer's finners, bless 'um, is as mischievous and quick as magpies), or I should ha' nowt to my belly nor nowt to my back. And I dunna see," she continued, as her natural pride in her calling returned, "as Martha ain't as much wanted i' th' world as Mary. There wouldn't ha' been much dinner, I warrant, i' th' house where they were i' Bethany, an it hadn't been along o' she."

Lydia rose with a smile. "Tea'll be mashed soon now, when Cassie and German comes in; belike ye'll hae a sup o' milk though afore?"

"Nay, I'll wait. More by reason here she comes, and the lad too."

"Eh, Nanny," said German, as he entered, "I heerd a cock crow first thing this morning, and I said as how a stranger were a comin'."

"They're wonderful creeturs is them cocks," answered Nanny, meditatively. "'Tis like as they knows a very deal o' things. There's a great tower o' rocks, one atop another, at Hurleston, nigh to the

old moor (I were passing there t'other day); t'upper stone *—and it's a rare big un too—rocks, ye know, when 'tis touched, and an ye cum nigh to it first thing i' th' mornin', soon as cock crows, it just turns itself right round upo' itself as 'twere; but folks is a bit shy o' goin' o' that lonely moor so early, so there ain't a many as have see'd it."

"Dear heart, I wonder was the virtue i' th' cock or th' ston'?" said German.

"And here comes Cassie. Why, child, yer fine colour's gone sadly. Ha' ye been bad sin' I saw ye?" said the old woman, compassionately. "Ye munna take on a' thattins for what's past and gone. I hae been so throng as I couldna come before," she added, apologetically.

In fact the story of the murder had been an invaluable stock in trade to Mrs. Elmes. "It has been the vally to me," as she declared, "of more suppers and teas than I'd ever ha' know'd, me knowing the parties so well, and had a sould 'um the very buttons as was upon old Ashford's shirt the day he were murdered (them's the very same,

* A rocking-stone, thrown down and broken up about twenty years ago. Can nothing be done to stop the destruction of such relics?

leastways off the same card, mum.) I've sould a sight on 'um." She therefore felt considerable gratitude to those who had been the means, even involuntarily, of procuring her such a pleasant time. She had not seen them since the funeral—when, in the capacity of "our own correspondent," she had gone up to Stone Edge to collect the latest information—and she felt as if she had been guilty of neglect.

"I've been a wanting to see ye this three months and more," she went on, "but I couldn't get up this way afore now, I've been so throng." Then looking critically about her, "Ye'r' a deal better off down here, to my mind, nor upo' the top o' yon Nob, with the winds blowing like as they'd tak' yer heads off. It took sich a sight o' time, too, going up the lone moor, and yer heart i' yer mouth as 'twere wi' a' the boggarts and things as mid be upo' the road. I'd ha' folk live in a come-at-abler place, where their frens can get at 'um asy, wi'out such a deal o' toil."

"'I can' ain't allus the same as 'I would,'" said German, half annoyed. "Him as canna get oatcake mun put up wi' bread, but I loved the old house dearly I did. 'Tain't the place so much, 'tis the feelin'."

"I've a baked some fresh oatcake to-day, and it's gey sweet," interposed Lydia, as she placed what looked like layers of round flaps of tough whitey-brown leather on the table.

"If there's one thing I do love it's fresh oats," said the old woman; "and it's a deal wholesomer for strength and delight nor any other grain. They say folk's teeth as eats it is whiter and long and broad; but it's not you as wants that, my lass," she added, as she looked at the row of pearls in Cassie's mouth. The girl smiled absently, hardly seeming to hear. "Manners is manners," Nanny went on, accepting all that was pressed upon her. "I will say *that* for this house: first ye picks a bit and then ye chats a bit; ye dunna wolf it down as some folk I see does."

"P'r'aps they're poor creatures as is sore put to it for a livin'," said Lydia, excusingly.

"Ha' ye heerd," proceeded Mrs. Elmes, after a pause, "how Lawyer Gilbert have a took on hisself along of the murderin' of yer feyther? He says it's a sin and a shame as Joshuay werena put upo' his oath and 'xaminated. He's a been up in Yorkshire where his mother died, or he'd a sin to it hisself, he says, before; and the Crowner were a deal too thick wi'

Joshuay he says. There were summat about a horse atwixt 'um; but there's such a many tales allus, one doesna know which to believe. I thought mebbe the councillor had a been up here for to axe ye (he said as how he would) about a' that ballaraggin' and quarrellin' atwixt yer feyther and Joshuay."

"I hanna nowt to say," answered the lad, shortly, "nor what I telled un all at the 'quest. My feyther sent me home early o' that market-day, and I know nowt o' any quarrel nor ballaragging nor nowt."

Cassandra's tongue and lips seemed too dry to utter a word, but she looked pitifully at Lydia, who asked the question for her.

"Ha' ye heerd owt o' Joshua or Roland sin' they went?"

"Not th' littlest bit o' a word," replied Nanny. "And 'tain't nateral we should. Joshuay 'll kip as close as a hunted hare an a' be true, wi' all this hanging over him."

"And what's come o' poor Roland?" said Lydia again.

"They say he looked a very deal more cut up nor his feyther, hiding o' his face like, and just an he knew more o' th' murder nor were good for's soul, he were so white."

"I dunna believe a word on't," burst out German. "Roland were as good a chap as ever walked i' shoe-leather. I were main fond o' him. I'd lay my life he know'd no more o' wrong nor I did,—and I'd gi'e a great deal for to see he again—that's what it is," said the lad, pushing away his chair and getting up with an angry glow in his face, which made poor Cassie's heart swell with gratitude to her brother.

"'Tis just the way o' the world," she murmured to herself.

"Well, I'm not a sayin' nowt agin the poor fellow," said Mrs. Elmes, rising also and shaking the buttery crumbs from her lap. "He's a good-livin' chap, I believe. I'm on'y a tellin' of ye what folk says, and as yerselves has the best right to know. And now, Cassie, I want ye for to help me wash my two or three clo'es. To-morrow's Sabbath-day and I'm to sleep at Farmer Clay's, and I wants to be tidy like. 'Tis very viewly for to be clean, for all that one's things mid be mended and coarse. And it's my 'pinion," she added, significantly, "that if I was Roland, his frens 'ud do well to advise un to kip hissen out o' the way an he dunna want for to be brought in 'axnaparte' witness agin his feyther. Joshuay's one as 'll fin' a many for to swear his life

against him. There ain't ne'er a dirty puddle o' bad things as he ha'n't a put his foot into this score o' years and more, and a broken pitcher may go oncst too often to th' well, we all know *that*."

CHAPTER XXIII.

VERY LONELY.

For I go, dull from suffering, here,
Naked I go, and void of cheer,
What is it that I may not fear ?
TENNYSON.

JOSHUA and his son had continued their slow way unmolested to Liverpool. As they came in sight of the town and drove through street after street of frowsy, squalid, grimy houses, Roland's heart sank within him. There are few things more depressing than the suburbs of a great city, where all the beauty of nature has been destroyed, and man's handiwork is only shown in ugliness and wretchedness.

"And they have a dirtied the very air as it ain't clean to swalla," said Roland, with inexpressible disgust as they passed into the lurid, foggy, dull smoky atmosphere.

"Yes," answered his father; "but it mun be a fine place, and safe, an a body didn't want for to be looked arter."—The views to be taken of

the same place vary curiously according to the wants of the seer.

The next day Roland went in search of the old Quaker's warehouse with Nathan's letter in his hand.

"What a sight o' folk!" said he to himself. "And how they runs to and fro, nobody a speaking to nobody, nor simmingly caring whether we all be alive or dead." In Youlcliffe every one knew every one else, and the intense solitude of the crowd of a great town made his loneliness sometimes almost unbearable.

Mr. Rendall received him coldly and suspiciously: he seemed nearly to have forgotten Nathan's existence, and questioned the young man closely and very unpleasantly. Just, however, as Roland was turning on his heel, half in anger and half in dismay, the old Quaker said placidly,—

"Well, young man, I'll give thee a chance and try thee in the outer warehouse for a while—lest, as Nathan Broom observes, perchance thy falling into evil ways might reproach us for our neglect. Thou seem'st a bit hasty, friend. Dost thee think the father can eat sour grapes and the son's teeth not be set on edge? 'twould be against Scripture. Thou mayst come to-morrow and we'll see what thee'st good for."

Although he was accepted, it was a galling position, however, for Roland: he felt that he was watched by the foreman and watched by the masters. At Youlcliffe his own character stood him in stead, and he was trusted and respected, with little reference to his connection with Joshua; but the sins of the father were beginning to tell fearfully against his child. The lodging which he first took was too respectable for Joshua, who had soon fallen into the worst possible set.

"I dunna like them stuck-up folk a pryin' into a body's ways. I tell thee, Roland, I wunna come to thee no more an thou dostna change," said he.

And they moved gradually into a more and more miserable part of the town—for Roland was set upon keeping a kind of home for his father—till at last they settled in one of the narrow airless courts of which Liverpool is full, with high houses all round shutting out the sky, where Roland, used to the free air of the hills, could scarcely breathe: the dirt and wretchedness of the other inhabitants was a misery to him—the world of dark and dismal houses oppressed him like a nightmare. The want of space is of itself excessively trying to one who has had as it were the run of half a county.

He made no friends, scarcely any acquaintance; the clerks at Mr. Rendall's rather looked down upon his country ways; besides, it seemed to him as if he were being borne along on a rapid current he knew not where, as if everything were a temporary make-shift, that "something" was coming, he never said to himself what, and that it was not worth while to make plans or undertake anything beyond his day's work. There was a steep street leading down towards the river, where he could get a glimpse of the blue Welsh hills beyond the forests of masts, along which he always passed if he could—they "seemed friendly." His only amusement, indeed, was to stroll down it in his leisure time and along the docks to watch the outgoing ships. Why could not his father be persuaded to go somewhere,—anywhere, far away?

One evening, with his hands in his pockets, he was strolling aimlessly down the street counting the public-houses for something to do. "Well, they're thirsty souls here, for sure," said he to himself; "I b'lieve as there's as many drinking-shops as there is for food a'most," when he came against a little child crying bitterly. It had lost its way. One passenger after another "passed by on the other side," in order

not to be delayed. One or two attempted hurriedly to make out where it lived, but without success; and the forlorn little being looked more and more utterly wretched and confused at each failure to make itself understood. "I dunna know as it's more mazed than I am for to find my way through my life arter all," thought Roland, as he stooped his long body over it and tried to disentangle from among its sobs some clue to its home; but to his unaccustomed ears all that it said was alike unintelligible. By this time it had taken fast hold of his hand, however,—his face was a helpful one.

"What's yer father doin'?" suggested he, at last.

"He's away in a ship," sobbed the child, "and grandad goes most days to the docks."

He took it up in his arms—here was at least an opening—and carried it up and down the river-shore unweariedly for some time in vain.

At last he was rewarded for his patience: the child gave a joyful cry, "There's grandad!" and she flung herself into an old sailor's arms.

"Well, you *have* done a good job!" said the man, gratefully, as he kissed the little girl fondly. "I'd like just to do as good a turn to you. What, my little maid, and you was lost like upo' the high

seas, without a compass as 'twere; and she, too, like the apple o' my eye! and a bringing of me my supper."

He was a worn-out old man, almost past work, who hung about the docks doing odd jobs; and it was something of a comfort to Roland, from that time, to go to him for the sympathy of a little friendly talk: he dreaded any intimacy with those who might inquire into his former life, or his father's reasons for leaving home. But sailor Jack asked no inconvenient questions, and to hear of far-off lands—something as different from his present perplexities as possible—was a relief. "Why don't ye go over the way and seek yer fortin' out there?" repeated the sailor, at the end of all his glowing descriptions. "There's plenty of room for them as 'll work, and it's a fine place where my son is, he writes me word."

But even in his haziest visions the two images of Cassie and his father could never come together, and it was as grievous to him to think of going as of staying. He had no rest even in day-dreams for his soul, and his longing after Cassie—after a loving home such as she would have given him—became sometimes almost more painful to him than he could bear.

"Oh, that I had wings like a dove!" said the poor fellow to himself, watching the spreading sails,

which looked to him like wings. "This is a dry and thirsty land, where no water is," he went on, as he gazed over the muddy Mersey. It was true to his feeling, though not to sense. It is strange how the images of a climate and manners so opposed to ours should have become our true expression of feeling in defiance of reality of association. The isolation, the anxiety, were half breaking his heart; but he felt as if he were the last plank to which the drowning soul, fast sinking from all good, was clinging, and he stayed on, though there were sometimes whole days when he scarcely saw his father.

Late one evening Joshua, having nothing to do, strolled, excited and half-tipsy, into the warehouse to inquire for his son, and while Roland, in the greatest possible distress and annoyance, was trying to persuade him to go home, the chief clerk—a precise, ceremonious old gentleman with a dash of powder in his hair—came up and ordered him very summarily off the premises.

Joshua was exceedingly insolent.

"What's that powder-headed monkey mean?" said he in a loud voice. "I hanna done nowt! I appeal to th' coumpany," he went on, turning to the bystanders, to their infinite delight, for the clerk was

not popular. It was with the utmost difficulty that Roland could get his father away.

That night he was even more restless than usual after they had gone to bed: the wretched room was close and airless, and he muttered frightfully in his sleep. At last, in the dim moonlight which came in over the tops of the tall houses in the court, Roland, who was dozing, suddenly saw him sit up and stretch out his arm angrily.

"Hold yer hand, yer rascal! I won't ha' it made a hanging matter on."

The voice then sank in unintelligible sounds as he lay down again, and all was then so still, as Roland, in an agony of horror, leant forward, that he heard the cinder fall in the grate as he listened. Presently the ghastly figure rose again. "I tell 'ee half the gold's mine; the county notes won't be worth nothing i' th' county. Share and share alike," he repeated fiercely, and as his son shook him violently to wake him, he muttered,—"No, he shanna know owt on it —not Roland. I wunna hae him flyted at." And then he sank into a dull, heavy leaden sleep.

His poor son lay shivering with the extremity of his misery till the dull daylight broke upon the town.

He seemed somehow never to have realized the

thing before, and the touch of tenderness to himself made his heart ache. In the morning Joshua rose, quite unconscious of his night's revelations, and Roland went to his work, feeling as if he had committed a great crime himself. Indeed, those who saw the two might have doubted which was the guilty man. He could hardly bear to look any one in the face.

"How shall I get through the day wi' them a' at the office?" said he to himself. It was settled for him very summarily. As soon as he reached the warehouse the old Quaker sent for him, and said, that though he had no complaints to make of his own conduct, no young man of his could be allowed to associate with such a fellow as Joshua was now known to be. "It injured the establishment to have such scenes as that of yesterday," he said. "Perhaps if Roland would promise to have nothing whatever to do with his father from that time forth—" he added, doubtfully. . . .

"There ain't no good in my stopping" ("in this bad place," he was going to add, but stopped in time,) "unless it were for me being along wi' my father," he answered indignantly; and accordingly he was dismissed.

It was a sentence of exclusion from all respectable places of trust. He had no one now to apply to for a character; and his heart seemed to die within him as he walked down to his father's usual haunts, and wandered to and fro in search of him. He was nowhere to be found, however; and Roland returned through the sloppy, grimy streets, more depressed even than usual, and sat drearily waiting in the desolate little room. He thought he would make one more effort to get his father away. Joshua came moodily in at last: another of his reckless schemes had failed, and he was sinking deeper and deeper. He sat down sulkily without speaking.

"What is it ye was inquiring arter me for, Roland?" he said at last, almost sadly, turning unwillingly towards his silent son.

"Father, I'm turned off."

"Well, there ain't no great harm in that. I hated th' ould man."

"And how am I to get anither place? who'll trust me? Mr. Rendall says," added the poor fellow, goaded by his father's indifference, "'none o' my young men shall ha' aught to do with such as thy father,' says he. I mun go and work at the docks an we bide here. Let us go, feyther, away

from this dolesome place. What for should we stop here?" muttered the poor fellow, desperately.

Joshua had fallen into the very sink and slough of life, but there remained the one spark of light, his belief in and respect for his son's character,—a sort of love for him.

"Leave me, lad—go; thou'st been a good lad to me. I shall be thy ruin, body and soul, I know, an thou bidest wi' me."

"Oh, feyther, canna we go thegether? Come wi' me! Let's try anither place, not this horrid black hole,—ony ither place. There's a many homes over the water, sailor Jack says: why shouldn't we go out there? The *Jumping Jenny* sails in a month somewhere; let us go? I've a been down already to the ship's office and seen as there were room. On'y I must just go back to the old home and see how matters is," he muttered to himself, with a sort of spasm at his heart.

"I canna go gadding o' that fashion. England's good enough for me; but do thou go thysen. Nay, child, thou canstna drag me up, and I on'y drag thee down. Go while 'tis time; go d'reckly; who knows what may happen?" he said almost fiercely. "If God A'mighty is as parson says, He'll reward thee.

Dunna folla me; 'twill be o' no use—I shanna come back. Thee knowest I'm as obstinate as a bull, and I wunna see thee——"

And from a hidden place in the floor he dragged out a hoard of some kind, wrapped in a handkerchief, which made Roland shiver. Joshua had striven to keep his son free from the knowledge of his past crimes, with a curious respect for his good name; and rolling some few articles of clothing into a bundle, he pulled his cap over his eyes with a kind of rage, wrung his boy's hand, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MANY WATERS WILL NOT QUENCH LOVE.

> Say never, "I loved once."
> God is too near above, the grave below,
> And all our moments go
> Too quickly past our souls for saying so.
>
> MRS. BROWNING.

THE young man had hardly a shilling in the world after having paid the few things which he owed, and he set off to walk towards home, with all his worldly goods in a handkerchief hung on a stick. He wanted the quiet of the fields, the freedom of the open road, to be able to collect his thoughts; the dark and dirty town was each day more and more dreadful to him. He slept two or three nights on the road on his progress home in quiet out-of-the-way cottages; it is always the poor who have compassion on the poor.

"I mun see her again," he muttered, as he went along, "an it be only to say good-by. But who knows whether she'll hae speech wi' me? An they've

any scent o' the thing, happen they mid think there were a taint o' blood o' my hands too,"—it seemed to drive him half out of his senses as the thought crossed his mind.

The sweet air from the hills came over him like an old and soothing friend as he approached his own country. When the brown stone walls and the rocky outlines came in sight he greeted them like living beings. "How can onybody live in they stinking holes?" said he to himself. "I'd reither be a herd-boy nor have all Mr. Rendall's stores. Eh, but it's a lovely sight," said he, as he saw a plough passing crosswise along a field on a hill nearly as steep as a house-side.

He came at length to the Stonyford Bridge, at the opening to his beloved Netherdale, and stood watching for a moment, as he went, the rush of the water among the big stones. It bore the traces of its different periods as distinctly as if they had been engraved upon its parapets: first, the remains of the old ford chapel, where those who were about to cross its uncertain and hazardous bed went in and prayed for help; then, the narrow pack-horse bridge, with its two steep handsome pointed arches, which not long before had been widened for carts and carriages by

an ugly addition on one side of two commonplace round arches. He was leaning over the parapet, trying to make out Stone Edge in the distance, when a voice near him cried out, "Why, if it ain't Roland Stracey!" and he encountered the sharp eyes of Lawyer Gilbert, a low attorney, with whom he knew his father had had a long quarrel about an exchange.

"And where's your father, I'd like to know?" said he. "He cheated me once, but I'll be even with him yet. He got off finely at the inquest; he'd hardly be so lucky again. I should like to know if *you'd* a been set in the witness-box and the screw put on, what you'd ha' been made to say? There was one Jackman, horsedealer," he added, with a searching look——

"And what right ha' you to take folk's characters away o' that fashion?" said Roland, fiercely, turning at bay. "I know a thing or two o' you, as ye'll hardly like telled i' th' court!" and he passed on without another word. He was evidently not to be trifled with in that mood, and the man let him go.

He struck across country to avoid meeting any one else—up a lonely valley, where now runs a high-road and a railway is threatened, but where then there passed nothing but the old pack-horse way,

paved in places, which had probably existed since before the time of the Romans. Up and down it went, without the smallest idea of keeping any level, turned aside by every little obstacle, running hither and thither like a child at play, instead of the stern determination of a Roman road, or even of its modern equivalent. He walked for miles without meeting a living thing, and all was silent except a brawling stream, which ran at the bottom, hidden amid moss and magnificent broad leaves. Sometimes the steep hill-sides rose bare, with nothing but bush and shaley loose stones mixed with lilies of the valley and rare mountain aromatic herbs; then came sweeps of the short sweet emerald grass of the limestone pastures, and a sheep or two, as nimble as goats, bounded out of the way. And still as he went he had scarcely determined in himself whether he should go on to Cassie or not. Presently he saw in the middle of the steep bare path a brown partridge cowering over her young. She had brought out a just-hatched brood to sun themselves, and awe-struck at this unexpected danger, from which her children could not escape, remained perfectly still as the best chance of saving the small things, which could hardly run, by sharing their peril with them.

The *Sortes Virgilianæ* are played in many ways and by varying needs. "If she have faith and doesna stir," said the young man to himself, "I'll go on; if she runs I wunna go nigh Cassie. I canna stan' what she mid say to me." Many an action is determined by the behaviour of as unconscious an agent as the partridge, who never flinched in the courage of her love. Roland even stooped over her as he passed; but her bright eye was the only thing which stirred.

"Sure an the dumb beasts has that in 'um, there's hope," muttered he to himself as he strode on. "She'd a big heart had Cassie." And then he remembered that, except that painful interview at the "Druid's Stones," it was almost a year and a half since he had seen her. "There's a deal may ha' happened sin' then," he thought, and goaded by the idea, he hurried on almost at a run.

He had taken a cross cut, and was a little out of his reckoning among the folds of the hill, when, mounting a higher ridge than usual to look out, he saw suddenly, just beneath him, the scene of Ashford's murder: it seemed as if he could not get out of reach of its memories. He sat down as if he had been shot: he could trace far below him the bit of steep road, the stream, the little grove, as plainly as

if he had been there, and he tore away in another direction. The shadow of the guilt was on him as if he had committed it himself. "I oughtna to go belike to Cassie," he muttered again. Still, as he said the words, he was walking on towards her; the attraction was too strong, and he crept along the quietest way he could, over hill and down dale, and up to Stone Edge by the Druid's temple: the grave old stones looked sadly at him—he remembered his last sight of them, and hurried on to the house.

He heard a loud scolding woman's voice: what did it mean? and a blowsy red-cheeked girl was on the threshold.

"Where be the Ashfords?" said he; but before the answer came the whole truth flashed upon him. Of course they had all been ruined by that black night's work: everything they possessed in the world must have been swept away, and it had been his own father's doing; he could have wrung his hands.

"Well, for sure, so you'd neevir heerd as they'd flitted! Where do ye come frae, young man?" said the woman, after the fashion of all secluded dwellers. "Ye mun ha' a drink o' milk and a crust o' bread though," she added compassionately. "Ye look wored out like to death."

"I canna' wait," he replied, and as soon as he had learnt their new home he hurried on again. The little hamlet was scattered up and down the hills, no three houses together, each in its own croft or garden, and he went in and out of the green lanes for some time at random, not liking to inquire. At last he saw Cassie coming slowly up a field-path which led to the cottage, carrying a large bundle of work from the mill; but he looked so haggard, so worn, so thin, that at first she scarcely recognized him. "Roland!" she said in a low voice at last,

He was there for no other purpose but to try and see her, yet when she spoke he walked on as if he had not heard. After three or four steps he stopped.

"Did ye call me?" he said, huskily, without turning.

She did not answer, and he looked back. She was leaning against the narrow stone stile, trembling all over, and her eyes full of tears.

"Oh, Cassie, my heart's nearly broke," he went on.

"Come wi' me to the house and see Lyddy," replied she, compassionately.

"No, no: thou dustna know all, thou dustna know all! I think I'm going crazy wi' misery!" And

he took hold of both her hands, and looked into her face with an expression that went to her heart.

"Yea, but I think I do," said she, earnestly and kindly.

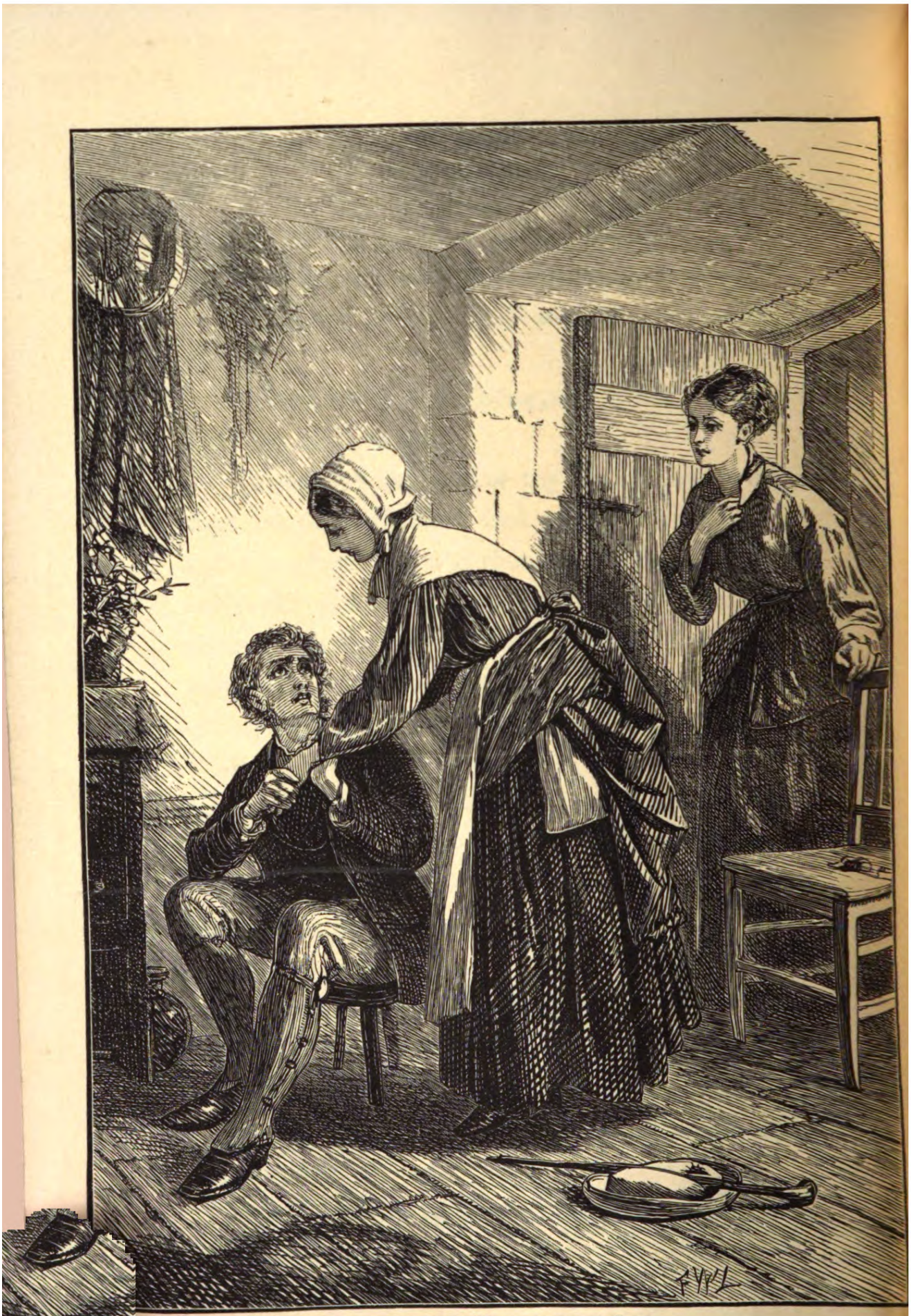
"Whativer dost thee know, and how?" answered he, in an anxious tone.

"I read it i' th' lines of thy face, Roland.—Why shouldna we be friens? God Almighty have a laid a heavy hand on us: why should we make it worse to oursens? Come in wi' me. There's Lyddy and German will be main glad to see thee. Come," she said, with gentle compulsion, and something of her old stately grace.

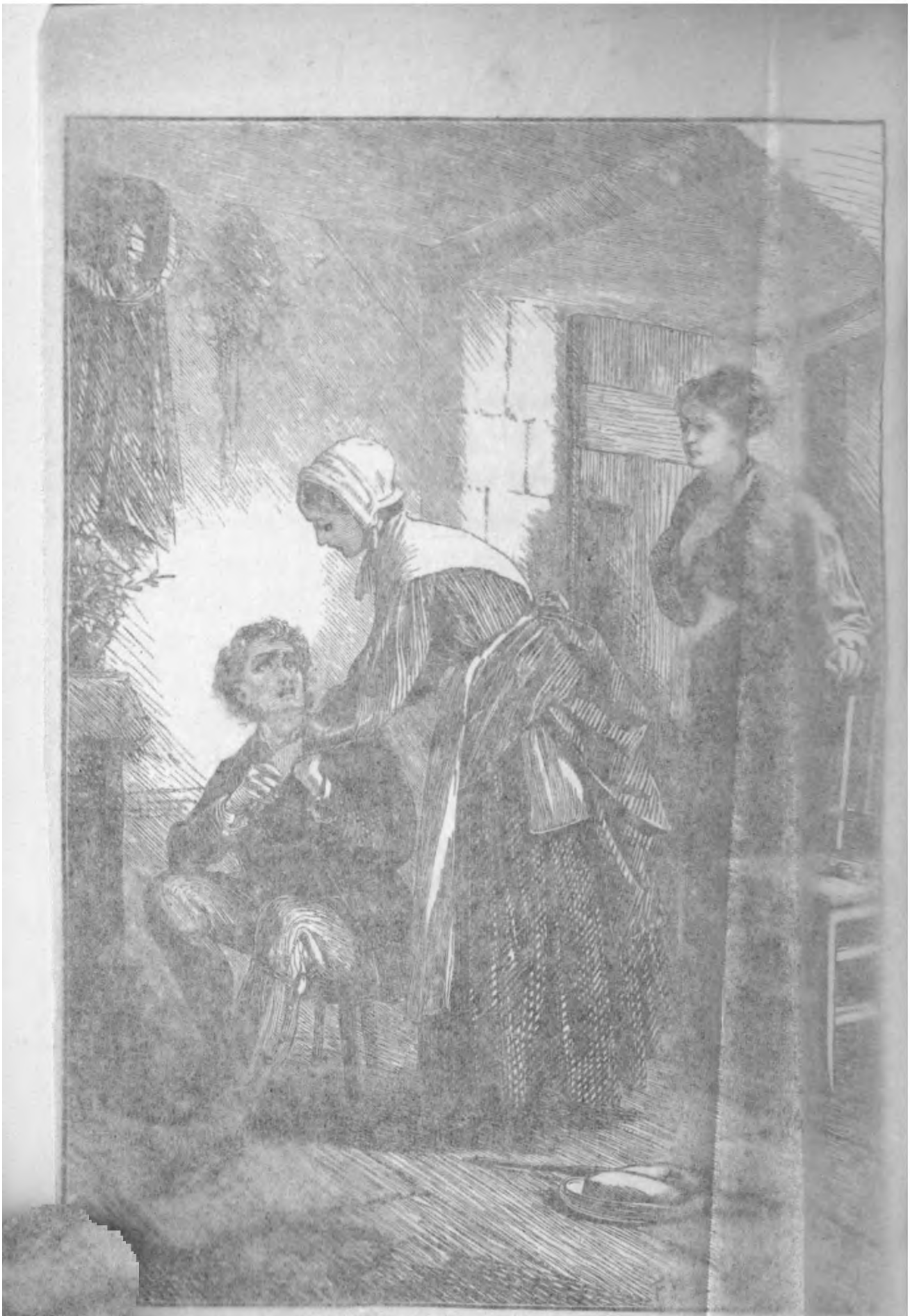
He followed her irresolutely, as one drawn on against his will, but taking up her bundle from the wall by his instinct of help. The house-place was empty when they reached the cottage, and Cassie hurried into the kitchen, which was a few steps lower and opened out into the quarry and garden.

"Lyddy, he's there" ("Who's there?" said she), "like one crazed wi' trouble. Go into him, dearie, comfort him, tak' him in, for my sake. Lyddy—go to him," and the vehemence of her entreaty shook her from head to foot.

Even Lydia's large charity was a little taken aback.



Many Waters will not quench Love.



Many Waters will not quench Love.

"Thou'st sure it's trouble and not wrong?"

"Sure, certain sure; as sure as there's a sun in heaven! Go in and see him thysen."

Lydia went in. It was a sight to touch even a hard heart, and hers was certainly not hard. Roland had set himself on a low stool, with his elbows on his knees and his head hidden on his hands; he did not move as she came up to him, but only said,—

"You're come to send me away?"

"Nay, poor lad, thee'st welcome, in God's name," said she, laying her hand on his shoulder.

He seized her by both her wrists and pressed them almost fiercely, and walked out of the door with a great sob to recover himself.

In a few minutes German appeared, coming in for his tea.

"Eh, Roland, but thee's kindly welcome," said the lad. "Why, thee look'st like a ghost, poor fellow!"

Their greetings were like coals of fire on his head, and it was horrible to him that he could not even grieve over their fallen fortunes, without inferring something about his father either way. He sat, hardly speaking, his hand over his eyes.

"Where art thou going to-night?" said Lydia,

later in the evening, when he had recovered himself a little under their kindly influence. "Thou canst sleep o' th' settle for a turn," she added, with a look at German, to see that he did not object.

It was the first dreamless, quiet sleep poor Roland had had for months, and till German went out to his morning's work he never stirred hand or foot. When Lydia came down she found him washing his face outside the door, where a bright stream of water came flashing out of a stone conduit, fresh from one of the beautiful mountain wells, which poured out of the brown rock of the hill above. He turned up his wet face for the cloth which she gave, as if he had been a child. "I want my mother," said he.

It was almost curious how completely they all accepted her and she considered herself as belonging to the past generation.

Lydia smiled, and turned to look at Cassie, standing in the doorway behind her, smiling too, to see how the haggard look had vanished, though the worn and sad expression remained.

But after breakfast his anxious face came back again. Lydia was sitting on the settle, busy with the mill work, near the small casement window filled with plants, while Cassie seemed possessed with a

demon of tidying. Roland kept looking anxiously in for an opportunity to speak to her, which in a coy, shy fit, she pertinaciously avoided.

"Leave a' that till to-morrow, dearie," pleaded Lydia, vainly. She was as difficult to catch as a bird.

At last, saddened and disheartened, Roland followed her to the lower kitchen, opening on a sort of terrace above the glen, where Cassie had lighted for a moment in her cleaning operations.

"I understan'," said poor Roland, coming up to her with a dimness in his eyes. "Dunna fash thysen to put it into words, my darlin'. Good-by. God bless thee. Thou said'st we mid be friends; shake hands, Cassie."

"Ye dunno understan' at all," she answered in a glow, with a reproachful sob. "Goin' about breaking thy heart (and somebody else's too) a' these long months, and then 'Good-by,' says he, quite quiet—'we mid be friends!'"

All the latter part of which speech was uttered under difficulties, for he had seized her passionately in his arms, and was making up with interest for past arrears.

Half an hour or so afterwards, as they sat on the

little low wall at the bottom of the garden, under the shelter of the French beans, she said,—

"Thou wiltna part me from Lyddy, Roland?"

"I want my wife and my mother too," replied he, looking deep into her eyes. "I'm not sure I dunna love her the best of the two," he went on, smiling at what he saw there: by which it will be seen that Roland's spirits had considerably improved in the last hour.

"Nay, thee mustna say that; thee mun say thee lovest me better nor anything on the earth. Dost thee not, Roland?" pleaded she, looking wistfully into his face.

"My darlin,' ye needna fear for the bigness o' my love. It's as if it were me, from the sole o' my foot to the crown o' my yead; but it's like the big bottle wi' the little neck, it canna get out. Ye should ha' seen me i' that big black place, when I'd a'most lost hope o' thee."

"What's thissen?" whispered she, shyly, touching a bit of string which she saw hanging from his neck as he sat with his arm round her. He pulled it out: it was the new shilling which she had given him to help in buying German's knife.

"'Twould hae been buried wi' me an I'd never

seen thee agin," he answered, tenderly. "'Twere the only thing I iver had o' thine."

"'T has been a cold winter and a wet spring," said she, later, "and the little buds was afraid o' coming out, and a' things looked nipped and wretched; but summer's come at last, even to us, and ye see they're a' green now." And she smiled as she pulled leaf after leaf to pieces, turning away under the light of the loving eyes that were upon her.

"And now, my dearie, about our life. I'd just come and live and work here wi' ye all, but the world's a nasty place, Cassie, and folks is given to evil speaking. What dost think o' our going abroad? Yonder, at Liverpool, I've seen scores o' ships and hundreds o' people goin' off. It seemed so easy, I longed for to go mysen, on'y I couldna bear putting the salt sea atwixt thee and me; 'twould ha' been like cuttin' off my arm."

"Nay, thee niver wouldst ha' had the heart to do that," said she. "We'll see what Lyddy and German says."

Such an idea was very terrible to her inland bringing-up, but she was beginning to understand how much worse it might be to stay. It was a long time before the two returned into the house-place.

"Why," said Lyddy, looking up with a low laugh, "I heerd Roland a wishing' on ye good-by mebbe two hours back; ain't he gone yet?"

"No, and I ain't a going' at all," said Roland, drawing his stool close to her on one side, while Cassie laid her head on her shoulder on the other.

"And what's more, he said as how he wasna sure he didna love his mother the best o' the two. What mun I do to him?"

The tears sprang into Lydia's eyes and her lips trembled as she said, "God bless ye both, my dears; ye're main good to me."

There was something in the feeling that their joy did not make them selfish, which to her keen perceptions of right gave almost as deep a satisfaction as the merely personal one.

That afternoon Cassie's work certainly suffered. Roland followed her to and fro after the cow and the pig, and they wandered together down to the little streamlet which flowed through the glen amid a tangle of lady-fern and brushwood, and up and down the rude steps and the paved path which led to the church, by a steep ascent on the other side. "We'll hae to go there soon oursens, Cassie," said he, as they lingered

on the little bridge made of three large stone flags overarched with fantastic ash and pollard oak, till the long level shadows fell round them.

Few were the words he said about his father, but he made her understand that Joshua had now cut himself off entirely from his son—the last anchor to a possible good life. They could now do nothing, and he shrank from exposing his future wife to the reflection of the terrible doom which might be impending. Surely it was best to go over sea when they could do no good by staying; and then he hinted at his new and horrible dread that he might be called on to give evidence against his father.

"Nanny Elmes telled us so," said Cassie.

One word the poor fellow clung to: he gave her his own version of that night's revelations, which to Roland's mind implied that Joshua had not himself struck a blow. "He never hit un; I believe it, on my soul I do, my darlin'," he went on as they strolled home together.

"I mun get the iron and iron out them creases in thy forehead," said she that evening as she lifted up the mass of light locks which had hung so wildly when he arrived, but were becoming smooth and civilized already.

"I think thee'st done a good bit o' the job by now," observed Lydia, smiling.

He looked fondly at Cassie, and then a shadow passed over his face. "But there's creases there even thou canstna smooth away." And he turned and went out into the quiet night to recover himself.

"We wants to be our lone together for a bit, Lyddy and me," said Cassie at night. "We're very throng, and thee'st sorely i' th' road. Thou mun go a bit out wi' German i' th' morning."

"I'm a wanting sore for to hear about them foreign parts, but I canna get a word out on him. He mun be a bit hard o' hearin', on'y 'tis queer it's allus o' my side o' his yead!" said the lad, smiling at Roland. "Tell us about that there Canady."

German had caught at the notion of a change. Canada was of course to him the vaguest of ideas, but he had come down from the position of a farmer to that of a servant lad with some difficulty. The women were mistresses in their own dwelling, but he was at the beck and orders of a master, after having been one himself, and he had as earnest a desire as Roland to begin afresh.

"Eh, it's a sore thing to leave one's own country," said Lydia.

"If we're a' togither, I dunna see as we ain't just as well t'other side watter and a deal better too," said German, diplomatically appealing to the principle in his womankind that "home consists in the affections and not in the place!"

"Ye dunna think as there's other places in England as would suit," said Lydia a little regretfully.

"An we move at all 'twouldn't be so much differ to go to Canady out and out, would it? One place is pretty much as fur as another, once one's left home," observed Roland, with a not uncommon feeling in his class. "And we'll chance hear some ugly things said an we bide here," repeated he, walking restlessly up and down.

"And where's the money to come from? how much will it cost, Roland? we dunna know even that."

But Roland had all the particulars of the *Jumping Jenny* at his fingers' ends, and there was no fault to be found in his armour at that point.

"And there's the pig will sell for this much, and the cow for that," went on German eagerly, "and the furniture and the garden-stuff."

"All togither won't mak' much above half what ye want," said Cassie, with some satisfaction.

Whereupon her brother began again as if the sum

would come out differently when counted from the other end. "But there's the beds and things, yer know, and the cow and the pigs, and the garden-stuff, yer know."

"We'd best go to bed for to-night," said Lydia, with a smile. "We shan't mak' the count not any bigger wi' turning it t'other way."

"We'll see clearer i' th' morning, mebbe," cried Roland, earnestly, "and the first thing is for to get us married as quick as can be; we shall manage somehow for th' brass I reckon."

When two men have made up their minds distinctly to a thing, it is pretty clear that it will have to be done in the long run, and Lydia lay down that night with a sigh, amidst the joy of the day's work, at the prospect of the uprooting.

"Hadn't ye best write to th' ship's office to inquire—'twon't do no harm?" said German next morning as he went out.

"And I'll send to auld sailor Jack—he were allus good to me, and he'll see to all's being set as it should be about the ship, for when we get thegether the money," observed Roland.

"I mun go buy a sheet o' paper then, and borrow some ink at the public for thee," said Cassie.

Literary pursuits were not common at the cottage, and she hung over him to watch the wonderful performance of making a letter, and gloried in the marvels of his scholarship.

A letter is a composition having a body as it were common to all its varieties, to which any information desirable to communicate is afterwards added as a sort of extra,—*i. e.* "this comes hopping," &c. and "leaves me at these presents," is a necessary part; your announcement that you are married, or ruined, or buried, is but accidental; and Roland's epistle was no exception to the rule.

"And now," said he, with a sigh of relief, when the laborious effort of inditing was over, and stretching himself as he rose, "I'll just best be off after the 'Spurrings;'" * there ain't not any time to be lost. I'd best ca' for German and get him to go wi' me for to show that as all be right to th' parson," added he as he departed.

The women, however, were not fated to have much time to themselves, for not long after he was gone old Nathan appeared at the open door clad in the plum-coloured dittoes of ceremony.

"I've been thinkin' a very deal up and down sin'

* "Speer," to ask.

I were here," said he, standing upright in the middle of the house leaning on his staff. "It's ill living wi' a scolding woman: a man mid as lief be in a windmill; 'it's better to live on a house-top nor with a brawling woman in a wide place.' I want my own fireside again. My missis were that good-tempered, 'twere like the sun upon one's vittals, so now I'm wantin' ye all for to come and bide wi' me—Lyddy for to marry me, and Cassie and German to be my childer. Now will ye?"

"Uncle," said the girl, half laughing, "did ye meet Roland as you was a comin' here?"

"Roland Stracey? No, child. Is he come back i' th' country?"

"Yes; and I be a goin' to marry him, so ye see I canna come."

"Whew!" said the old man, with a kind of whistle. "His father's son!" The world's talk was beginning to be heard even thus early, and "across the sea" seemed to grow fairer in Cassie's eyes.

"We're thinking of going to Canada," said she.

"Well, where's that? It sounds queer too, to be sure. But there's Lyddy. Won't ye hae me, Lyddy? I'm a year younger nor Ashford, and I'd make ye a kind husband."

"And I'm certain sure ye would," answered she, warmly, "and thank ye kindly, Master Nathan; but I've a cast my lot wi' they three, my dear ones, for good and ill, till death do us part."

"Let be, let be," said the old man. "Think on't, turn it over a bit."

"Nay, we canna spare her, uncle," answered Cassie, with a smile and a sort of pride. "There's a many wants her, ye see," added the girl, putting her arm over Lydia's shoulder as she sat at work. And Nathan saw that his long-considered scheme had melted away. Presently the young men came in together, eagerly discussing their plans.

"We've a been up to Parson Taylor," said Roland as he entered. "Th' auld man were a sitting i' th' kitchen wi' his porringer upo' his knees, and he says, 'I hope as you've enough for to pay me my rights. It's a hard matter for me to get through, I can tell ye, Roland Stracey, and that's the truth. 'Tweren't but last Easter as I niver got my dues upo' th' pattens and cocks' eggs.'" (The hens pay for themselves of their produce—the cocks are probably punished for their remissness in not laying.) "'It's queer times these,' says he. 'I dunno whiles whether I stanns on my head or my heels. And

so you and Cassie Ashford's a goin' to put yer horses together? And that's strange,' he says. 'Well, the world's fine and changed sin' I were young.'"

The class to which "the parson" belonged has completely died out, and their existence even is almost forgotten. Miserably paid, the difficulties of communication rendering any intercourse with the outer world impossible, "Parson Taylor," in appearance and manner, was hardly above a common labourer; and although he had once not been an illiterate man, his dialect was as broad as that of his parishioners, with whom indeed he was completely on a level.

"He didna think much o' them parts across the water, when we axed him; but eh, he didna seem to know nowt about it, so to speak; and one mid as well be set i' th' ground like a turmit as canna wag its own head, as not flit when one has a mind to it. Dunna you say so, uncle?" said German, turning eagerly towards him.

The old man had stood by in silence and some mortification for a few minutes; but as he now began to criticize their plans, the rejected suitor became the wise Nathan once more.

"Well, it a'most dazes a man for to hearken ye youngsters talk, as blithe as bees; and there's the

big watern, wi' only a board atwixt ye and death, and the wild beasts and the serpents, and the savages nak'd as when they was born. There was a man I heerd on no longer nor Toosday, and he'd a song said,—

> Peter Gray went out to trade
> In furs and other skins,
> But he got scalped and tommie-hocked
> By those nasty Indahins.

Tommie-hocking—I canna rightly tell what that mid be, but it stan's to reason 'tain't anything pleasant, and you out in the wide world for to risk it."

The women looked a little aghast: the unknown is always terrible, and this new peril bade fair to stand more in the way of their imaginations than all the real obstacles.

"Me and German's pretty good agin they black people, I take it," said Roland, who was not very strong ethnographically, and somewhat doubtful as to the colour of his future enemies. But though he spoke contemptuously he was a little anxious as to the effect of this new view of the case on his womankind. "German mun take his big sword," he added, laughing uneasily.

Nathan, however, was reassured by the effect of his eloquence after his late discomfiture, and he

began graciously to relent. "I wunna say, though, as you're wrong, a' things considered. How much ha' ye gotten together for th' voyage and things?"

"Not much above half, when a' we has is sold," confessed German, unwillingly.

"Law, ye'll be a sight o' time getting the brass together! Come, I'll just lend ye twelve pund, or gi'e it for that matter, an ye canna pay it back. Ye're a' that's left to me o' Bessie," said he with a sigh.

Roland had turned away, chafing at the sting of the thought that he was contributing nothing to the common stock, and was a burden instead of a help to their plans; how could he urge them so eagerly to what was after all so much more for his own benefit than theirs?

Cassie felt what was passing in his mind, though his back was turned; as he stood by the window, she went up to him and laid her hand on his arm.

"'Twill be thy turn out there, Roland. Once we're off, thee'lt have to find and think for a many; ain't we a' now i' one boat? neighbours-fare and more? When one's hurt dunna we a' ache? and what's good for one, don't it make us a' rejoice?" she whispered, looking up into his face with an anxious smile.

He could not help smiling down on her in return; but he shook his head as he said, "Thee'st a deal too good for me, my girl."

"Well," said Nathan, who had been watching them, after a pause, "I mun be thinkin' o' goin'," and he prepared to depart with rather a downcast countenance.

"I wish you'd go with us, uncle," said German.

"I'm too old, my lad, too old by twenty year. But ye mun think o' me whiles, where ye're a goin'."

"You've took good heed we shanna forget ye," said Cassie, with a smile on her lip and a tear in her eye. "You'll come back to the wedding, uncle?" she went on, following him as he left the house. "They say it ain't lucky to hae any one at a marrying as is older nor bride and groom, but Roland and me'll risk that, and a good deal more too an 'twere any good."

CHAPTER XXV.

HOPE IN THE FAR WEST.

That doubt and trouble, fear and pain
And anguish, all, are shadows vain,
That death itself shall not remain.

. . . . . .

And we on divers shores now cast
Shall meet, our perilous voyage past,
All in our Father's house at last.

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

"I WANT to see th' auld place again afore we flit for good," said Cassie a few days later to Roland, and up the long rutted track they went, every step a memory to her. But the house at Stone Edge was dirty and ill-kept, full of screaming children, and little pleasure to see, and they passed on to the Druid's Stones on the Edge (now, alas! destroyed like many of their fellows). The grand old hills spread wide under their feet, beautiful, though the day was grey and colourless, while they looked their last over their old country.

"There's the 'self-stone' above father's close on

Win Hill," said Roland, "and Lose Hill, where yer uncle's biding now with Martha." Probably the names recorded some pre-historic battle of the aborigines with the Danes, who are generally fathered with all fights in that county. The two hills faced each other over a dale lovely to look upon. There is little positive feeling for beauty of scenery in the peasant class: it is a taste of cultivation; but there is a clinging love to the old landmarks, a *sehnsucht*, difficult to describe, but very real and deep.

"When I were at the worst about thee, I used to come up here," said Cassie. "Winter were beginning and it were cold and windy: there were a little blue harebell as growed in among the dark stones, looking so nesh and bright through it all, and I thought it were my hope; and when the weather grew snowy I was 'fraid it would kill my hope, and I just picked it and kep' it in my Bible. Good-by," she went on, going up and stroking the solemn old stones. "You'll niver see us again no more, and you'll not break yer hearts nor yer corners for that," she added, reproachfully.

There is something chilling and disappointing in the contrast between the everlasting hills and our brief day. They will smile as fairly when we are

gone: they care nothing for our love or our sorrow. The want of sympathy falls occasionally like an ache upon one's heart. Something like this passed through her, though she could not have put it into words, and she turned away with a sigh of relief from the insensible nature to the warm human heart beside her, and clung to his arm.

"I'm a poor portion for thee, Cassie," said he, with a sigh. "T'ain't on'y as I've nowt to give thee, but I tak' thee away from a' thou lovest."

"I wunna wed thee an thou sayest such things. Dostna know I care more for thee than for a' the stones as iver was born?" answered she, with a pout.

He passed his hand lovingly under her chin. "Women is queer folk," he said. "I b'lieve as they cares more for us when we've nothink for to gi'e 'um."

"But love,"—answered she smiling; "it wunna do wi'out, Roland,—not wi'out; and ain't that the most precious thing ye can find for to gi'e us i' life?"

When they re-entered the cottage they found Lydia as much "put about" as was possible to her gentle nature.

"Councillor Gilbert have a been here nigh upon an hour," said she, "speering no end o' questions

up and down. Why we hadn't made more rout about——," and she paused; "and what for was we letting thee wed wi' Roland," she added in a low voice, turning to Cassie. "I could ha' cried, he deaved me so wi' it all; but I niver let on as I cared a bit, and the upshot o' it all was, he wanted for to worm out where were thy feyther to be fund. I made as if I'd niver heard tell o' thissen, and I couldna understan' thatten, and at last he got into a rage like, and went off, saying as he b'lieved I were just right down stupid silly; but he'd get what he wanted for a' that."

In fact Lydia's demeanour had been a masterpiece of defensive warfare: she had let down over her whole face and manner that impenetrable veil of apparent stolidity which is so often used by her class as armour against impertinent questions, and which is as difficult to get through as the feather-beds once hung over a castle wall in an old siege.

"The man's a bad un, and he's a grudge at father," said Roland, gloomily. "I wish we were off."

"Ye dunna think as he could forbid the banns?" put in Cassie, anxiously.

"Them lawyers is like ferrets; they're so sharp

that they'd worrit and worrit through a stone wall afore they'd be denied anythink," replied he.

And they hurried on their preparations. They had sold almost everything belonging to them to pay their passage, save warrior Ashford's big sword, which was found not to be allowed for in the square inches of "emigrant's luggage" permitted in the hold, or the still smaller space of "cabin necessaries," and German hung it up in the little chapel up the glen.

"Mebbe I may claim it still," he said, rather sadly.

The earliest possible day after the banns was appointed for the marriage. It was a still cloudy morning in July as they passed along the silent meadows, where the hay had just been carried, and the bright green of the "eddish" was fair to look on; up the "clattered way" they went—the paved path necessary in these mountain regions to make the road passable at all in muddy weather—and through the copsewood, to the little chapel standing at the head of the deep wild glen on its lonely hill-side, surrounded by great old feathery ash. Nothing could be more solitary; and the stillness seemed almost increased by the sound of the single

bell which rang forth from the small ornamented turret perched at one corner—a quiet note, used for strangely different purposes—a wedding, a passing-bell, or a birth. It belonged to the days when bells were properly baptized, and had its name engraved round its neck—"Melodiâ nomen Magdalenæ campana resonat"—and now gave forth its quiet welcome, that peculiarly restful, peaceful sound which a village bell seems to "gather in its still life among the trees."

"The parson ain't come," said the old clerk, looking out from a window of the tower. "I'll go down and open for ye. Things ain't hardly fettled yet within."

As they stood silently before the closed door, Cassie's face was full of thought. It is a solemn moment for a woman, and must always be so to her, if she thinks at all: the death of the old life, the birth of the new, as she stands on the threshold, as it were, of an unknown future, giving up her separate and individual existence for ever, and becoming part of another,—it can be no light matter to her, however deep her affection. Cassie, fortunately for her, had been made to think and feel too much by the sufferings and anxieties of her past life, to take marriage

as easily as the peasant class (and indeed a much higher one, for that matter) so often does.

"Thee'rt not afeard, Cassie, o' trustin' thysen to me?" said Roland, in a low husky voice, with a pressure of her hand that was almost painful.

The girl's expression in reply, as she looked up to him, though she did not speak, told more forcibly than by any words how entire was the confidence of her love. Lydia sat silently a little way off, on the low stone wall, and waited. No one was ever less inclined to revert to herself and her own sensations; but it was impossible not to contrast her own loveless marriage, so few years before, in that very church, with theirs; to feel that, in spite of trials, in spite of griefs before and behind them, they had in their affection a blessing which could not be taken away, and which had been denied to her. Nathan stood by with rather a rueful countenance, leaning on his staff.

"I likes a bell," observed he, for conversation. "They says as how the Deevil can't abide it nohow, and as it keps off ill things when a soul's passing. And mebbe that's wanted for a wedding as well, sometimes," he ended, as the old parson came up hurriedly.

"Well, young uns," said he, "you was nigh having no weddin' at all this morning. I'd one wi' me this ever so long as would ha' forbid it an he could. 'I'd ha' Roland Stracey took up,' he says, 'as particeps to the murder, and then the old un would turn up in notime;' but I pacified him that it weren't his business, and would mak' a big scandal. I'd a hard matter to stop him, he worrited me so. You'd best mak' haste, I can tell ye."

"So there was very ill things i' th' wind for the bell to tackle," said Nathan, in a low voice, smiling as he followed them into the chapel.

The marriage ceremony was quickly through. "And I wish ye God speed, and well through yer troubles, for you'll have plenty of them," said the old minister as he dismissed them.

"But nothing can't part us now," said Cassie, with a sigh of relief, as they came out again into the open air, "naythir ill report nor good report, and we two is one to bear them."

"Yes," observed Nathan, overhearing her, "'two is better than one, because they has a good reward for their labour, for if one fall the other will lift up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone.' Ah," added he, with a half smile, as he saw her take her husband's

arm, "I dunnot believe as my Bessie ever 'linked-armed' wi' any man but me a' her days as we was togither."

When they reached the little stone foot-bridge on their return to the cottage, they saw Nanny leaning over the stone wall of the terrace looking out for them. She had arrived to see the last of her friends.

"Well-a-day, I'm fine and pleased for to see you so content, and I'm hoping as it's all right, but marriage is a vera tickle thing—whiles better, whiles worser. I buried my first husband when Johnny were but two year old, and then I chanced upo' another, and I mid a'most a been as well without one. He were a sore un to drink, and so I had to fettle for mysen and him and the boy too."

"Nay," replied Nathan, "most things is kittle,—it's according as ye looks upon 'um. It's a sore thing to be alone, and it's what God A'mighty didn't see as it were good,—and yet it's ill convanient to ha' company as is not to yer mind. And I've a got both on 'um, it sims to me," he added in a low voice.

"I've a brought ye some pins and tapes, and a little o' all things as is agreeable," said Nanny, helping to give a final touch to the packings. "Ye'll feel mighty comikle, I tak' it, wi'out a carrier

nor a 'sponsible body peddling about wi' a' ye need in those wild woods as German were a talking on. Ye'll want sore to be back again. I wish ye a' well through. Ye'll be a sore loss to me anyhow, I know that."

"Ha' ye got plenty o' haps? The wind's high west to-day" (*i.e.* close upon north). "'Tis main cold. The sayin' is

> Ne'er cast a clout
> Till May be out,"*

moralized Nathan; "but I think as it shouldna be till July. I wish I were ten year younger, and I think I'd a gone wi' ye. Home's home, be it never so homely, but it'll seem cold and lonesome very for me when ye be a' flitted. Tak' heed," added he, to a boy who was wheeling off some of the goods in a wheelbarrow and dropped a fresh thing at every step. "Ye'r' but a moithering chap."

"'Tain't my fault," said he. "I canna help it."

"Eh, excuses ain't nowt—what were it Aaron said? 'I put in the gold and there came out a god,'" said Nathan, striving to be his old self and "keep up their spirits."

He seemed altogether to have forgotten his inten-

* "Lord Monmouth using oft that saying." 1649.

tions of marriage, and treated Lydia exactly as he did his niece.

A number of neighbours had come in to see the last of the emigrants, but they gradually dropped off, and only he and Nanny went on with them to the turning which led from their own valley to the high-road. The wrench to Lydia was great, and she suffered very much, though there was no outward sign of it in her quiet face. The tearing up by the roots, as it were, of all her old associations seemed, with her tenacious affections, to give her a separate pang with every stick and stone which they passed on their way. Cassie walked along by her husband's side in a kind of maze. The outer world was nothing to her then. She was living in her own sensations, which seemed to her the only reality, (for the time at least,) and all other things, whether to go or stay, at home or abroad, indifferent. "For better for 'worser,' for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and obey," seemed ringing in her ears. They all sat down on a bank with their bundles and awaited the waggon. They sat in silence: even Nanny did not utter a word. The soft carpet of thyme and cistus and eyebright under their feet gave forth a pleasant smell,—and smells have a

singular power of association, and, at times, bring after them a whole history of recollections in places and years far removed. Ever after in Lydia's mind the scent of thyme brought back the whole scene, the bitter sweet of the parting, the rocky hills, the valley, the feathery wych elms, and the old man murmuring to himself, as he sat amongst them, "'Tain't for very long."

"No," said German, thinking that he meant the waggon, and pointing to it as it came slowly down the road, which wound like a white riband along the green hill-side. "It won't be long now."

"Nothink ain't for very long, thank God," said the old man, half aloud.

"God bless yer, childer," he continued, rising solemnly as the sound of the jangling bells of the horses came near. "I shall see yer faces here no more, but we shall meet o' the other side the river i' th' morning, please God, some time. God A'mighty kip yer in a' yer ways, and prosper ye in a' yer dealin's, and have mercy upon yer, and upo' me too," he ended, as he passed his hard hand over his eyes and turned sadly towards Youlcliffe.

Nanny was too busy stowing away bundles, helping to arrange cloaks and seats, to be quite aware that the last moment was come, till the heavy

waggon was once again under way, when she burst into a wild kind of sob. "And I haven't so much as an old shoe to throw arter ye for luck!" she cried out in a loud voice, as she held out her arms towards them. It was the last they saw of their old home as they turned the shoulder of the hill.

They were obliged to sleep a night or two in Liverpool before the ship sailed, where the old sailor took them in hand; but though Roland went about the town looking anxiously out for his father he could not find him. As the boat left the shore for the ship, however, with a host of sympathizers and friends standing about, and a ringing final cheer, the crowd parted for an instant, and he saw the face he knew so well, looking earnestly after them, sad, dark, and lowering. But as he caught his son's eye, he smiled, and raised his cap above his head with a shout and a cheer that went to Roland's heart.

"Is it him?" said Cassie, pressing close to his side as she saw him turn pale.

"Yes, dearie, and he's a shouten to make as if he were main glad—poor feyther!"

It was almost the solitary piece of self-denial of Joshua's life; let us hope it was counted to him—it was his last gleam of good.

His children prospered in their new land. They had a hard fight to begin with, but they won their way to a farm in the backwoods in time. "Penetanguisheen"—the lake of the silver strand—became a very pleasant homestead, which they called Stone Edge, in spite of geography. They kept together. German never married; women such as he had been used to were scarce out there, and he had all that he wanted in his mother and in Cassie's home and children.

Roland always held that his father had struck no blow against Ashford, and that this made a great difference; Cassie, as a good wife, agreed with him, and Lydia held her tongue. She worked with head and heart and hands for them all, and was a happy woman in her loving toil and the love of them all in return. Sometimes as she nursed Cassie's numerous babes a dreamy look came over her face, and they knew she was thinking of her dead boy, and Cassie would come behind her with one of her old loving caresses—or, better still, send a small tyrant, her first-born, a little German, whom Lydia had tended in all their early struggles, and to whom she clung greatly and was supposed to spoil.

It was not much more than a month after they sailed when the horsedealer was taken up for some far inferior crime, and "Lawyer Gilbert" getting scent of it, had the man put on his trial for the murder. He, of course, laid the chief blame upon Joshua, declaring that he had suggested the robbery as a means of freeing himself from debts which he could not otherwise pay; that he had ridden behind him to the spot where Ashford was set upon, had held the horse and shared the spoil, with a great deal more which seemed to be apocryphal; but it was impossible to unravel the truth from the lies in his statement.

Joshua was still wandering under a feigned name about Liverpool, when one day, while he was boozing grimly and sadly in a low public-house near the docks, a friendly voice said in his ear, "Tak' heed, they're arter ye."

He rose and went out, he hardly knew where. The sun was setting behind a mass of dark red angry-looking clouds, and the tall masts and rigging stood out black and distinct against the sky as he came out on the shore. Far in the offing was a ship in full sail: he stood for a moment watching her, as she seemed to follow on the track of the only thing he had ever loved, his son; then his thoughts went

back to his "troubles," as he called them. He had made a bad bargain with the Devil: the county notes had been of scarcely any value; the seeming treasure had turned into dead leaves, as in an old fairy tale.

"It were hardly worth while," he muttered to himself, as he came to a crowd of men unloading a timber-vessel. It was not a lofty sentiment for such a crime, but some petty detail seems to fill a mind stupefied by guilt and drink to the utter exclusion of the great horror itself. In the bustle and confusion he was struck by a plank, and at the same moment a tipsy man hustled against him. "What for is thattens?" said Joshua, suspiciously, returning what he thought a blow. In the drunken squabble which ensued he lost his footing, and fell over the river wall among the stones on the shore, and was only rescued much injured and half-drowned. They took him to the workhouse, and when the slow constables of that day came upon his trail they found him dying. "Joshua Stracey?" said one of them, laying a hand on his arm gently. "Joshua Stracey it is," said he, mechanically, without opening his eyes. "It werena worth while," he repeated again, and passed away.

The horsedealer was found guilty and executed.

An old guide-book of some fifty years ago, describing this part of the country, tells how a murder was committed in this valley, and after a solemn little sermon against highway robbery and murder, proceeds to say "that the murderer was hanged on the scene of his wickedness," and adds, without the smallest surprise or disgust, evidently as an ordinary event, that his body was hanging there in chains, on a gallows erected for it, when he (the guide-book) passed that way some time after.

There has been more change in the habits of thought and feeling among us during the last fifty years than had taken place during the previous eight hundred.

It was a bright autumn day in Canada some seven or eight years after. A building "bee" (work to be repaid in kind), in which all the few neighbours far and wide had joined, had just raised a new and larger loghouse for the family, which had pretty well outgrown the old shed. Roland and German, two tall, strong, bearded fellows, with axes in their hands, were just finishing a "snake" fence, while Cassie, now a handsome matronly woman, stood at

the door, with a child on each side, calling them into supper.

"Where's mother?" said German. "Is she after the weaning calf?"

At that moment, however, she came in sight, with her little squire proudly carrying the calf's jug. Their course might be traced all over the farm by the incessant prattle of one of the loving pair, while the almost entire silence of the other did not seem to prevent the most perfect sympathy between the friends.

She seemed now younger than Cassie, with that peculiarly placid other-world look which keeps the heart and the expression young till death.

"You spoil un, mother," said Cassie, with a smile.

"Nay, I dunna humour un, and 'tain't love that spoils : the sun ma's the fruit rippen. I mind when I were a little un and hadn't got it," replied she, with an answering smile.

"But we dunna see that the fruit didna rippen wi'out," added German affectionately.

They stood for a moment at the door of their new dwelling. It was on a promontory overlooking the beautiful lake : the forest spread wide all round the shore ; their own clearing was the only bit of

civilization in sight. The woods were touched with the magnificent colour of an American autumn, and there was a gorgeous sunset, besides, over all.

"Yer wouldn't hae seen such a sight as that in England," said Roland, looking west.

The women turned towards the old country in the east, where a little moon was rising in a pale delicate blue sky. A woman is generally more apt to look towards the past than forward: a man's mind inclines more towards the future than to recollect.

"Eh, there was fair things too in the dear old land," said they, "though things mebbe werena all so gaudy for the look."

THE END.

London: Printed by SMITH, ELDER and Co., Old Bailey, E.C.