

FIELDS OF THE  
FATHERLESS

JEAN ROY



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THE FIELDS OF THE FATHERLESS



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# THE FIELDS OF THE FATHERLESS

BY

JEAN ROY

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Enter not into the fields of the fatherless, for  
their Redeemer is mighty; He shall plead  
their cause with thee.



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## CHAPTER I

### MY HOME

I've learned to judge of men by their own deeds ;  
I do not make the accident of birth  
The standard of their merit.

Mrs. HALE.

WE lived in a little village by the sea. My earliest recollection is of a house facing the water. It was a queer old house. The entrance was through a narrow alley. Turning to the right, one went down two steps, and into an open, paved passage, which was exclusively our own. At the end of it was our door in a little porch, formed by an outside stair, which led to the houses above.

We were very proud of our entrance, and kept the flags scrubbed white with sandstone. We had a long stool at the door, painted green, with a row of potted geraniums on it. On one side, the kitchen window looked into the passage. Facing it there was a wall about four feet high. Back about a foot and a half on the ground, which was level with the top of the wall, a wooden paling, painted green, ran along the length of the passage.

There was one drawback, however. When it rained, all the muddy water came through the paling on to our clean flags, and left them in a

puddle. At night there used to be a thick fringe of long, slimy worms along the top of the wall. We would get a handful of salt, sprinkle it along, and they would disappear like lightning.

Standing at the house door, one could see right into the room. The lobby was short and narrow. The kitchen was just beside the house door, to the right. It was very small, and had a concealed bed. There was a door in the kitchen leading to a tiny room which served as a bedroom for my two sisters and me.

It was always dark in there, the only light it had coming from a small window looking into the public alley. The window was high up, but by putting a chair on the bed, and standing on top, I could push my shoulders through, and catch a glimpse of the sea.

Another advantage we had, though perhaps an unworthy one, was, that when people stood in the alley to talk, if the window were open we could hear all they said without being seen. Very often we heard unflattering remarks about ourselves.

On a Saturday, if I could slip in to the window when it was dark, I got great fun watching the drunk men coming up the alley. There was a big tenement at the back, and the alley was the only entrance. They would come up holding on to the walls. Just when they were underneath the window, I would tip off their caps with a little stick. They would curse and swear, and fall all over the alley, in the search for their headgear. Sometimes I would put a white apron on my head, whiten my face, and stand close to the window.

Perhaps a woman would come up with messages. She would happen to glance at the window, then give such a jump, and run up the passage like the wind.

At times my game would be rudely interrupted by my grandfather's voice behind me, shouting angrily :

'Whit the divil are ye wantin' up there?'

'I was lookin' if the window was snibbed,' I would answer innocently.

'Snib it then, an' come to the kitchen out o' there,' he would say unsuspectingly.

I was the youngest of the family. There were seven of us in the house—my father, mother, my sisters Meg and Ann, and my brother Jack. At least I always called them so, but I knew that in reality they were my grandparents, and my aunts and uncle. I was the illegitimate child of an older daughter. She was a barmaid, and, before I was a year old, she eloped with her master. She was in London. We used to get letters from her sometimes. My grandparents felt the disgrace terribly. Her name was hardly ever mentioned. Sometimes when they were in bed, and thought no one listening, I have heard them speak bitterly of the shame she had brought on them. I was never told anything, but I gathered it from what I had overheard.

We had a relation of my grandmother's staying with us. Barney was his name. He was a gardener. Though up in years, he was jolly, and fond of a joke. Sometimes we kept two lodgers. Then Jack and Barney got our bed in the little room, and

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my sisters and I slept on a shake-down on the floor.

When the bed was spread down, there was so little room, that we had to stand on it to undress ourselves. Barney was generally in bed long before us. When we went to bed, he would be snoring. He was a frightful snorer. There would be a long-drawn, gurgling sound, as if he were choking, then a great gasp. It was most eerie to listen to him.

It was always late when my brother came in. When he lay down, he used to prod Barney in the ribs to make him stop snoring. Barney would get mad, and that made us laugh.

'Who the divil could sleep, an' you's yelpin' away there?' he would mutter angrily.

In five minutes he would be at it again as bad as ever.

I have always had a great love of the sea. I liked to sit in the big room facing the water. We never reached the dignity of a parlour. It was always the 'big room' and the 'wee room.' I sat at the window, and listened to the noise of the waves on the shore. I liked it best on stormy days; then I would watch the boats that were anchored in the bay. Every minute they would look as if they would capsize, and my heart would be in my mouth. I would think of the stories I had read of derelict vessels found with dead men floating about inside.

How beautiful it was when the moon sailed from behind the hills, and threw a silver bridge across the water. Sometimes a big liner would pass across



the bridge, with all its lights reflected in the sea, making it look like a fairy scene. To me, the liners were full of happy people going to enchanted lands where everything was beautiful, and life a golden dream.

I used to think a lot about my mother. When they talked of Nora, I always listened intently, but didn't ask any questions. Old acquaintances of my grandmother's would look at me and say :

' My ! but that wean 's like the mother.'

My grandmother would shake her head and answer :

' Faith ! she is. Her very spit.'

Then would follow a whispered conversation, with many covert glances over to where I was sitting, apparently engrossed in a book, but in reality straining every nerve to catch a word.

I had built for myself a wonderful romance. My mother must be a beautiful woman. In London, she would have a big house, with carriages and a lot of servants. No doubt we were too poor for her now. She must be terribly ashamed of us.

Perhaps some day she would come back for me. In imagination I saw her lovely carriage stopping in front of our house. All my companions would run to see what it was. The Jacksons, who stayed above us, and were madly jealous if we only got a new door mat, would be hanging half out of the window. My mother would stare at them haughtily. I would rush out, and she would clasp me in her arms. I had gone over this so often in my mind, that I began to think it would really happen.

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I had few companions at school. The other girls seemed to think me beneath them. They used often to call me names and slap me. I have heard people say that the schooldays are the happiest in one's life. I haven't found it so. I never look back on my schooldays with pleasure. Two girls in particular used to bully me. I was always in terror of them. They are married now, but I often meet them in the street. I have the feeling, from the look in their eyes, that they would still like to punch me. I am inclined to put up my hand to ward off a blow.

The girls I knew used to go picnics to the woods, but I was never allowed. Even in those days I felt that I was considered different from other children. My grandparents seemed to be on the watch for some evil growth in me. I would have been very unhappy, but that I lived in a world of my own. I was very fond of reading. I used to get into a corner of the window, hang up a shawl on the backs of chairs, and make a little alcove. When my eyes got tired of reading, I would stop for a little, and watch the sea.

In the changing clouds I used to see wonderful things: palaces, flying angels, sometimes a company of soldiers on horseback. I never tired of watching them.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WEE FOLK

And now they throng the moonlight glade,  
Above—below—on every side,  
Their little minion forms array'd  
In the tricky pomp of fairy pride!

J. R. DRAKE.

My grandparents belonged to the North of Ireland. They had come over to Scotland when they were about twenty. My grandfather was an honest, God-fearing man. We held him in awe, and would never have dreamt of taking any liberties with him. We were kept down very much. My brother did as he pleased, but my sisters and I got very little freedom. Meg, the younger, used to grumble, but Ann didn't mind so much.

When my grandmother was younger she used to go out and work in the gardens with my grandfather. My mother would be left to watch the younger children. Very little watching they got. She would go off on the hunt for some of her companions, and bring them in. They would tack a shawl down on the floor to deaden the noise, and dance until they were tired. Then she would go to the shop where they got their groceries, get a lot of fancy biscuits and other things, take them home, and they would all have a fine spread.

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Neither of my grandparents could read, so they couldn't tell what items were in the 'Tammy book.' In those days there was a lot of money coming into the house. There was a brother older than my mother working too. My grandfather was only a labourer, but he often worked overtime. There was a great deal of drinking on a Saturday night. I have often heard Ann tell Meg all about it.

From what I gathered, my mother seemed to have run wild.

'I've an awful sore head,' she would say. 'I think I'll take a run out.'

'Wull ye?' my grandfather would answer. 'No, damn the fit.'

She would hide the meal, or the tea, or something, then say innocently, as if she had just discovered it: 'Oh, I forgot we were needin' tea. I finished it at tea-time.'

My grandfather would glare at her suspiciously.

'If ye're no back in twinty minutes, Heaven help ye,' he would say angrily.

Half an hour would pass, an hour, and still no sign of her. Then my grandfather would get wild. He would take a stick, and go out to look for her. Some of her companions would see him coming, and warn her. She would hide up a tree, and watch him. He would search everywhere, but wouldn't find her. It would be hours before she returned home. Then she would be left black and blue. It didn't seem to affect her in the least. She used to say she would get the beating anyway, so she might as well have full value.

One night she was caught. She had complained of toothache, and pretended she was going to the dentist's to get a tooth out. My grandfather was suspicious of her, and followed. When she had gone a short distance, she was joined by a young man. She took his arm, and they walked on. My grandfather slipped up behind them, and laid his stick across the young man's shoulders, who took to his heels and ran. Then he whipped my mother the whole way home.

One day my mother and a few others were having a run down a hill. She had her sister Ann on her back. Somehow, she slipped and fell. Her foot came down heavily on Ann's arm. She was afraid to tell them at home about it. The arm got very painful. Gradually it got worse. Then the story came out about how it happened.

My grandparents were in a state. They took Ann to a doctor, and he told them to poultice her arm. They worked at it for months, but it got no better. They then took her to a skin specialist in Glasgow, that they had heard great things of. He said the arm must come off at once. My grandfather told him angrily that no doctor would cut the arm off his wean, and brought her back home again. They started the poulticing again, but it was no good. Her whole arm began to get bad.

One would have thought that that would have sobered my mother a bit, but no.

My grandfather, who was very generous when he had money, one Saturday night bought her a hat at thirty shillings. That, to us, was a fabulous

sum to give for a hat, six or seven shillings being our limit. On the Monday she was at her usual game of staying out. When she came in, my grandfather tore the hat off her head, and stuck it into the heart of the fire.

Yet she was very good-hearted too. When she went to work, every time she came home she would have something for each of them. She was always light-hearted, and full of fun. The day she eloped, they had never suspected anything. She had said she was going to the dentist's to have a tooth out that was troubling her. The hours passed until it came to bedtime, and she hadn't returned. Getting suspicious that something was wrong, they went into a room to look at her box. It was locked, but they broke it open, to discover that it was empty.

Afterwards they found out that she had smuggled in two bags, belonging to the man she ran away with, filled them with her things, and slipped them out of the room window to him when it was dark. That was the last that was seen of her.

My grandmother had a weakness for gin, and slipped it in when she got the chance. As a rule she was kindly and good-hearted, but drink seemed to rouse the devil in her. The least drop went to her head. I kept out of her way when she had any. She used to swear a great deal. When my grandfather came in for his meals, she would say insulting things to him. He was always very patient with her.

'Woman, woman,' he would say reprovingly, 'dinna take the Almighty's name in yer mooth.'

She would get worse. He would scarcely eat a bite, but with a sigh rise and go back to his work.

My grandfather was not a regular drinker. It always upset him. He didn't seem to be able to touch it without getting full up. The next day he would be so ill he would have to lie in bed. Afterwards he would go down on his knees when he thought there was no one listening, and ask God to forgive him, and promise not to touch it again for perhaps six months. He never took the pledge, but that promise was always sacred to him. Exactly on the day his time was up, he would get full.

He was an Orangeman, and generally walked in the procession on the 12th of July. He was sure to be drunk then.

Jack never liked to see him going to these demonstrations. He said they were a bad, drunken lot.

One 12th there was an awful row at the station, coming home. My grandmother was with him that time. She lost him, just before the train started, but got into a compartment beside some women she knew, thinking he would be sure to be in the train. Meg and I were down at the station waiting for them. My grandmother told us how she had lost my grandfather, and we looked about anxiously for him. He was not to be seen. Every one was there but him. The men we asked said they had thought he was in the train all right. As there were a few black eyes and skinned noses, as evidence of the scuffle, my grandmother thought that maybe they had half killed him, and left him lying somewhere.

Hours afterwards he appeared, covered with grime from head to foot. He was very particular when he was going anywhere to have everything nice. He had left in the morning wearing his best black suit, and a white shirt, fresh from the laundry. When he came home, the shirt was the same colour as the suit. He had got out at the wrong station, and walked home the rest of the way through the long tunnel. How a drunk man could do such a thing, and live to tell it was a marvel. While he was in the tunnel, several trains must have passed through it.

My grandmother was very fond of making patchwork quilts. Almost every afternoon she sat and sewed them. She had a box, packed full, and took a great pride in them.

She must have been a fine-looking woman when she was young. She used to tell us proudly that the minister who married her had said she was the finest-looking girl he had ever married, and he wasn't a young man either.

She always wore a druggert apron, a woollen neck shawl, and a black woollen 'mutch' with the ends tied under her chin. If she were going anywhere, she wore a bonnet and beaded dolman.

She was very straight, had fine features, and the neatest foot I have ever seen. It was small, with a high, arched instep. None of her family could equal her in looks. Meg was most like her.

She often sang as she sewed. Such quaint songs, that had been composed by people she had known in her young days in Ireland.



They seemed to be made on passing events. There was one that she was always singing, about a lady who had fallen in love with a poor young man.

‘O Donnachie, but I love you well,  
I love you better than tongue can tell,  
I love you better than all my kin,  
When you call at midnight, I’ll let you in.

They’ve got a new song for to divart,  
To drive all sorrow from my heart,  
It’s an oul’ sayin’, ay but it’s true:  
I’ll no change the oul’ ever for the new.’

She would often tell us of her young days.

‘Faith!’ she would say, with a toss of her head, ‘ye’ll niver be a woman like yer mother. I was workin’ for the strangers when I was ten. We had to be hardy in them days. I earned the first boots I iver wore, an’ they were kep’ for the church, or goin’ to the fair. We walkit barefit till we were near the toon, then we put on our shoes an’ stockin’s. Faith! I was the boy to get the lads. The fellas wid be killin’ one anither to see who wid get treatin’ me to peppermint punch, an’ ribbons for me hair. No, faith! nane o’ ye’s will iver be as good-lookin’ as yer mother.’

She had a great belief in fairies. One afternoon we were all sitting round the fire, helping her to sort out the patches for her quilts, she began to talk about them.

‘Did you ever see one yourself?’ asked Meg.

‘No,’ she answered, ‘I niver did. My brother James saw them though!’

'Tell us about it,' I said eagerly.

'Yin night,' she began, 'a fine, moonlight night it wis, I min' it fine, as clear as day, my brother James was comin' home from the market——'

'Had he any drink?' interrupted Meg.

'No, divil a drap had crossed his mooth,' answered my grandmother impatiently.

She stuck her needle carefully into her sewing, folded her hands on her lap, stared thoughtfully into the fire a few minutes, then continued:

'Well, there wisn't a sowl on the road but himsel'. Suddenly he heard the soun' o' music. He looked up kin' o' startlet to see whit it wis. The road wis full o' fairies, dancin' away like mad. Wee craters they were, but faith! they had seen him, an' before ye could 'ave clappit yer han's, they had disappeared like magic. He stood trimblin'. Fine he knew, that if ye interfered with them, ye wid niver have luck. Any way, he thought he wid go on. He come to a cove that went under the grun'.

'There was their wee spinnin'-wheels, an' a' their bits o' chairs an' things. He touched some o' them, but they went to dust under his fingers. When he came hame, he was white as a sheet. Efter that, when he went to the market, he come hame before it was dark. But he was always queer efter it.'

'But what made him queer?' asked Ann, who had drawn her stool over beside my grandmother, and was arranging the loose patches in a neat little pile. 'Was it the fright he got?'

'No, faith! it was the fairies that did it to him

for interferin' with their hoose. Deed it's a bad thing to interfere with them at all,' returned my grandmother solemnly.

'Mercy! we've sat till the fire's nearly out,' exclaimed Meg. She drew the red embers together, got a shovelful of coals from the bunker under the kitchen dresser, and, having made up a good fire, drew her chair close against the fender, and sat down again.

'Did you know of anybody else that had seen the fairies?' asked Ann eagerly.

'Deed ay!' answered my grandmother, a far-away look in her eyes.

'There was John Henry Connel, a fine big strappin' lad. Man nor divil couldna frighten him. He telt James he wished he could come across them. He would soon make a scatterment among them. Faith! one day he was at the market. He had stayed late, an' was well canned up before he left the toon. He was seen to take the same road that James had ta'en, the night he saw the fairies.'

'And what happened?' I asked breathlessly, as she paused.

'He was niver seen or heard tell o' again,' she answered in an awed whisper.

A loud bang made us all jump. Meg got up, and very nervously went into the lobby to see what it was.

'It's only the room door that has shut with the draught,' she said in a relieved tone, as she returned to her seat.

'And then there was the M'Quatties,' resumed

my grandmother. ' Their ferm was near oor hoose. They used to empty a' their dirty water doon the siver at their back door. One day Jean M'Quattie was parin' tatties at the sink in the kitchen. The back door was open. She happened to look up, an' there was one o' the wee folk stanin' in the middle o' the floor. Jean got a great start. She was dressed a' in green, an' was about the half length o' me arm.

"Ye'll have to change your siver to the ither side," she says to Jean. "A' your dirty water comes doon oor lum," an' oot she went.

'Though Jean was frighten't at the time, she niver bother't hersel'. No long after a coo fell sick an' died. Still Jean kep' throwin' the dirty water doon the siver, niver connectin' the fairies with the dead coo. Jean was workin' in the kitchen a while after, when faith! back come the wee crater in green.

"If you don't shift your siver," she says, angry like, "we'll no' leave a livin' coo in your byre," an' turn't an' went oot the door.

'Jean looked after her, fair dazed. Still they niver bothered. Another coo took bad an' died. The third one took bad, then they got feared. That very day they sent for a man, an' he shifted the siver to the other side o' the hoose. Next mornin' the coo that had been badly was fine. They niver saw the wee body in green again. Faith! no, they're no' canny.'

## CHAPTER III

### THE DEVIL'S VISIT

The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed ;  
Loud, deep and lang, the thunder bellow'd :  
That night, a child might understand  
The deil had business on his hand.

BURNS.

At this time we had two lodgers. They were Irish labourers. One was a middle-aged man called Lyons ; the other was about twenty, and, as Lyons said, a bit of a softie. His name was Johnny Boyle.

It was the cold, winter days, and after they had finished their tea, they used to come into the kitchen to chat with my grandfather and Barney. We always had a great fire of gas cinders. Meg and grandmother would knit. Ann would be crocheting ; she could not knit with her arm. Sometimes my brother Jack would stay in. He was a sett-maker, and had to sit outside all day, so on cold, wet nights, he was glad to toast himself at the kitchen fire. Lyons used to keep us all laughing at his stories about the people in Ireland.

One night Johnny Boyle brought in a pack of cards. Jack and Lyons said they would have a game with him. They started to play. Barney and my grandfather looked on. Then my grand-

father began to tell about something that had happened in Ireland.

'One night,' he began, 'jist a night like this, a fair whustler, Jock Kelly and Paddy Stewart were sittin' havin' a game o' kerds. Paddy's wife was away keepin' a daughter that was badly, an' Jock had come in to keep him company. Well whatever, they were playin' away when they hears a knock at the door. Paddy open't it, wonderin' who it could be. It was a man Paddy had niver clapped eyes on afore.

"I've lost my road," he says, "an' if ye would let me shelter here I would be thankful."

The others had stopped their game to hear the story. Lyons sat with his mouth wide open, as he always did when he was interested, but Johnny Boyle was kind of frightened looking.

'Well,' continued my grandfather, 'Paddy didn't know what to do. He didna like the man's looks, but it wasn't a night anybody could turn man or beast from the door.

"Come in," he says, "ye're welcome to shelter here to the morn." Heth! in he comes. There was a blast o' win' come in along with him that nearly took the roof off the hoose. He looked roun' them a' with eyes that were like two livin' coals.

"Oh, you're havin' a game," says he; "have you any objection to me takin' a han'?"

"None whatever," says Paddy, an' the three o' them sat down to the table.'

My grandmother rose, and, drawing the fire together, put on some more cinders. Johnny Boyle

edged his chair closer to the fire, and I managed to get my grandfather between me and the door.

'Well,' resumed my grandfather, 'they played away for a long time, an' nobody spoke. They were shufflin' the kerds for anither game, when Jock happen't to drop one on the floor. He bent doon to lift it, when, heth! he saw the cloven fit under the table.'

We listened breathlessly. My grandmother stopped her knitting.

'He was in a terrible state,' continued my grandfather, 'but he knew there was only one thing he could do. If ye mention the name o' the Almighty, the divil can't stan' it. He has to fly. So Jock lifts the kerd, gets to his feet, an' says to the man :

' "In the name o' the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are you? "

'Begod! he couldn't stan' that. He went through the roof like a flash o' lightnin'. They could hear the whustle o' him above the storm. At the same minute, a blast o' win' shook the hoose 'til the very walls trembl't. After that night, no' for love or money would Jock or Paddy touch a kerd.' My grandfather shook his head solemnly.

'Heth no! they're a bad thing the kerds. I would have nothing to do with them. There's something o' the divil in them.'

Lyons laughed, and began to tell some other story. Johnny Boyle shuffled uneasily on his chair, and listened intently to the whistling of the wind, as it rattled the window, and sent the piece of carpet,

that was lying within the kitchen door, flapping up and down.

After a while we all went to bed. I was glad I hadn't to go along the lobby in the dark. We were sleeping in the wee room. Meg, Ann, and I sat for a little while after Barney and Jack had gone to bed, then we went too. We never troubled with a light. The gleam from the little window was all we needed. Sometimes, if I were in first, Meg stepped on my face when undressing, but that was a small matter.

We must have been sleeping for some time, when I felt Meg shaking me gently.

'Come and see this,' she said in a low whisper, pulling me towards the door.

Half asleep, I looked into the kitchen. I was amazed to see Johnny Boyle standing at the fire. He had his long night-shirt on, and his feet were bare. I couldn't think what he was doing. He was staring into the fire. Then he lifted the poker, and began softly to turn over something that was on the coals. There was a bright glow.

'He's burning the cards,' whispered Meg in my ear.

We quietly awoke Ann and Jack. We didn't want them to miss the fun. Jack nearly strangled himself with the blanket, in his efforts to keep from bursting into a laugh.

Next morning we told the others. How Lyons and Barney laughed.

'He must be a soft sowl,' said my grandfather.

Next night, Jack said innocently :



'Bring out the cards, Johnny, and we'll have a game.' He winked at us, and I could hardly keep from laughing.

Johnny went into the room, pretending to look for them. He came back in a little. His face was a bit red.

'Somebody must have stolen them out of my pocket,' he said, looking confused.

Jack felt sorry for him, so he just said :

'Oh, never mind, Johnny.'

The subject was dropped. We never referred to the cards again.

My grandfather was paid fortnightly. Some of the men got what was called 'sub' every Saturday. That was a few shillings of their lying wages. My grandfather never got that. He always prided himself on being able to do without 'sub' on the 'blin'' Saturday.

On the pay day, he and my grandmother used to go to a neighbouring town called J—, to buy provisions. One of us girls used to go with them. They generally bought a large piece of beef for broth on Sunday. There would be a bit over for Monday, then the rest of the week we would have salt fish, or salt herring, for our dinner. We had always a long string of salt herring hanging up in the kitchen.

Every second pay, my grandfather bought a whole ham. The first week we would get a good plateful of it for our breakfast. Gradually we got less. When it came near the end of the second pay, we generally got none at all. My grandmother always baked Indian meal scones. We had porridge

made of it too, which we supped with sour milk. I liked it very well.

I liked going to the town with them. If my grandfather had any money to spare, he would buy something to whoever was with him. I used to go oftenest.

We often met acquaintances of my grandfather's. Then we would all go into a public-house and get a dram. My grandfather would take a teetotal drink, my grandmother gin, and I would get lemonade or wine.

One shop especially I liked to go to. The waiter knew me, and always brought me a handful of little biscuits, like buttons. It was a shop that was a great deal frequented by Orangemen. There were often great rows. Every time I went in, I had the hope that there would be a row before I came out. It was exciting, and they were generally separated before much harm was done.

Often my grandmother brought home some gin with her. When she had taken some, she would get quarrelsome, and it often ended in a fight.

There was a married brother staying a street or two away from us.

Some of his family were at school with me. I used to get sent to their house, until the row would blow over. Often it was the middle of the night before any one came for me.

Of course, to give her her due, my grandmother wasn't always like that.

My sister-in-law was a jolly kind of woman. One day we had a holiday from school; my grand-

mother planned that her family and ours would go a picnic up a hill close by.

My sister-in-law was to make a dumpling, and bring the tea and sugar for her share. My grandmother was to get boiled ham, and make sandwiches.

As it happened, it was a very wet day. My sister-in-law sent word just to come to her house, and have a little jollification there.

We went, and she made the tea for us. We ate up everything we had.

When the tea was over, my grandmother, Meg, Ann, and my sister-in-law sat and gossiped. We others played games and fought.

Then my grandmother said she would show us a game we could play together. She told us to sit on the floor, one behind the other, draw up our knees under our chins, and clasp our hands round them.

We all sat down, with the exception of my sister-in-law. The baby was yelling, and she had to rock the cradle with her foot.

'Now,' said my grandmother, 'you're to jump forrit like a puddock, an' cry "Shoo me lily cock. Shoo me lily cock," all the time. The one that stops jumpin' is out o' the game.'

It was so funny to see my grandmother jumping round the kitchen, with her bonnet bobbing up and down, that my sister-in-law laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks. We had a fine time in spite of the rain.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DEAF MUTE

Why for fortune good or ill, to joy or grief thy soul  
deliver ?

On the pages of existence, see! the writing changes  
ever.

HAFIZ.

ONE day I was playing about the door, when a queer-looking man turned into the passage. He looked so wild, and had such fearsome eyes, that I ran into the house in terror.

'Whit's wrong wi' ye now?' said my grandmother, as I shut the door quickly with a bang.

'I think it's a daft man,' I whispered breathlessly. She peeped over the screen, then started back.

'It's the dummy man,' she exclaimed excitedly to Meg and Ann.

They both jumped up eagerly. There was a loud knock at the door.

'Open it,' said my grandmother to me. I shrank back.

'Ach, ye're always feart for things ye niver saw,' she said impatiently, and went to the door herself.

I peeped out. The man was selling notepaper. He held it out to my grandmother. She knew better, and signed to him to come in.

He looked round cautiously, then stepped quickly into the lobby. She waved him into the kitchen. He came, making queer, unearthly noises.

I think my sisters were frightened for him too, but curiosity got the better of their fear. My grandmother signed to him that it was Meg's fortune she wanted told. Meg ran to the room for a piece of paper and gave it to him. He put it into his pocket, then seized hold of her hand. All the time he was looking at it he kept making a noise like the whining of a dog. My grandmother was nodding and shaking her head all the time, as if she understood all he meant.

He dropped Meg's hand suddenly, took the paper from his pocket, wrote something on it, then handed it to Meg.

My grandmother then pushed me forward. He stared at me intently for a minute, then caught hold of my hand and began to examine it. I stood in fear and trembling. In a minute he let go my hand. Meg gave him another piece of paper. He wrote on it, then looked meaningly at Ann.

Ann didn't want hers done. My grandmother handed him fourpence. He slipped it into his pocket, looked round us all with a kind of half smile, gave a grunt, and, turning to the door, disappeared quickly.

'Whit's on yer paper?' asked my grandmother, turning eagerly to Meg.

'"Married, some time yet, no family, a widow soon." That's all,' said Meg, in a disappointed tone.

My grandmother turned to me.

'An' whit's on yours?' she asked.

I handed my paper to Meg. Ann couldn't read. She had never been able to go to school, on account of her arm.

Meg looked at my paper.

"Father, mother, and son," she read out in a puzzled voice. 'I wonder what that can mean.'

'I doubt he's got mixed up,' remarked Ann, with a laugh.

'Mixed up or no,' said my grandmother, 'whit he says always comes true anyway. Deed ay! that man has the second sight if iver anybody had. He's come about us for I'm sure twinty years, an' everything he has said has happen't. It's a strange thing, but he niver would read Nora's han'. When we asked him, he jist looked at her, then shook his head an' spat oot.'

'It was strange,' said Ann sadly. 'He must have known what her fate was to be.'

'But, if he knew then that she was to go to the bad, how could she avoid it? That looks as if the things that happen just have to be,' answered Meg thoughtfully.

'God knows,' said my grandmother. 'These are things beyond the knowledge o' human bein's to understan'.'

'It's a long time since the dummy was here before,' Meg said, as she put on the kettle for the tea.

'It is that,' answered my grandmother. 'I'm sure it's two years. I've seen it longer though.'

One time we niver saw a sight o' him for three years. It's queer how he disappears like that.'

'Maybe he gets his information from old Nick, and has to go and work for him sometimes in return,' laughed Meg, as she clattered the tea things down on the table. 'What do you all say to a bit of salt herrin' to the tea the night?'

'The very thing!' agreed Ann cheerfully. 'I'm sick of syrup and Indian meal scones.'

'Fry an onion an' a wee bit ham for yer fether and Jack then. They need a bit kitchen whites,' said my grandmother, going into the press for the onions.

Soon the kitchen was full of the odours of fried onions and herring.

For a long time I puzzled over the words the dummy had written, then I forgot all about them. Years after, the meaning of them was made quite clear to me. What he had predicted for Meg came true also.

Twice only have I seen him since that day. The last time was about four years ago. It was at a fair in the town of J——. I was standing watching some girls dancing outside a wild beast show. Some one brushed against me. I looked round quickly. In a minute I knew him. The little leather bag hung over his shoulder. The hard hat was pushed half over his face, above his wild, staring eyes. He looked neither to the right, nor to the left, but hurried on, apparently unconscious of all around him; seeing things afar off, that are not perceived by every one.

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Perhaps, who knows, the power may be given to some to see into the mysterious future.

I lost all interest in the dance. The silliness and vulgarity of it all suddenly jarred on me.

I turned away to seek a quiet place, where I could be alone to sit and think.



## CHAPTER V

### THE TRIP

If youth is but a joyous time,  
A world of flowers, a summer sky ;  
What, ere man is in his prime,  
Is its remembrance, but a sigh ?

F. F. DALLY.

My grandfather used to go to a meeting of the Orangemen once a month. We looked forward very much to that night. Barney generally gave us money to buy brown sugar, to make candy. As soon as my grandfather had gone, I would throw a shawl on my head, and run for the sugar. Meg would get the pot ready. While the candy was boiling, we would have a cup of tea. Barney kept us laughing all the time. When my grandfather was in we daren't laugh. If we did, he would have said :

'Whit the divil's wrong with ye? If yer stomach wasna full, ye wouldna be so hearty.'

When the candy was ready, we divided it among us. Barney liked it sugary, and my grandmother liked it 'cheuch.' Chance always decided the matter.

This night, it happened that we were late of getting the pot on. We were afraid my grandfather would

come in, and perhaps smell it. It happened to be the 'cheuch' kind, so we couldn't take it off the plate until it had firmed a little.

'Open the window an' lay it out on the stane,' suggested my grandmother.

Meg opened the window, and set the plate out on the sill. It was a large soup plate.

'It 'll soon cool there,' she said. 'There 's a good wind.'

She had just turned from the window, when there was a loud smash on the stone.

'Damn it!' exclaimed Barney, 'there 's the candy gone.'

Sure enough it was. Meg and I had the most awful job to get it off the flags in the passage. We were afraid it would stick to my grandfather's feet when he came in. As it happened, it did, but the Jacksons up the stair got the credit of it.

The exclusiveness of our passage, compared to the publicity of their stair, to which four tenants had an equal right, was the cause of much bitterness.

Often in the mornings we would find a lot of little trifles such as potato parings, egg shells, fish bones, and the like strewed along our flags.

My grandfather wouldn't allow my grandmother to go up and make a quarrel. He hated squabbling with the neighbours. My grandmother used to take a sly way about gaining her end though. She would stand outside the kitchen window, and talk loudly in to Meg and Ann about the dirty folk up the stair, mentioning no names.

Mrs. Jackson would be at her window listening.

At last she would put her head out, and say something insulting to my grandmother. That was my grandmother's chance. Then Mrs. Jackson would be told in plain terms what she was, and everybody connected with her. As my grandmother had a much greater variety of insulting words at her command, Mrs. Jackson would have to retire discomfited, and shut the window.

Meg and I did not often get anywhere, but, as a rule, we got to the Sunday School trip. This year I was very much disappointed because my grandfather didn't seem to want us to go.

The day came round when we had to go for our tickets. I wanted Meg to ask if we would get, but she wouldn't. She wasn't so keen on it as I was.

'Ask yourself, if you 're so mad to get,' she said.

'All right!' I answered, 'but I'll just ask for myself when you 're so sticking.'

She laughed. 'You 'll not get goin' unless I'm with you,' she retorted.

My grandmother was scraping potatoes at the sink. With a beating heart I walked over to her.

'I'll help you,' I said, taking up a knife.

'Whit's up?' she asked, looking at me suspiciously. 'It's no' often ye 're so willin'.'

It was a bad opening, but I was determined to make the best of it. I knew if I failed, Meg would have a laugh at me.

'It's a rare day,' I remarked, trying to speak casually.

'Ay!' answered my grandmother, 'I think it's a pet.'

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She started to sing, and my hopes began to rise. She was always in a good mood when she sang, and easier to manage. I waited. She stopped to lift some more potatoes into the sink, then began again :

'Three drunk-en fa-ir maids, came from the Isle o'  
Wight,  
They drank from Mon-day morn-ing, till Sat-ur-day  
night;  
When Sat-ur-day night came roun', they wou-ld not  
gang out,  
An' the three drunk-en fa-ir maids, they pushed the  
joogs a-bout.

In come Sal-ly Fland-ers, as blithe as an-ny queen,  
She says, "Me dears, ass-ist me, can ye grant me  
an-ny room ?

I'll be worthy o' me room," says she, "be-fore that I  
gang out";

An' the three drunk-en fa-ir maids, they pushed the  
joogs about.

They had wood-cock an' part-ridge, an' her-rin' so fine,  
All sorts o' bev-ridge, no scar-city was there.

Four an' twin-ty quarts o' cid-er, an' they free-ly  
drank it out,

An' the three drunk-en fa-ir maids, they pushed the  
joogs about.'

Her song was finished, and so were the potatoes. If I didn't speak quickly, my chance would be gone.

'It'll be a pity if they get a bad day,' I said hurriedly.

'Bad day! Who?' asked my grandmother.

Meg, who was taking a drink, began to splutter and cough.

'I niver seen anybody that had a thrapple like ye,' said my grandmother, turning to slap her on the back. 'Ye 're ay chokin', if ye only swallie yer spittle the wrong way.'

'Ay, that was it,' said Meg, winking behind my grandmother's back.

'Whit was ye sayin' about somebody gettin' a bad day?' asked my grandmother, turning to me.

'The Sunday School trip I was meaning,' I answered, breathing hard. 'This is the day they get their tickets.'

'Oh, is it?' said my grandmother absently.

'It would be fine if we could get,' I hinted.

'Oh well,' she said, after a minute, 'I 've nothin' to do with it. Ask yer fether.'

'Will you ask him?' I said eagerly, knowing that if she was willing the battle was half won.

'We 'll see,' she answered evasively.

Shortly after, my grandfather came in, and sat down to his dinner.

'There ye are,' said my grandmother. 'Ask him now.'

'Ask whit?' said my grandfather, looking at me from under his brows.

'She wants to go to the trip,' explained my grandmother.

'The trip?' repeated my grandfather. 'Oh ay. Well, well, I suppose ye may let her go. Meg can go with her.'

'Will I go for the tickets?' I cried joyfully.

'Ay, away ye go,' answered my grandfather good-naturedly.

'You can bring mine, that 'll save me goin',' said Meg.

'Away with her, or I 'll give ye a skite on the lug,' exclaimed my grandfather angrily.

The morning of the trip was bright and fine. Meg was to wear her brown dress. It was one that she had got from a wealthy family belonging to the church. I had a white dress that my grandmother had made. The skirt was cut from a piece of flowering that she had worked in her young days. The bodice and sleeves were cotton, just cut straight, without being shaped at all.

The dress was starched so stiff that it would have stood alone. My hair had been washed the night before, and put into six pleats. It was not very long, and when the pleats were taken out, and it was combed, it stood out from my head like a mop. I had a bow of blue ribbon on top. My grandmother handed me a pair of white cotton stockings. I put them on. I had only one pair of boots. They were heavy, and short in the leg like a boy's. When I put them on with the white stockings, they looked awful. I wore a royal blue sash and a sailor hat, with a band of the same colour.

My grandmother made me turn round, to let her see how I looked. She seemed quite proud of me. I had the uncomfortable feeling that I was terribly Irish looking, a thing Meg and I hated to be.

She came to the door to see us off.

'Now min',' she admonished me, 'if there's a spot on ye when ye come home, divil pity ye. An' if any of the gentry speaks to ye, don't staun' with

yer finger in yer mouth like a tappie. I 'm warnin' ye now. Meg 'll tell me when ye come back.'

'All right!' said Meg. 'So long then. We 'll need to hurry.'

We walked away quickly. At the turn, we looked back. My grandmother was still standing on the pavement looking after us. She smiled, and waved her hand. We waved back. She had a biting tongue, but underneath it all a kind, loving heart.

'If you clype on me, you 'll be a mean beast,' I said to Meg.

'Oh, shut your mouth and come on,' she retorted. 'We 're late as it is.'

The steamer bell was ringing when we reached the pier. We hurried up the gangway. I shrank behind Meg, as I hated any of the gentry to speak to me.

'There you go,' said Meg impatiently. 'You would think somebody was goin' to eat you.'

'Hey, Meg, Meg!' a voice hailed us. 'Come over here.'

It was Mrs. Davidson, a woman we knew. She had her two children with her. One was a boy about seven, the other a girl like me. 'Sit down here beside me,' she said, making room for us on the seat. 'Sit ower a bit, Jock. Whit! you want a piece already. No a chow will you get. Stop your girnin', or I 'll take my han' aff your jaw a rattle. It's a wonder the old boy let you come, Meg. You 're a queer swell the day, Jean, with your white frock and blue ribbons. We 're away. Hurrah! she 's heavin'. Wave your henkerche', Jock. No, gutsey, you 'd rether have somethin'

to eat. I suppose I may as well give you it and have done. I'll get no peace.'

She opened her bag, and gave him a thick slice of bread, with boiled ham between. He ate it greedily. She had a large paper bag of gooseberries lying on her lap. When Jock had finished his piece, he made a little hole in the bottom of the bag with his finger. Occasionally he slyly extracted a gooseberry. His mother was so busy talking to Meg, that she never noticed him.

We were nearing the pier. The children began to crowd to the gangway.

'Wait to the crowd gets out,' advised Mrs. Davidson.

'Come on, Missis, get yer parcels gether't up,' shouted a sailor.

'Och, Tonal'! is that your nane sel'?' she laughed. 'Here, sonny, here 's a handful of grossets to you.'

She rose to her feet, gripping the bag by the top. Suddenly the bottom of the bag ripped open, and all the gooseberries were scattered over the deck. Mrs. Davidson's face was a study. Everybody laughed.

'A fine mess you've made with your tam't rubbish,' cried the sailor angrily.

'Gether them up, Tonal', she shouted back from the gangway. 'You can make jam with them, and take them hame to your mither. I'm sure she'll need it. Ta, ta, sonny! and see and keep sober till we come back.'

We were scarcely off the boat when the rain came on, and stayed on. We had to go into the waiting-



room at the pier, while the minister went to find some shelter for us. He returned, saying he had got the use of a barn. He led the way, and we all fell in behind him, like, as Mrs. Davidson said, 'Sheep followin' a shepherd.'

The barn, we found, was a nice, cosy place. I felt a perfect scarecrow. My white dress was no longer stiff, but clung tight to me, and my hair was hanging in pencils round my neck. However, I was out to pack as much pleasure as I could into this long-looked-for day, and I tried not to think of my appearance.

We sat about, wherever we could find seats, then we were served with sandwiches and milk. After that, we had some games.

'Does any one know the "Jolly Miller"?' shouted the minister.

'Was that the wee, bowly leggit man that shifted the bags out of the corner to let us get room when we came in?' asked Mrs. Davidson.

'No!' answered the minister, with a laugh. 'It's a game I'm speaking about. Does any one know it?'

'Deed no!' said Mrs. Davidson, her face very red. 'I know none of your silly games.'

No one appeared to know it.

'I'll show you all how it goes then,' said the minister. 'Watch me, then we will play it together.'

He side-stepped up the barn, with his coat tails swinging, and began to sing:

'Oh there was a jolly miller, and he lived by himself,  
As the wheel went round he made his wealth,  
One hand in the hopper, and the other in the bag,  
As the wheel went round he made his grab.'

'Now, we go in pairs,' he said. 'At the word "grab," each lady lets go, and catches the arm of the gentleman in front of her. Whoever is left without a partner is out.'

He took hold of a young lady, and led the game.

'Doesn't he make a fine Willie Wagtail?' said Mrs. Davidson, with a laugh. 'He's as light on the fut as an Irish ragman. He's a lively boy for a sky pilot.'

When they were tired of the 'Jolly Miller,' there was a one-legged race for the children. I won a needle-case at it.

I got soaked to the skin coming home on the steamer. As we neared the pier I saw my grandmother and grandfather waiting for us.

'Ye're soakin', wean,' said my grandfather concernedly, when we got on to the quay. 'Here, put that shawl roun' her.'

My grandmother took out a shawl from under her dolman. She wrapped it round me, then we hurried home.

When my wet things had been taken off, and I had been regaled with a hot drink, I proudly exhibited my needle-case.

Meg corroborated my statement, that I had been talked to, for ten minutes by the clock, by two ladies, two of the swells.

Also, that I had had the extreme honour of sitting on the minister's knee, wet clothes and all.

Therefore, there was satisfaction all round.

## CHAPTER VI

### MY MOTHER

Ah me! from real happiness we stray,  
By vice bewilder'd, vice which always leads,  
However fair at first, to wilds of woe.

THOMSON.

WASHING-DAY I always hated. We got the use of the washing-house for two days every fortnight. The drying green was in full view of all the back windows. The neighbours were very keen to see what kind of garments we hung out. There was generally a head behind the screen at each window when the wash-house was occupied.

My grandmother and Meg used to rise at five in the morning, carry all the things to the wash-house, and light up the boiler fire. They took a great pride in having the clothes snow white. By dinner-time they would have the ropes full from one end of the green to the other.

Nearly all our bed napery was made out of flour bags, that had been scrubbed and bleached until the printing was all out. My grandmother used often to take a lot of them out of the boxes, wet them, and hang them up in the green. She would peep through the wash-house window to see if any of the neighbours were looking.

'There's two or three heads at ivery window,' she would say to Meg. 'Aha! that bates them. See if ony o' them can put out a washin' like that. Lick into it, ye boy ye, an' show them what we can do. I'll houl' ye we'll give them somethin' to look at.'

They would rub and scrub and wring. The sweat would be pouring off their faces, the boiler roaring, and the place full of steam.

Then I would be sent for some gin. When my grandmother had taken it, there would be no more peace that day. She would get very quarrelsome, and say taunting things to Meg. Meg took no notice, but it made her miserable.

One day, when they were in the middle of the washing, the post brought a letter from my mother, saying that she was coming home.

The man she had run away with was dead. She had had a little boy, but he was dead too, so she was left alone.

The letter caused great excitement. When my grandfather came home, and was told the news, he became very much agitated. That night every one was very quiet. Our lodgers were both away. They had gone home to Ireland.

'Will ye niver go home?' they used often to ask my grandfather.

'Home be damned!' he would answer scornfully. 'My home is where I can make a livin'. I niver knew anything but hardship an' stervation at home.'

My mother was expected the next morning. I

was awake very early, greatly excited. At last I was to see this wonderful mother that I had dreamt so much of. I wondered how she would arrive.

In a cab surely, perhaps with two horses. A cab to us was an undreamt of luxury, a very grand affair indeed. I listened eagerly for any news I could gather. Strange to say, they were all very silent, though I noticed a look of expectancy on each of their faces every time a footstep sounded in the passage.

I wondered why they didn't go to the station to meet her. It would have let the neighbours see that she was a relation. They might think she was a lady visiting us for charity.

At any rate I would show them. I slipped out, and watched in the direction of the station. No sign of any one. I waited and waited.

I saw my grandfather coming for his breakfast. I ran into the house. If he saw me waiting he might take me in, and make me stay in.

'She's no' come yet?' he asked, as he sat down to the table.

'No' yet,' answered my grandmother, pouring out his tea. 'She'll no' be long now.'

My grandfather sat back in his chair, making no attempt to touch the food in front of him. A footstep sounded in the passage. He gave a violent start. I looked eagerly at the door. It was only Barney coming in for his breakfast. He looked round them all questioningly. My grandmother shook her head.

'Take yer breakfast, man,' she said to my grandfather.

'I've a sore head the day,' he answered wearily. 'I'm no hungry.'

Barney started to his breakfast without speaking. I slipped out.

When I got to the street I saw, a good distance away, a cab coming with luggage on top. It must be she. I felt I could dance with joy.

How I hoped that all the neighbours would be at their windows, especially the Jacksons. How mad it would make them to see that we had such grand relations. I looked anxiously up at their window. No, there was nobody there. It would be terrible if the cab came, and went away again, without any of them having seen it. I was just thinking I would scream, and perhaps that would bring them out, when the window was suddenly flung open, and Mrs. Jackson stuck her head out. She was evidently watching for wee Johnnie, who was coming along the street with a message. The cab was just at the alley. I ran forward eagerly.

The cabman opened the door, and a stylishly dressed lady stepped out. She looked at me and asked :

'Are you little Jean ?'

I nodded. She kissed me, and took me by the hand.

'So this is the house,' she said.

'Yes,' I answered, feeling ashamed of our humble home.

She turned to direct the cabman to bring her

luggage in. I glanced up to see if Mrs. Jackson was still at the window. Yes, there she was, all eyes and ears.

We went up the alley into the house. I flew in before her, crying :

‘ She ’s come, she ’s come.’

She stood in the doorway, looking round them all. Then she ran in, and kissed every one of them. Tears streamed down my grandmother’s cheeks. Meg and Ann were crying too.

My grandfather sat at the table, with his head bowed. I never noticed before how old he looked.

Barney picked up his cap from the table.

‘ It ’s time I was away,’ he said huskily, turning towards the door.

My mother squeezed his arm as he passed her.

‘ Poor old Barney ! ’ she said softly.

He patted her shoulder, and went out. His going seemed to rouse the others.

‘ Ye ’ll need yer breakfast,’ exclaimed my grandmother, hastily putting on the frying-pan.

‘ Ay, get yer breakfast,’ said my grandfather, raising his head. ‘ Ye must be stervin’.’

But my mother didn’t seem to mind about breakfast. She began opening one of her boxes. I noticed her hands were shaking so, she could scarcely turn the key. Then she lifted out presents for us all. There was tobacco for my grandfather, Barney, and Jack.

My grandfather rose to go to his work. My mother was kneeling at the box. As he passed her, he put his hand on her head. A bar of sunlight

flickered in at the window, glided uncertainly across the floor, and finally settled over where my grandfather was standing. It lit up his face, making him look, with his grey hair and beard, like a picture of Saint Peter we had in an old book.

'May God keep ye,' he said solemnly, and passed out.

My mother looked after him, her face twisting queerly. Then she gave a silly kind of laugh. Next minute, she put her head down on the box, and began to sob.

Jack didn't come home for his breakfast. We had an early dinner at twelve. When he came in, my mother kissed him too. It seemed to me strange. Kissing was a thing unknown in our house. Jack hardly said a word all the time he was in.

We soon got used to having her with us. She had a lot of beautiful clothes, and apparently plenty of money too. She had sold off all her furniture when Harry, as she called her man, had died.

Sometimes she would dress herself, and go away for the afternoon, alone. Once she took me with her. She went into public-houses several times for a drink, and warned me not to tell. How proud I felt walking beside her.

She wore a black satin dress, and a large picture hat. A long gold chain hung round her neck. She walked very straight, and had a bold manner. I thought her very nice-looking. She had a small oval face, with large grey eyes. Her hair was cut short. I wondered why. Afterwards, I learnt the reason.



She had been in a house in London one night. A quarrel had arisen, and she had got her head cut open.

'If ye behave yersel', an' stay in the house, ye might get some decent man to take ye,' my grandmother would say to her.

'And how would I get a man if I never went out of the house?' she would answer with a laugh. She spoke with a strong English accent.

When she had been at home about a month, she began to get restless.

'God knows how you stand this life,' she said to Meg one day. 'If I had to suffer it long I would go mad.'

'We have to stand it,' Meg answered, a little dryly. 'What else can we do? You 'll soon get used to it.'

'Never!' she returned, shrugging her shoulders disgustedly.

She was standing before the glass, admiring herself. Her hair was curled all over her head. She had done it with a pair of curling-tongs. It made her look very pretty. She had put some stuff on her eyebrows, to darken them. I felt, somehow, that she was a stranger to us all. The only feeling I had for her was admiration, because she was pretty, and well dressed, and I question if she gave me any more than a passing thought. Of a certainty she did not love me.

'But you know, Nora, it's better to live a quiet, decent life; then you've nothing to be ashamed of,' remarked Ann, with gentle reproof. 'If you stay at home quietly, folk might forget what you had done.'

My mother gave a loud, ringing laugh.

'Good for you, sobersides!' she exclaimed. 'That's splendid advice. I'll go and work in the fields. It would purify me. I'll rise at five in the morning, breakfast at nine on a bit of sixpenny ham, home for dinner of potatoes and salt herring at one, and a plate of porridge for my tea when my work is done. Then a nice long lie in bed until the morning. Heavens! what a glorious life! No thanks, Ann. I'll have a good time as long as I'm living, because I'll be a long time dead. A short life and a merry one is my motto.'

'Nora,' said Ann sadly, 'don't forget that you'll have to answer for it all.'

But my mother began to hum a music-hall song, unconcernedly.

Next afternoon she went out, saying she was going to the city to buy some things. She never returned. It was years before we saw her again.

## CHAPTER VII

### AT THE FAIR

Oh! enviable, early days,  
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze  
To care, to guilt unknown!

BURNS.

At this time I left school. The day I came home free was a happy one for me. I could read and write, but that was about all.

Of course, in my grandparents' opinion, I had had a splendid education. Fortunately, I had a great love of books. There were no books in our house but a few school prizes. My grandparents could neither read nor write. I used to look Jack's pockets, and find a book occasionally. I would slip away into a corner with it. They were always about gold mines, cowboys, or something like that. I would begin to read, and get lost to all around me. I would be away in a vast forest, or flying over the snow in a sleigh, with the bells tinkling, and the dogs barking.

My dream would be suddenly shattered by my grandmother's voice calling.

'Where the divil are ye now? Stuck into some corner with a book in yer oxters.'

Unwillingly I would show myself.

'Put down yer book, Preachin' Jean,' she would say. 'I wonder ye don't knock yersel' blin'.'

I had to hide my books from my grandfather too. Not being able to read themselves, I think they imagined that the majority of books were evil. Meg seldom read at all. Ann had never been at school owing to her trouble. They never could understand my love of reading.

Sometimes we got an evening paper, and I had to read out the news. Meg hated to read out, as she never could pronounce the words properly. The mistake she made was, that when she came to a big word, she tried to get the better of it. I looked ahead for the difficult words, and ignored the sentence altogether. A sentence more or less didn't make much difference to my grandfather, and so I was considered the better reader.

There was one book we got the loan of from somebody. *Prince of the House of David*, it was called. It was about Christ's life on earth, but written like a novel. I read it out, a bit each night, until it was finished. It was very sad near the end. How they looked forward every night to it. Meg and my grandmother would be busy knitting, but drinking in every word. I was always very easily affected. Sometimes I would have to stop for a minute, to get my voice. At the part where Christ was taken to Calvary, I broke down altogether.

Nobody spoke. The only sound was the click of the knitting needles; Meg and Ann were crying. Meg knitted hard, to try to hide it. My grandmother

took off her glasses to wipe them. I glanced at my grandfather, and saw him furtively wiping his eyes with the back of his hand.

When I had finished reading, they talked about it quietly for a while. It had a strangely softening influence on them. Meg put on the kettle. We always had a cup of essence of coffee, and a piece of bread, generally dry, before going to bed.

The morning after I had finished the book, we were up very early. It was the Fair holidays, and we were expecting a niece of my grandmother's to come and stay with us for a few days. Her mother had died a few years before, leaving her alone in the world. She worked in a thread mill, and usually came to us on her holidays.

She was to arrive in the forenoon, and we wanted to get the work done, so as to be free. My grandfather was having a few days too, so he was going to take us all to the Fair in the neighbouring town after dinner.

Mary—I of course called her my cousin like the others—arrived about twelve, laden with parcels. She always brought us presents. I was sent out for a gill of whisky. My grandfather insisted that she should have a glass after her journey. She was very stout, and got short of breath, but was good-natured, and a hearty laugher.

My grandmother made the whisky into toddy. Mary drank about two-thirds of it, then slipped the rest to me. I was delighted to get it, as I was very fond of toddy. My grandfather wouldn't have minded *me* having it, but he wanted Mary to take it

all herself. When there was any toddy going, I always got some.

We had our dinner of cabbage, potatoes, and sliced sausages, then we began to get ready for the Fair. Every one wanted into the sink at the same time to wash her face. Foreseeing this, with great forethought, I had washed mine before dinner. I had also had the white frock, cotton stockings, and blue sash disinterred and laid handy for me. I slipped into them quickly. All I needed was a hand to button me up the back, then I was ready to help the others.

'Bring my dicky, Jean,' said my grandfather. 'An' the wais'coat. The stud's in the pocket.'

I brought them. He put his hand in the pocket for the stud.

'It's no' here,' he exclaimed impatiently. 'Did any o' ye take a stud out o' my wais'coat pocket?'

No, nobody had seen it.

'Damn it!' he cried angrily, 'ye can let nothin' alone. Folk canna turn but the thing's shiftit. I put it in that pocket the last time I had it on.'

'See if it's no' in the dicky stickin'?' said my grandmother suddenly.

My grandfather lifted the dicky.

'Heth! so it is,' he exclaimed in surprise. 'I could have sworn I took it out.'

'Ye shouldna be so positive about a thing,' reproved my grandmother, as she started to fasten the dicky on to his shirt neck. 'It's too big in the head any way. It'll niver go through that button-hole.'

'Damnation! ye're runnin' it into my neck, woman,' roared my grandfather.

'Try it yoursel', then,' my grandmother retorted, turning huffily away.

'Maybe I could manage it,' said Meg.

She quickly got it into its place, without any undue suffering on my grandfather's part.

'I'll get my boots on now,' he said, 'then I'll be out o' yer roads.'

He found the boots, to discover that they had never been cleaned.

'Is it no' lamentable?' he cried angrily. 'No' a han' on them. God knows what ye've all been doin' the whole day!'

'I'll give them a rub,' offered Meg, holding out her hand for them.

'Niver mind,' he snapped. 'I'll take the brush to them mysel'.'

'That's no' the boots at all,' said Ann, who had been eyeing them over. 'That's the old pair you said were done.'

My grandfather turned them over and looked at them.

'So it is,' he admitted.

The other ones were brought, and he sat down on a chair to put them on.

'Here, Meg,' said my grandmother, 'pin up me hair, that me bonnet will stick on.'

Her hair was up, but she always liked Meg to make it secure. Meg fastened her hair, helped her on with her dolman, then looked round for her bonnet. It was nowhere to be seen. My grand-

mother had had it in her hand five minutes before, but couldn't remember where she had put it. My grandfather, having finished lacing his boots, got up to help in the search.

'Here it's on the chair,' cried Meg. 'He's been sittin' on it all the time.'

My grandfather looked ruefully at the crushed mass of ribbon and beads.

'My good bonnet,' wailed my grandmother. 'I may stay at home now.'

On examination, however, it proved to be none the worse. We were soon all ready, and off we went gaily to get the car. As we neared our destination, our ears were greeted by the noise of drums, steam whistles, blaring trumpets, and organs, all blended together. When we turned into the Fair ground, it grew into a perfect pandemonium of sound.

'Min' yersel's now,' said my grandfather warningly to us. 'Put yer purse in a safe place, Mery. An' Jean, see an' keep a hold o' one o' us.'

I had sixpence and four pennies that I had saved up for the occasion. Seeing my grandfather was in such a lordly mood, I expected he would defray all my expenses.

Any little trifle I might want, Mary would likely buy me. Thinking therefore that I would save the sixpence for some other occasion when the money wasn't so plentiful, I slipped it into the top of my stocking, and shook it down into the sole of my shoe for safety.

At the entrance to the Fair was a row of photographic studios. As we were passing one of them,



the owner gripped my grandfather by the lapel of the coat, and urged him to get his photograph taken. My grandfather told him he did not want it, but the man persisted, and held on to his coat. Then my grandfather got angry.

'If that's a specimen o' yer picters hingin' out there,' he said, pointing to some that were hanging in a frame at the door, 'I'd sooner have the sixpence in my pocket.'

'I suppose you 'aven't got a sixpence to spare,' said the man sarcastically, seeing it was of no use.

'Sixpence to spare!' retorted my grandfather hotly, 'I would spen' more here in an hour than would buy all yer clap-trap twice over.'

'The likes o' ye talkin'!' broke in my grandmother. 'We couldna spare the sixpence indeed. Ye sterved-lookin' sowl that ye are. There's no' as much on ye as would pad a crutch.'

But the man was evidently impervious to insult, much to her disappointment, and turned away indifferently to look for a more likely customer.

We walked on. The wild beast show was just coming out, so we went over to see it. A big negro, in a scarlet plush coat, started to beat the drum. Two girls in tights came out and began to dance. We watched them for a while. The people began to push in again, and my grandfather said we would go too. He led the way, and the five of us followed him up the steps. It was twopence each for admission.

The tent was pretty dark. Down both sides were

cages with monkeys, leopards, tigers, and other animals. At the foot, facing the door, was a large cage containing a lion. There was a great crowd of people round it.

It was a very hot day, and the place was stifling. The air was full of the blended odours of tobacco, beer, perspiration, and animals. We were not long in, when the curtain that closed the entrance was pulled aside. The organ stopped playing, and the big negro left off beating the drum. A man dressed up to look like 'Buffalo Bill' cracked a whip, and pointed inside the tent.

'This way, ladies and gentlemen,' he shouted, 'for the great untamable lion, "Nero." The only chance you'll ever 'ave. This, ladies and gentlemen'—he slapped a picture in front with his whip—'this magnificent specimen of a lion is the same one that killed his keeper last year. Captain Joyce, here,' slapping the negro on the shoulder, 'will enter the cage, and perform the same trick that killed the other man. That is, putting his 'ead in the lion's mouth.'

He turned to those inside the tent.

'Make way there, ladies and gentlemen,' he shouted, 'and let the people see the great untamable lion.'

The ladies and gentlemen inside were not very willing to stand to one side, but a little gentle persuasion from the negro's elbows made them change their minds, and a passage was cleared that the crowd might see this wonderful animal.

'Now, ladies and gentlemen, this is absolutely your

only chance to see the world famed "Nero." One more tune and we begin.'

The organ started again. The negro applied the drumsticks viciously, and 'Buffalo Bill' dropped the curtain.

There was a rush inside the tent, to see who could get nearest the lion's cage. The anticipation of perhaps having the tremendous experience of seeing a man's head nipped off, made every one fight wildly to get to the front.

I was behind my grandfather, and was nearly suffocated. A big man lifted me up, and held me round the waist. He was chewing tobacco, and breathing right in my face. It nearly made me sick.

'Damnation!' roared my grandfather, to a man in front of him, 'come off my fit. Ye're crushin' it to jeely.'

'Keep your feet out the road, then,' returned the man rudely. 'I paid my twopence as well as you.'

'The twopence didna include my feet for a doormat,' snapped my grandfather.

My grandmother, who had got separated from my grandfather by the crowd, was pushing her way over, the light of battle in her eyes, and her bonnet hanging over one ear. Meg, however, after a deal of persuasion, managed to get them over to the other side of the tent, away from the man.

The curtain was again drawn aside, the music stopped, and the negro came inside. The pushing and squeezing began again, with greater violence than ever. Two men came in from a side door, carrying a brazier of burning coal. They placed it

within the rail that was in front of the lion's cage. Taking two long, iron poles, they put the ends into the brazier until they were red hot. They then lifted them out, and pointed them at the lion, while the negro was opening the door of the cage.

'That 's all bunkum,' whispered a man standing beside my grandfather—'only for show. That beast would eat out your han'.'

'Do ye tell me that?' said my grandfather, in a disappointed tone.

The negro had got into the cage, and was chasing the lion round with his whip. Lastly, he opened the lion's mouth, and put his head partly in. Everybody held their breath. Nothing happened. The curtains were drawn aside, and the music started. The show was over.

There was a look of disappointment on every one's face.

'Where 's Mery?' asked my grandfather suddenly when we came out.

Nobody knew. We had thought she was beside us all the time. We were beginning to get very anxious, when we saw her. Her hat was all to the side, and her umbrella was broken in two.

'In the name o' Providence, what 's wrong?' cried my grandfather. 'How did ye break yer umbrell?'

'A drunken beast o' a man put his arm roun' my neck,' she answered excitedly, 'and I broke it over his back.'

'Ye might have kep' beside us,' returned my grandfather testily.

'I got shoved away in the crowd,' she answered

crossly, and, putting her hand to the front of her bodice, began to cry wildly :

‘ My purse, my purse—I ’ve lost it ! ’

‘ Look again, an’ see if it ’s no’ slipped down some-way,’ said my grandfather, in great concern.

I looked on in dismay. If Mary’s purse were gone, my sixpence would have to be brought to the surface again.

She began clutching over her blouse. Suddenly, she gave a gasp of relief.

‘ I ’ve got it,’ she cried joyfully. ‘ It had only slipped down.’

In the pleasure of finding her purse, she ceased to vex herself about her broken umbrella, and became quite cheery again.

Greatly relieved, we pushed on through the crowd. My grandfather won a cocoanut at ‘ Love in a tub.’ Meg and I got Mary coaxed to go on the switchback, but she yelled so much that the man had to stop it and let her off. A green bird told me, through a piece of paper which it presented to me in its bill, that I would be married in a month, and have fifteen of a family, for which information my grandfather paid a penny. Mary bought me three gold bangles, and a watch.

We were standing outside a show where there was a fat lady on exhibition. It was a penny each, and we were wondering whether to go in or not, when a man came and handed Mary a penny. She looked at him in surprise.

‘ What ’s this for ? ’ she asked.

‘ I thought you were the fat woman come out to

lift the pennies yourself for a change,' he answered, with pretended innocence.

Mary was so enraged, that before she could think of a cutting answer, the man had disappeared in the crowd, laughing loudly.

My grandfather and grandmother, who were behind us, had a good laugh over it, unknown to Mary.

We visited several other shows, then, as we were beginning to get tired, we started for home. On the way to the car we went into a public-house and had some refreshment.

That night, we agreed that it was the most glorious day we had had since the last Fair.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE STIGMA

Yet over all there hung a cloud of fear,  
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,  
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,  
The place is haunted !

T. HOOD.

As I grew up, I seemed to be watched more closely. I'm sure my grandparents thought that the seeds of evil were sown in me. They would have to watch, and, at the first sign of development, crush them out with a firm hand.

It was strange how the one thing that is the fore-runner of all evil was indulged in freely before me. When my mother was a girl, if there had been less drinking, perhaps she would have found home a more desirable place, and might not have looked for distraction elsewhere. Perhaps, too, if she had been led, instead of driven, things might have turned out different.

Drink, of course, was her ultimate ruin. What other example had she before her? I know drink was the curse of our home; the cause of all the heartache and misery. My grandparents were terribly headstrong. There was no use trying to reason with them. What they wanted was blind

obedience to their will. We girls never dared to dispute it.

The girls that I knew could go to the shore, or wander about the woods as they liked. I had always to stay about the door. Sometimes I did slip away for a little while, but I never enjoyed it. I was afraid that perhaps some one who knew me would see me, and tell them at home.

Sometimes I would ask my grandmother if I could go out for a little. Perhaps she would tell me to go for half an hour. When my grandfather came in she would tell him I was out far longer, though I had not stayed beyond the prescribed time. My grandfather would come out and look for me, then I would catch it.

I do not wish to give the impression that they were always harsh to me ; far from it. It was quite evident, though, that they had a dread of me following in my mother's footsteps.

Meg and I used to go to the church on Sundays, to the forenoon service. Occasionally my grandfather would go, but not often. He was a little deaf, and couldn't hear the sermon very well. I think he soothed his conscience by sending us.

One Saturday, when he was in a good humour, he bought Meg a feather boa. The Sunday was fine, so she put it on to church.

When she came back she laid it on the room bed. Jack asked me to go to an ice-cream shop for some cigarettes. I put on my hat, and, seeing the boa lying on the bed, thoughtlessly slipped it round my neck. I thought I would be such a swell, and



they would never know. I left the door slightly ajar when I went out, so I could slip in again unseen. I got the cigarettes, admired myself in the mirror, and then hurried back. To my dismay I found the door shut.

What was I to do? If any one opened the door they would see the boa.

Suddenly it was thrown open, and my grandfather stood before me. Before I had time to think, he caught me by the hair, pulled me into the lobby, then ran me into the big room.

'God's curse on ye for a w——s b——d,' he said, in a voice trembling with passion. 'Ye damned whelp that ye are, I'll put the pride out ye. God knows, the like o' ye has much need to be dressed! The next time that I catch ye puttin' on anythin' belongin' to anybody, I'll—I'll——'

He ran at me, his hands opening and shutting spasmodically, as if he were unable to control them. I cowered back into the corner, terrified at the look of dreadful anger on his face.

'The next time,' he said, shaking his fist in my face, 'I'll make the blood fly out your mouth.'

Then he turned away quickly, as if fearful that the sight of me might provoke him beyond control.

I stood in the corner, where he had left me, for a little. I was trembling all over. Something seemed to be choking me. Then I slipped down on the chair beside me, and sobbed as if my heart would break. I did not make any noise. I would not for the world have let any of them hear me; besides, my tears were the silent kind that tear the heart.

It wasn't the physical pain that hurt me, although the side of my head was throbbing. It was the words that had cut me to the heart.

It was the first time such names had been applied to me, but not by any means the last. It is said that one gets used to anything. It was not the case with me. Those names never failed to wound me. I know they have been said without any deliberate intention of hurting me. At home, they never realised what an abnormally sensitive nature I had.

Poor grandfather! I do not harbour a single hard thought of him. I know that he was a good, well-meaning man, and did what was right, according to his lights. If they were a little obscured by ignorance it was not his fault. Besides, he was far from being alone in his opinion that the daughter may, and possibly will, inherit the mother's vices. In fact, I believe that is the general opinion. I know I have heard it voiced pretty often by people that certainly couldn't plead ignorance. They lose sight of the fact that the body can be made subservient to the soul. The soul is God's gift. Its development depends on ourselves.

Between my married brother's family and ours a rivalry had sprung up. The superiority of herself and family seemed suddenly to dawn on my sister-in-law. She began to remember that she had rich relations. She had a sister that had married well.

On Sunday, when we had broth, I was generally sent over to them with a jugful. Perhaps they would have a dumpling, and they would send a bit back to us.

One Sunday, after my sister-in-law had been to church, she called in to our house on the way home, apparently, for the pleasure of seeing us, but in reality *to blow* a bit. She began to tell us of a wealthy relation that she had who was ill. If it pleased Providence to remove this person from all earthly sorrows, my sister-in-law would give Him thanks, and be a great deal the richer.

My grandparents were very angry after she went out. They said they believed it was all a lot of lies.

Shortly after she had gone away, I went to her house with a jug of broth. Just as I raised my hand to knock, I heard my sister-in-law's voice speaking loudly. I heard her go over the whole story she had told us. It seemed, from the tone of her voice, to give her immense satisfaction that she had at last gulled us, as she imagined, into believing that she had superior relations. I knocked at the door, and innocently delivered my broth. When I related what I had heard at home, they were mad, then they saw the humour of it, and had a good laugh.

Shortly after, my brother's family removed to a larger house. They only stayed a year though. It was a fearful house. My brother was not superstitious at all, but he said there was certainly something about that house that was uncanny.

None of them dared stay in a room alone. My brother had tried it several times. Each time, his name was called out imperatively behind him, but no one was to be seen. Such a fear always came over him, that he was glad to get out. It was the same if any of the others went in alone. As soon as they

went to bed in the kitchen, the noise of slippared feet would be heard walking backwards and forwards at the bedside. Then there would be a sound as if some one were rolling marbles all over the floor. One night when the girls, who slept in a bedroom off the kitchen, were going to bed, the candle was blown out three times. It got so on their nerves, that they were afraid to move about the house. If it happened that they all had to go out and leave my sister-in-law in by herself, she sat with the house door wide open. The noise of the traffic kept her from being so frightened.

Very soon after that, some quarrel arose between my brother's family and ours. For two years my brother passed my grandfather in the street without speaking. My grandfather felt it keenly. After one of these meetings, he would come in and sit down, looking so vexed.

'Isn't it terrible for a man to pass his own father in the street?' he would say sadly.

'Him a man!' my grandmother would answer bitterly. 'He's only a Jenny. I every dog has its day though. They'll no ay be so big.'

But my grandfather would stare into the fire, a look of pain on his face.

## CHAPTER IX

### WE GET A PIANO

To show the strength and infamy of pride  
By all 'tis followed, and by all denied.

YOUNG.

AFTER we had ceased to be on speaking terms with my brother's family, Meg and my grandmother used often to take a walk past their window. They always waited until it was dark, so that they wouldn't be seen.

Occasionally I went with them. The window was high up, but as they hardly ever put down the blind, we could see into the room. For my part, I didn't see any novelty in a thing we had seen dozens of times. If there were only a pair of clean curtains on the window, or a picture shifted on the part of the wall that was visible, it kept Meg and my grandmother in conversation all the way home.

One night they went on the prowl I happened to be with them. There was nothing new, and we were just turning away from the window, when we were startled by the sound of a piano. We looked at one another, the same question on each face. Was it possible that they had got a piano? The very thought of it made us wild. Yes, there it was again. We stood on the pavement, silently listening. Some

one was trying to go over the scale, and the sound was coming from their room too.

Deeply mortified, we turned homewards. Such grandeur fairly took our breath away. We never said a word on the way home.

Pianos were rare things in our locality. Certainly, Mrs. Boyle beside us had one. She went out charing and had got it in return for a day's work. It was an old thing about the size of a chest, and had a sound like the tinkle of a tin can. Besides, it could not stand alone. They had to prop it up in front with pieces of wood. They had a frill of turkey red round the front to hide its crippled condition, but I knew. At first when they got it, I had looked in at the window when they were all out, and had seen it. The frill was on, so I thought it was all right. One day, when Mrs. Boyle was washing, I noticed the frill hanging up in the green. I thought I would see what like the piano was when it was undressed, and peeped in at the window. Then I saw that we had been jealous about nothing. It was only the remains of a piano.

When we got home, and told them the news, they were dumbfounded.

'A piany!' exclaimed my grandfather in astonishment. 'Heth! they've much need o' a piany. Their meat would fit them better. Oh, they're goin' out o' it all thegither.' He crossed and recrossed his legs, a habit he had when angry. 'They'll get a settlin' though. Heth! ye'll see that before long.'

'It's yon woman,' said Barney. 'She'll go off her nut yet with pride.'

Jack said little. The matter seemed to give him food for thought.

After that, our excursions past the window were more frequent.

We always heard the piano, and listened eagerly for anything resembling a tune. But no. We were mercifully spared that ordeal.

As long as they couldn't play anything, we felt we could bear it.

Some time passed. One day, when Jack came in for his dinner, he electrified us by saying that he thought we might get a piano too. Such a thought had never in our wildest dreams entered our heads. Jack very soon showed us that he was in dead earnest. The thought of it overwhelmed us with joy. If we got a piano, the Jacksons would go simply mad with envy.

When my grandfather came in, Jack broached the subject to him.

My grandfather stared at him with his mouth open.

'Begod!' he said testily, 'I think ye're off yer head.'

But when Jack let him understand that he was going to pay it up himself by instalments, he changed his tune.

'Ay!' he admitted, his face brightening up at the thought of being upsides with his son, 'ay! it would be a gran' bit o' furniture.'

Greatly excited, they discussed the matter the whole evening. It was arranged that we should go to Glasgow on the following Saturday.

I was to go with Jack and my grandparents. We spent a good deal of time looking up the papers for shops that did business on the instalment system. Jack fixed on one in the Paisley Road.

Saturday came, and we got ready to go. Seeing my grandfather in a good mood, I asked him timidly if I was to be taught to play it.

'What!' he cried, drawing down his brows. 'Learnt to play it! What are ye talkin' about?'

'Surely if you get the piano bought for you, you can send her a quarter anyway,' said Jack.

My grandfather thought hard for a minute. I'm sure it never had struck him that it had to be learnt at all.

'Oh, well,' he answered slowly, 'we'll see about it.'

Off we went for the train. Meg and Ann watched us away, hoping to hear of great things on our return.

We arrived in Glasgow, and, after a great deal of trouble to ourselves, and some annoyance to numerous policemen, we found Paisley Road. The shop we had fixed on was a very large establishment. Jack was kind of shy of entering. The four of us were going in of course.

'We'll go in then,' said my grandfather, looking very important.

As we entered the shop, a polished-looking gentleman, with eyeglasses, came to meet us.

'What can I do for you to-day?' he asked, smiling and rubbing his hands.

'Oh,' said my grandfather in a casual manner, 'we've come in to look at some pianys.'



‘Certainly, certainly,’ returned the man, with a smile. ‘Come this way, please.’

We followed him through the shop into the show-room.

‘Plenty of choice here,’ he remarked. ‘About what price would you like it?’

My grandfather looked at Jack, who explained to the man that we wanted it on the instalment system.

‘Oh! I see,’ said the man, his manner changing a little. ‘That’ll be all right. You’ll have to pay down a few pounds though.’ Jack said he would do so.

The man opened a piano, and ran his fingers over the keys.

‘Can the girl play?’ he asked, looking at me.

Jack said no. I felt greatly humbled. It seemed a terrible thing to be buying a piano and not be able to play it.

He played a few notes to let us hear the tone. We, of course, knew nothing whatever about pianos. My grandfather tried to look as if it were an everyday affair to him.

At last Jack fixed on one that we liked the sound of. He paid down four pounds, and the instalments were arranged. They were to be paid monthly, and the piano was to be sent down on Monday.

Sunday seemed a tremendous long day. Monday came, and we waited all day, but there were no signs of a piano. Tuesday, the same. We were in a state.

Wednesday morning my grandfather was working on the railway, near the goods station. When he came home, he told us that there was a piano there,

in a wooden case. It must be ours. He was very angry.

The man in the goods station knew him, and he thought he was keeping it back purposely to take him down.

'If it belong't to any o' the swells, they'd soon take it home,' said my grandmother angrily.

'Heth! they would,' answered my grandfather. 'Wait a wee though. I'll smerten them up a bit. I'll hou' ye they'll no make a fool o' me.'

We waited anxiously until he would come home at dinner-time, and tell us the result.

He came in, a look of satisfaction on his face.

'Well, how did ye get on?' asked my grandmother impatiently.

'Heth! I sortit them,' he said proudly. 'Over I goes to the goods station. Jock Glen was there, an' another kin' o' clerk crater, wi' a pen stuck behin' his ear. I says to Jock:

"Have ye a piany o' mine here?" He looked at me wi' his mouth open. Begod! he was that much ta'en, he could hardly speak. "Are ye gettin' a piany?" he says. "Ay," I says. "I'm no only gettin' it, but I've got it. I think, if I'm no mistaken, that's it." I pointit to the one that was sittin' in the shed. "If it's no deliver't out o' that smert, ye'll hear about it." Then I turn't on my heel an' walk't oot.'

'Boys, oh boys! but ye did well,' cried my grandmother in a satisfied tone. 'This'll give them some-thin' to talk about. It'll fair kill them.'

The piano arrived that afternoon. I think that

was the proudest day of my grandmother's life. The passage was narrow. It was a tight squeeze to get the piano through, but my grandmother kept close to the men, at the risk of being jammed flat against the wall.

Mrs. Jackson, in her efforts to see well, leant so hard on a flower-pot that was on her window sill, that she overbalanced it.

Fortunately, it didn't hit any one, but it made a mess. My grandmother treated her to a few choice remarks, but she was so mad at being caught watching, she made no answer. Drawing her head in hastily, she banged down the window.

That afternoon Meg and I were at the piano all the time. When Jack and my grandfather came home we were able to play a tune with a distinct resemblance to 'We 're a' noddin' ' with one finger.

My grandmother had made the men put it just within the room so that any one coming to the door could see it from the end of the lobby. We used to go into the big room and look and look at it.

After a week or so, Jack spoke about me being taught to play it.

My grandfather said he would pay for a quarter. I was sent to arrange with a man who taught music. He said he would come to the house half an hour every week. He was a very eccentric man. When he came to give me my lesson, Meg and my grandmother took turns of watching through the keyhole. They thought it great fun, but I didn't like it, because it kept me from giving any attention to my lesson.

When the quarter was finished my grandfather

thought that was all that was needed. Poor man, he didn't know a thing about music.

Jack wasn't pleased, but there was nothing to be done. I couldn't get practising either. They didn't understand that practising was needed. After a few weeks I just played by ear. I used to play, or thump rather, to torment the Jacksons. As soon as I started, they would begin to hammer at coals. It always ended in a kind of duel of who could make the most noise to drown the other.

'Play up! damn ye!' my grandmother would cry excitedly. 'Don't let them dirt up the stair droon ye.'

When any one came in I had always to play 'The Protestant Boys.' The louder I played it, the better they were pleased.

Jack was at me continually to practise what I had been taught, but I never did. He was very vexed about it, but I didn't know any better at the time.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PANTOMIME

The music in my heart I bore  
Long after it was heard no more.

WORDSWORTH.

VERY often we ran short of ready money at home. Something would turn up that had to be paid at once. I would be sent to the town to pawn my grandfather's chain. I liked to go to the town, but I hated to go to the 'pawn.' I was always warned to come straight home when I got my message, so I had not a chance to see very much—my grandfather could calculate so well the time it would take me.

The 'pawn' I was sent to was in a close, and up two stairs. Very dirty, dilapidated stairs they were too. I hated to go in, for fear any acquaintance might see me. I would walk past the close several times, my face burning. I imagined every eye was on me. I felt as I think a thief must feel when trying to dispose of stolen goods.

There was a shop at the side of the close. I would stand at the window looking in, trying to gather courage, until the people in the shop began to eye me suspiciously. The longer I waited, the worse I got. At last I would make a dash for it.

At the top of the second stair was a long, dark lobby. Along one side of it ran a row of swing doors. I would be sure to bump against some one standing in the dark awaiting their turn. Then I would get the benefit of a few oaths. There were always women there, and rough tramp-looking men. I was afraid to look at them, and would wait patiently until they got in before me. Then, when I was sure that one of the compartments was empty, I would open the door timidly, and go in.

It was a very small place. There was scarcely room to turn. A high rail in front of me gave the feeling of being in jail. I would lay the chain on the counter.

'I want eight shillings,' I would say meekly.

The man would lift the chain, and examine it all over.

'Give you six,' he would reply, looking at me sharply.

'I'll take it,' I would answer, feeling very uncomfortable.

I was never sure but what he might send for the police, and accuse me of trying to impose a worthless article on him. He would slam down the money on the counter, along with a ticket. The ticket was to let us know that if the article was not redeemed within a certain time, it would be sold. I would come down the stair again, breathing freely, now that the ordeal was over.

It was the last day of the year. I had not been to the 'pawn' for some time, but, as my grandfather was going to be idle for a week, we would be

short of money, so he sent me to pledge a ring of my grandmother's.

When I went to the counter, it was a pale-faced young man, whom I had often seen writing at a desk, that came to attend me. I felt my face flush. I had always tried to appear unconscious of his presence before.

'The boss is out,' he said apologetically. 'You might just wait for five minutes.'

'Very well,' I answered humbly, trying to hide my face.

'Are you on holiday?' he asked, a little shyly.

'Holiday!' I stammered, feeling very self-conscious. 'I'm not working at all.'

He hesitated. 'How would you like to go to the pantomime?' he asked.

I was flabbergasted. The thought of a young man wanting me to go anywhere with him made my heart beat rapidly. Certainly, he was only about eighteen, and I was a great deal less, but that did not matter.

'I'm going with my grandfather,' I answered.

'Oh!' he said, looking somewhat crestfallen.

Just then the man came in, and the conversation was abruptly ended.

I felt as proud as Punch, coming out of the close.

When I got home I told Meg the startling thing that had happened to me. She laughed, and said I had better not let my grandfather hear about it, as it might put me in danger of losing some of my hair, which I could ill spare. I vowed in my heart

that I would never again tell her anything that happened to me.

Meg, my grandfather, and I went to the midnight service in the church, it being the last night of the year. When we came back we found a bottle of whisky and a glass on the door-mat. My grandmother put it there, because she liked my grandfather to first-foot us. She thought he was lucky.

On New Year's Day we had a very early tea, as we were all going to the pantomime. As our seat was to be up among the gods, we had to be at the door at least an hour before it opened, if we wanted to get to the front where we could see.

When we arrived at the theatre, there were about a dozen people standing at the gallery door. It was a very wet night, and we had been hoping to get into the shelter of the doorway.

'Now,' said my grandfather to us, 'I'll go first, an' you's shove in behin' me as well 's ye can.'

He tried cautiously to elbow his way to the door. As every one was after the same purpose, he did not succeed very well.

'Who 're ye pushin'?' said a stout woman with a shawl on her head, to my grandmother angrily. 'Ye 're jist this minit here, an' ye expec' to get to the front. Take yer time like ither folk.'

'If there's a when o' your size, there's no mony'll get near the door,' retorted my grandmother.

'If ye say anither word, I'll knock some o' thae bugles off yer bonnet,' cried the woman, eyeing her wildly.



Fortunately, further words were prevented by a policeman pushing his way into the crowd and shouting :

‘ Get into line there ! get into line there ! ’ and using his cane freely to emphasise his order.

We had to stand along the edge of the pavement for a whole hour in the drenching rain. Meg had an umbrella, which she held over my grandmother’s head. I noticed that the water ran off it in a stream down the neck of a man who was standing in front of them. He was a poor, meek-looking soul, and never said a word.

When we had been standing about three-quarters of an hour, the lights were turned on. That gave us hope, that perhaps they might take pity on us, and let us in out of the rain. Those fortunate ones near the door had the pleasure of looking through the keyhole, and seeing what was going on within. Twice there was a jingling of keys, and our hearts beat hopefully. But no, it was a false hope. Then suddenly the lights were turned high, and we heard the key being inserted in the lock.

Meg put down her umbrella. The line closed up. Everybody kept pushing those in front of them. My grandfather stuck out his elbows to try and make room for us. When the door opened, those nearest it narrowly escaped falling in.

‘ Keep to the middle, ’ my grandfather shouted excitedly to us. ‘ If ye get shoved to the side, ye ’ll maybe get jammed agin the wall. ’

There was a tremendous push from those behind, and, before we had realised that we had left the

pavement, we were standing within the door. My grandfather looked round, breathing hard.

'That was a twister,' he said, with a sigh of relief. 'I'm damned but I thought my shoother-blade was out o' jint. Rin you's on, an' I'll get the tickets.'

I had had my knuckles skinned against the wall, and Ann had lost a button off her coat. We considered that we had got off very easy.

We hurried up the stair, to try to find a good seat. We managed to get on the third step from the front. There are no seats in the gallery.

My grandfather could not see us when he came in, but Meg stood up and waved her umbrella. He came over, and we managed to get him squeezed in beside us. Meg bought some oranges, and that kept us from wearying until the orchestra came out. Then I forgot all else. I had a passionate love of music. It always lifted me into another world—a glorious world of enchantment. What did I care about the tale that the woman next me was pouring into my ear, of how she had got the black eye that ornamented her face!

Then my grandfather began to get cross at a drunk man that was sitting behind him. The man had his feet on the tail of my grandfather's coat.

'Can ye no' keep yer feet back a bit,' said my grandfather angrily.

'Where would ye like me to pit them? Roon' my neck?' sneered the man.

'Put them where the divil ye like. Ye'll keep them out the sma' o' my back any way,' snapped my grandfather.

The curtain went up, and there was quietness for a little. Then some one struck the bald spot on my grandfather's head with a rotten orange. He made a whack with his stick at a boy behind, thinking he was the culprit. The boy ducked his head quickly, and a big navvy got the blow instead. He made such a row, that my grandfather had to give him a shilling to reconcile him.

After that we got peace for a while. We forgot all our annoyances in the play.

When it was over, and we rose to go, it was a bit disconcerting to find that the drunk man behind had used my grandfather's hat for a spittoon. But one could not expect to get three hours of unalloyed joy for sixpence.

## CHAPTER XI

### MY MOTHER AGAIN

A prison? heavens;—I loath the hated name;  
Fortune's metropolis—the sink of shame.

TOM BROWN.

THE days were beginning to lengthen. The thought of the coming spring made me feel restless and discontented. I hated the dreary monotony of the days. My life was very cramped. I wondered hopelessly if it were always to be the same. How I longed to see something of the world.

There was one consolation, however. On the clear evenings I could sit at the big room window, and knit or sew, and watch the boats passing up and down. I liked to sit alone and dream. How I would have loved to wander in the dark woods among the hills on the opposite shore. All these things were full of romance to me. I have always had a great love of trees, although I never could tell the name of any of them. They seemed to me to be living things. What grandeur there is in an old tree, with its huge, spreading branches. I liked to hear the leaves rustling in a gentle wind. It sounded to me like mysterious little whisperings of strange things they had seen. How glorious it was to watch the sun setting over the hills, making a pathway like molten gold across the water.

Neither Meg nor I was working. We never had been taught anything. We were expected to go to domestic service. My grandparents had been farm servants, and it never seemed to enter their heads that they might teach us a trade, and benefit themselves later on. All they thought of was the present. They had had a hard time in their young days, and they evidently could see no reason why they should try to make it otherwise for us. What was good enough for them was good enough for us. Domestic service, where we could get our food, a fire to sit at when we had finished our work, and a comfortable bed to sleep in, was all that they considered we could want in life.

There was an old woman that my grandmother had known for years, staying not far from us. We washed a few things for her every week. I used to go for them on a Monday morning. I took the things back to her next day, then she paid me. It did not come to very much. Between eightpence and a shilling generally. My grandfather did not know about it, so Meg, Ann, my grandmother, and I divided the money amongst us. Then we always bought cakes, or something to take with a cup of tea.

One day the old woman asked me if I would come and tidy her house in the mornings, give her her breakfast and dinner, and then go home. As there would be very little to do, she would only give one and eightpence a week. I was very pleased at the thought of beginning work, and asked my grandmother if she would let me go. My grandfather

had to be asked. He knew the old woman well enough, though he did not know about the washing, so he consented to let me try. One and eightpence was not much, but I was doing nothing any way.

I started the next morning. She was a queer old woman. She lay in bed nearly all the time. When she did get up, she never dressed herself, but went through the kitchen with her nightgown and a red flannel jacket over it. When I knocked at the door in the morning to get in, I felt very frightened. I would hear her going through the house in her stockinged feet, muttering away to herself. Then there was such a lot of bolts and chains to be unfastened before the door could be opened. She would open the door about an inch, and peer out at me, to make sure who it was. When I got in, she went back to bed again. There she would sit, with her back against the wall, talking away to herself. I tidied up the house, got her breakfast ready, and gave it to her. After I had washed the dishes, I sat back, where she could not see me, and listened to hear if I could make anything out of her talk. I never could, it was such a jumble of words, and she spoke so rapidly. Even when she was not speaking, her jaws kept going all the time. She had a very long nose, which almost met her chin. Her fingers resembled talons, and were never at rest.

My grandmother told me that the old woman had her shroud all ready, in case she died suddenly. It made me fearfully nervous. A shroud! What an awful thing to have in the house. I used to look

at the chest of drawers, that stood back from her bed a bit, wonder which one it was in, and shiver. Then the desire came to me to see it. I opened the drawers, and glanced over all the things. In the third one I found the shroud. I touched it fearfully with the tips of my fingers, then closed the drawer quickly. A terrible fear came over me. I sat as far back from the drawers as I could get. After that, something seemed to draw me to it. Every day nearly I opened the drawer and looked at it, but I never could pick up courage to touch it again.

Upstairs in the attic lived another old lady, who used to come in and see my employer sometimes. As a rule, she just looked at her in the bed, then sat and talked to me. She was a strange kind of woman too. Her head kept twitching all the time, the result of a nervous shock, caused by falling into the water when she was young.

One day the old woman that I was working for took ill. I went for the doctor. He said she would need some one beside her all night.

When I told them at home, my grandfather said that Meg and I could sit with her. Meg came over when it was dark, and we made up a bed in the room. We had not lain down very long, when we heard the old woman rising. We both jumped up, and sat listening. She was talking loudly. All at once she began to run round the kitchen like mad.

That settled it. Meg and I jumped out of the bed, reached the door in a bound, and flew up the attic stair as if demented. We banged and thumped at the other old woman's door. We heard her talking

angrily to herself inside. There was no other tenant in the building. When at last she opened the door, we flew in. She was a weird-looking figure in her night clothes, almost as bad as the one we had left below. The three of us sat on the edge of her bed, while we panted out our story. She wanted us to lie down beside her, but we would not. In a short time she got us advised to go down again. Cautiously we descended the wooden stair, keeping a tight hold of each other. We groped along the dark lobby, expecting every minute to feel a skinny hand making a clutch at us. Opening the door noiselessly, we peeped in. The old woman was back in bed, evidently asleep. We passed the remainder of the night sitting in the room shivering. In the morning, word was sent to some relations she had in Glasgow. I waited until they arrived, then I went home. They came over to the house, and pleaded with me to go back, but I would not. Wild horses would not have made me go.

Next afternoon, when we were sitting at the fire, a knock came to the door. Meg opened it. It was a Mrs. Graham, a distant relation of my grandfather's. She stayed in the neighbouring town, and sometimes came to see us. She came in and sat down. I noticed that there was an unusually serious look on her face. After a short time she put her hand into her pocket, produced a paper, and, without a word, handed it to Meg, indicating a certain paragraph with her finger. Meg looked at her wonderingly, glanced at the paragraph, then her face changed.

'What is it?' asked my grandmother impatiently.



'She 'll tell you,' answered Mrs. Graham, nodding her head towards Meg.

'I will not,' said Meg, taking a long breath. 'Tell her yourself.'

'What foolery are ye at?' cried my grandmother. 'Tell folk what it is, an' be done with it.'

'I 'll tell you, then,' said Mrs. Graham, breathing hard. 'Nora's got the jail for bein' drunk and disorderly.'

My grandmother's mouth opened, but no words came. She sank down on a chair, staring pitifully at Mrs. Graham.

'It's surely a mistake,' she said at last brokenly. 'The Lord would niver put such an affront on us.'

'I wish I could think that,' answered Mrs. Graham sadly, 'but it's too true.'

'But we thought she went back to London,' said my grandmother, her lips trembling. 'She surely couldna be in the next town without us knowin' it.'

'That's just where she has been though,' replied Mrs. Graham.

My grandmother sat silent, her face white and drawn. Meg's mouth was shut tight, a habit she had when greatly angered.

Ann sat and stared at my grandmother, a look of great pity in her eyes.

Words could do nothing to alleviate the sorrow and shame.

Mrs. Graham did not wait long. It was near the time when the others would be coming from their work. Meg and my grandmother seemed too dazed to think of anything, so I hurried and got the tea ready.

My heart beat rapidly when I heard my grandfather's step at the door. Poor old man. What a humiliation it would be for him.

My grandmother looked up as he entered the kitchen. He noticed at once that something was wrong.

'What's up?' he asked, looking round apprehensively.

'It's Nora,' answered my grandmother, in a trembling voice. 'She's got sent to jail.'

My grandfather looked at her, unbelief in his eyes.

'It's some mistake. Somebody else o' the same name,' he said sharply.

'It's no mistake,' answered my grandmother sadly. 'Her own name's there in full, an' the name o' the man she ran away with.'

'Good God!' exclaimed my grandfather brokenly, 'has she sunk to that?'

He dropped down on a chair, his face working pitifully. Resting his elbow on the table, he leant his head on his hand. I saw the tears roll slowly down his cheeks. Tears of shame and agony. A feeling of hatred came into my heart for the one who had brought this sorrow on his grey head. The only sound that broke the silence was the ticking of the clock. My grandmother sat staring into the fire with unseeing eyes. It may have been that her thoughts had gone back to the little innocent child she had nursed on her knee.

My grandfather lifted his head and looked round us.

'If it's God's will to put this shame on us,' he said solemnly, 'He'll give us strength to bear it.'

Just then Jack and Barney came in. Meg silently handed Jack the paper. He read it with kindling eyes.

'The shameless wretch!' he cried passionately. 'She might have saved us this disgrace by putting another name down.'

'What is it?' asked Barney wonderingly.

'Nora's got sent to jail,' answered Meg.

'To jail!' exclaimed Barney incredulously. 'Niver!'

'See for yourself, then,' returned Meg, handing him the paper.

He was not a good reader, but he took the paper, and read slowly the paragraph indicated.

'It's true enough,' he admitted. 'As Jack says, she might have put some other name. She's evidently no' carin' though. Poor misguided crater.' He sat down to his tea with a sigh.

My grandfather drank a cup of tea, but ate nothing. There was hardly a word spoken all the evening. Each one was busy with their own thoughts. Barney said he was feeling extra tired, and went off to bed early. My grandfather, complaining of a headache, went soon after. A shadow seemed to have fallen over us all.

In a short time we were all in bed. I must have been sleeping a good while, when I was suddenly awakened by the feeling that I had heard a sound. I sat up and listened. I did not hear anything, but I got up and tiptoed into the kitchen. I stood back in the shadow, and peered over at the bed. My grandfather was lying with his hands clasped

in front of him. His lips were moving in prayer. I listened, but could only catch a few words. Something seemed to come into my throat. I slipped silently back to bed.

For a long time after, my grandfather was very much depressed. My grandmother was greatly vexed about it too, but she was of a much cheerier nature than he.

The days passed on. Summer came and went. The evenings began to draw in again, and there was a sharpness in the air in the mornings.

I like the autumn, though there is a sadness too in the falling leaves. There is always the feeling that something has passed out of one's life, never to return.

One day I was sitting, idly dreaming. I had been knitting, but had stopped to rest my eyes a little. I heard a footstep in the passage, then a knock at the door.

'See who that is,' said my grandmother to me.

I went to the door. My heart nearly stopped beating when I discovered who it was. My mother stood before me.

'Hullo!' she said, and walked past me into the kitchen.

'Well, how are you all?' she asked lightly, glancing round.

'Oh! it's you,' said my grandmother, in a faint kind of voice.

'Did you think I was a ghost?' she said, with a laugh.

What a difference there was in her. It seemed to

me that her face had changed altogether. Her hair was cut in the front, and frizzed. She wore a motor cap, and a dark costume, very much the worse for wear. There was a slit in the jacket, near the shoulder. She herself drew our attention to it.

'You see my jacket how it is spoiled,' she explained. 'It was one night I was in a house where there was a row. A man drew his knife on me. I thought I was done for, but they managed to get him away just in time. It has ruined my jacket though.'

She looked down at her jacket, a half smile hovering round her lips as if at some happy recollection. Then she began to tell about a lot of her escapades, and seemed to have pleasure in the telling.

My grandmother listened to her in awed silence. Meg and Ann scarcely spoke. I think they were afraid of her. I shrank back, as far out of sight as I could get. Meg rose to put the kettle on for the tea. My mother got up, removed her hat and coat, and laid them on the bed, as if she meant to stay.

Soon after my grandfather came in. He stood looking at her, as if unable to believe his eyes.

I thought at first, from the expression on his face, that he was going to order her out. All at once the hard look passed away, and he said quietly :

'Ye 've come back ?'

'Yes,' she answered airily, 'like the lost sheep.'

He sat down on a chair, and looked at her.

'Ye 've put a terrible shame on us,' he said sternly.

'Oh! that,' she returned boldly. 'I only had a drop too much. It might have been worse. I never was in for stealing any-way.'

There was very little more said. She stayed, and slept with Meg, Ann, and me. I think they all thought that she had cast off the old life. I seldom heard any one reproach her.

She must have had some money. One day we noticed that she was the worse of drink. She had told my grandmother that she was going out for a drink. My grandmother, thinking to keep her in the house, had brought some in to her.

We did not know what to do. My grandfather would soon be in from his work, and would notice it. We managed to get her into the room before he came, and pretended that she had a bad headache. The night wore on, and bedtime came. When we went to bed, she was much worse. She must have finished what she had in the bottle. She undressed herself, and lay down.

Meg and Ann had been sleeping some time, and I was just falling over, when I heard my mother moving, as if to rise. In a minute I was wide awake. She slipped quietly out, and disappeared in the lobby. I stealthily followed. She went into the kitchen, and stood looking down at my grandfather on the bed. The moonlight streamed in at the window, casting my mother's shadow across the floor, like a gigantic, evil spirit. I think it was her intense gaze that awoke my grandfather. He stirred uneasily, then opened his eyes, and looked at her. The moonlight gave him an unearthly look.

'In the name o' God, woman, what are ye wantin' standin' there?' he asked, in a shaking voice.

She gave an awful laugh, that made me shiver.

'Hamlet!' she cried. 'Hamlet! thou art my father's ghost.'

Then she turned into the lobby. I ran back to bed, and huddled under the clothes. Very soon she was in too. I don't think she stirred again until morning.

My grandfather had bought her a nice pair of shoes. She had small feet, and was very proud of them. A night or two after, we heard her coming along the lobby with the new shoes on. We knew because we heard them squeaking. She looked in at the kitchen door, then we saw that she had her hat and jacket on too.

'Good-night all,' she said, and passed out into the darkness. That was the last we saw of her for a long time.

## CHAPTER XII

### AT WORK IN GLASGOW

Want is a bitter and a hateful good,  
Because its virtues are not understood ;  
Yet many things, impossible to thought,  
Have been by need to full perfection brought.

DRYDEN.

WINTER closed in on us quickly. The nipping winds whistled in at the crevices of the crazy old window frames, and underneath the doors, making us glad to crouch over the fire.

Meg and I thought we would try and get work somewhere. There was nothing in our place but domestic service, and Meg had a great dislike to that. She had a fancy for a shop.

Though we were expected to go to service, my grandmother spoke of it in such a way that made it seem very undesirable to us.

'Ay,' she would say. 'Wait 'til you go to service with the strangers. I'll houl' ye ye'll wonder what's wrong with ye. They think more o' their dog than they do o' their servants.'

'Ay,' Barney would chime in. 'I see them in the mornin', when I'm goin' to my work, a washin' clood in one han', an' a lump o' loaf in the other. Some o' thae half-bil't swells can hardly get their breakfast, but they must have a servant.'



Jack did not say much on the subject. I dare say he did not want us to go away. He would be lonely.

Sometimes we got him to buy a paper, and we looked up the advertisements. If we saw anything that we thought suitable, off we would go to the town, hope in our heart. Many a weary walk we had for nothing. We had to walk, as we could not afford the car. It was always the same story. Either we were too far away, or else they wanted some one with experience. We began to get hopeless.

One morning my grandfather came in with the startling news that my brother and his family had cleared out of the place altogether. It seemed that their furniture had been sent away in the early hours of the morning, and they themselves had followed in the first train.

It was a tremendous surprise to us. It appeared from the neighbours' accounts that they had left a lot of small debts behind them. But then, what will neighbours not say? Anyhow, we did not know anything about it. It annoyed my grandfather very much.

One day, shortly after, we were surprised to get a very friendly letter from them. My grandfather, who never could keep an ill feeling, got Meg to answer it at once. A correspondence began. Both sides had evidently agreed to bury the hatchet.

An idea began to form in my mind that I might go to Glasgow and get work. I had a confab with Meg about it. She thought it a fine idea. We made it up that I would go first and get work, then she would follow. We did not know how to broach

the subject. Well we knew that my grandparents did not want us to go to Glasgow. What they wanted was that we should work at home, at anything.

We would then be under their eye, and get no freedom at all.

Meg wrote a letter privately to my brother, asking him to send word for us to come to Glasgow, as there was plenty of work to be had. The letter came, and I, with beating heart, expressed my intention of going. My grandparents did not say much, but I could see they were angry, my grandmother especially. I thought I would go soon and get it over.

The day before leaving I had everything ready. My clothes were tied up in a paper parcel. That was my all. It was an occasion of extraordinary importance to me. We were all very quiet until the afternoon. Ann seemed to feel my going very much. After dinner my grandmother got some gin. Very soon it went to her head, and she began to get quarrelsome. Meg was sitting knitting at one end of the table, and I was sitting at the other, sewing something I wanted to take with me. My grandmother sat on a stool at the fire.

'You,' she sneered at me—'You would want to go to Glesca', ye insignificant-lookin' bein' that ye are. Ye're too much tied in here. Ye canna get yer fling. Aha! but ye'll be glad to crawl back. That's the thanks I get. Me that has done so much for ye. Ye b——d that ye are, where would ye have been if it hadna been for me? In the Poor-

house! Damn ye, ye should lick the very grun' I walk on.'

The hot tears stung my eyes. With a tremendous effort I kept them back. It hurt me very much to be reproached for what I could not help. How was I to blame for my entry into the world? So far, I had not found life such a pleasant thing. Often I have felt very ungrateful for the gift of life. No doubt I, and such as I, ought to be thankful to be allowed to live and breathe at all.

Meg said nothing, but I know what she thought from her tight shut lips. Poor Ann tried to say a word in my favour. The only good it did was to turn my grandmother's anger against herself.

The day wore on. Supper passed quietly. My grandfather was very dull. I think he was vexed at the thought of me going away.

Morning came, and I awoke, feeling very unhappy. The thought that I might have to part with my grandmother on bad terms made me miserable. To my joy I found her in a different mood when I went into the kitchen. She spoke kindly, and never said a word of reproach. I hurried and got ready. Now that the time was so near, I felt upset.

Meg was to accompany me to the train. My cousins were to meet me at Glasgow station. My grandfather and Jack came in, just as I was ready to go. With a full heart I bade them all good-bye. Ann could not speak. She shook my hand silently.

'Now min', said my grandfather, looking at me earnestly, 'min' an' come back if ye don't like it.

There 's a home for ye here whenever ye like to come. Be sure o' that.'

They all stood at the door to see me off. Meg took my parcel and I hurried out, my eyes blinded by tears. They watched me until I turned the bend.

We were just in time for the train. Meg got me into a compartment where there was an old lady, going to Glasgow also. She said good-bye, and stood waving until the train was out of sight.

I leant back in the corner of the carriage feeling miserable. Now that I was out into the world I felt afraid. After a little I got interested in the country round me, and my spirits began to rise.

Two of my brother's girls were waiting for me at the Central Station. I went home with them on the top of the car. What an interest the streets had for me. Surely this was life. I felt happy, that at last I was going to realise what it was to live.

My sister-in-law gave me a hearty welcome. Whether it was from the heart, or the lips only, I could not tell. I was perfectly well aware that she and my so-called brother had never lost much love on me. They had always tried to belittle me and make my grandparents believe ill of me. Very often they succeeded too, and were the cause of giving me many an unhappy hour. I did not mind that now though. All I wanted was to earn my own living, and be independent of every one.

'Come upstairs,' said my sister-in-law. 'You can take off your things, then we will go down to the dining-room. There 's a good fire there.'

Upstairs ! I was dumbfounded. And a dining-room too ! Had they really ascended to such a magnificent height of grandeur ? It was true. What did it matter if the stair was very short and narrow ? Nobody could possibly dispute that it was anything else but a stair. Though the dining-room was the only room that was not used for sleeping in, and was only a parlour, that did not matter. Haven't people the right to baptize their rooms by any name they choose ? At first I felt very humiliated, then I began to think that as I would be staying in the house, perhaps some of their glory would reflect on me.

Next morning I started on my search for work. Nell, one of the girls, went with me. My sister-in-law said I was to go to the big warehouses, and ask if they needed any one.

How I hated going into the large buildings, I was so fearfully backward. I was all shaking, and felt so nervous that I could scarcely make myself intelligible. I had to ask for the manager, then wait a time until he came, while all the workers stared at me. I went into half a dozen warehouses. In the last one, I heard a girl say to her neighbour :

' Look at Sally from the country.'

The other girls began to giggle. I felt my face burning with shame. I did not get any work either. They were all sorry, but they were not in need of any one. They seemed to sum me up in a glance as being green.

I went home with Nell, feeling very much disheartened. Next day I started again. The first

place I went to was a large building, with a great many stairs. Each flat was different—tailoring, dressmaking, and so on.

I stopped at the flat marked tailoring, and knocked timidly at the door. A small boy opened it, and I asked for the manager. In about five minutes he came out to me. He was a nice, pleasant man. I asked him if he could give me any work. He looked at me a minute, then said slowly :

‘ Well, I could give you something, but it is piece-work, and you wouldn’t be able to make much at first.’

I told him eagerly that I was quite willing to try, and asked how soon I could begin. He told me to come the next morning. I went down the stair on wings. We hurried home to tell the good news.

Next morning I started off early. I had to take a pennyworth of the car, as my work was in the centre of the city. I arrived in lots of time. The door leading up the stair was shut. There were a good many girls waiting. They looked at me, but never spoke. They were all talking together. More girls arrived. They said good-morning to the others, but took no notice whatever of me, except to cast a contemptuous glance over my dress. How I longed for the door to open. Soon it did, and we all flocked upstairs. I went into the tailoring department, and stood waiting, uncertain what to do. The manager came along, and took me through into another room, where a great many machinists were busy at work. Beyond them, a lot of girls were sitting at tables basting jackets together. At

the extreme end of the room, which was of great length, half a dozen girls were busy ironing.

The manager took me to an elderly woman, the forewoman of the 'basters,' and told her to show me how to baste jackets together. She told me to sit beside her. I did not like her at all. She asked me a hundred questions, and tried to find out everything about me. When she found that there was nothing further to be got out of me, she said she thought I would manage all right, and sent me beside the other 'basters.' There was just one vacant place. The workers sat at long tables, three at each side. I sat at the end of a table, beside a very sullen-looking girl. Opposite me was a woman about sixty. Directly behind me, with her back almost touching mine, was a stout, florid girl, with mustard-coloured hair—Edna, I heard the other girls call her. I mention these three, because during all the weary days I was there, they were the only ones that ever spoke to me. Two of them did not speak out of the spirit of friendliness. Curiosity got the better of them. As for the old woman, nobody else would talk to her. They all spoke very proper, and were exceedingly well dressed. How they managed to do it on the wages they earned was a puzzle to me. I was poorly clad, and felt very much to sit beside them.

The work was not difficult, but it required a knack. We had to baste the linings on to the cloth for the machinists to stitch. I found the corners troublesome. Sometimes I would get half a dozen back to do over again. The prices varied, accord-

ing to the quality of the cloth, from three halfpence upwards a jacket.

My first week's earnings amounted to about four shillings. The following week I managed to make six. I was to give my brother four shillings a week for my keep, until I would see how I would get on. My car cost me a shilling a week. When I got to know the way, I reduced it to sixpence by walking home at night.

I wrote home for Meg. She came, and soon found work in a restaurant. It was near the theatres, and was open until twelve at night. It was too far for her to walk home so late, so we thought we would look for lodgings. We found a room, almost opposite the shop she worked in. We were to pay three shillings a week each for it. That included one fire at night. If we wanted any more when that burnt down, we would have to pay extra.

We carried our belongings over, and got settled. I liked it much better than staying with my brother.

When I came home at six from my work I stayed in. Generally I waited up for Meg. When the fire went out I put my jacket on, and sat huddled up at the window. It was fearfully cold, but we could not afford extra coals. I was afraid to burn the gas, in case we might be charged extra, so I sat in the dark. The window looked into a busy street, and I always found something to interest me. Often I fell asleep before Meg got home.

Sometimes I would give Meg a fright by hiding under the bed. She would look wildly round for



me, dreading that perhaps I was out in the streets at that time of night. Then I would slip my hand out, and catch her by the ankle. What a jump she would give!

My work began to grow harder. The forewoman had favourites, and I was not one of them. Sometimes I would sit for an hour or two waiting for work, and then I would get the cheap jackets. I could seldom ever get beyond six shillings a week. Occasionally it was five. I had to live very poorly.

I did not care much for tea in those days. My landlady made me a small bowl of porridge in the morning, and gave me a halfpenny worth of milk. I took the porridge, with about half of the milk. Then I had a piece of bread and syrup. That was my breakfast. I spread two thin slices of bread sparingly with syrup, and took that with me for my dinner, as I did not come home until night. For my tea, I took the rest of the milk with some bread and syrup, or perhaps butter for a change. I paid the landlady threepence a week for the porridge. I did not take any on Sunday. I looked forward all the week to that day. Then Meg and I had a quarter of a pound of cheap ham between us for breakfast.

The girls in the warehouse used often to send out for sweets. Every one gave so much, and the message girl was sent for them. Edna always asked me to give a share too. I grudged the money very much, but had too much pride to let them see that I could not afford it. I would rather have bought a scone with the money. Some of the girls

used to bring something with them to eat at eleven o'clock. Often I ate my dinner bread then, and went without at dinner-time. Many a time I have stood at a baker's window on the way home, and wondered if I could afford myself a doughnut, or a pancake, as a little luxury for my tea. I seldom did though.

My food never cost me more than one and six, or two shillings a week. It was all I could afford. And yet I was not unhappy. If Meg had an early night off, we used to go for a walk together. Everything interested me—the shop windows, the well-dressed people, and the noise and bustle of the traffic. I liked Sauchiehall Street, because there was always some one singing, or playing a violin, or something. I have often heard fine singing there.

One morning Edna condescended to ask me if I had been out the night before, and where I had been. I told her I had been for a walk up Sauchiehall Street.

'Did you get a "Pick up"?' she asked.

I looked at her questioningly. I did not know then what a 'Pick up' was.

'What's that?' I inquired.

'You surely don't think that you can make me believe that you don't know what a "Pick up" is,' she answered sarcastically. 'You know well enough that I mean, Did you pick up a fellow? Don't kid you're so innocent.'

'Oh! if that's what you mean,' I said, enlightened, 'then I did not.'

'You're a liar,' she returned. 'You couldn't be up the "Sauchie" without getting a "Pick up."'

I would have liked further information on the subject, but just then the girl opposite her began to tell her some yarn about her cousin Doctor Jim, and she turned away from me indifferently.

## CHAPTER XIII

### NEW LODGINGS

When fumes of wine do once the brain possess ;  
Then follows straight, an indisposedness  
Throughout ; the legs are fettered in that case,  
They cannot with their reeling trunk keep pace.

LUCRETIVS.

WE did not care for our landlady. She was very reserved and superior. I think she despised us for our poverty. We were not as profitable as gentlemen boarders would have been.

Meg was leaving her situation, and going to another one near Glasgow Green, where she would get finished at seven at night. We made that an excuse to go to new lodgings. We got a room over an ice-cream shop, near where Meg was to work. There were three in the family ; a man and wife, and a daughter about sixteen. They were a class lower on the social scale than our last landlady. Meg and I were to sleep with the girl, and pay half-a-crown each a week. I liked it better, because they were more homely people. We generally sat in the kitchen with them in the evenings.

I did not care much for the man though. He had a way of saying nasty, disagreeable things that I

hated. We had not been there long, until we found that the woman took a heavy dram.

Work at the warehouse began to get more plentiful. Occasionally we had to work until nine o'clock at night. I liked the overtime. It meant a trifle more to me on pay day.

There was a large dining-room underground where the girls could get food. I never went down at dinner, but if we were working late I sometimes went there to eat my bread. There were long tables, bare of course, with benches down each side. Any one that wanted anything went up to the cook at the end of the hall, where the cooking was done, and got it. They then carried it back to the table where they wished to sit. The cook was a great, stout woman, with an exceedingly sharp tongue. I never bought anything, but the food seemed to be very cheap. I simply went down for the warmth. The weather was bitterly cold, and my clothing was thin and poor. I sat alone at the farthest back table.

There was a young woman, a machinist, who used to come and talk to Edna a lot. It seemed that she was a great Christian. 'Holy Mary' they called her behind her back. I gathered from what I heard Edna say, that though she professed to be such a Christian, when the work was given out she did her very utmost to get the best of it for herself. My impression of her was that she was really a great hypocrite.

One night when we were working late, she came over to where I was sitting in the dining-hall. I wondered what she was after, when she seated herself beside me.

'How are you getting on?' she asked, in an apparently friendly tone.

'Oh, not bad,' I answered, feeling a trifle embarrassed.

'I just thought I would like to ask you a question,' she said slowly. 'Do you love Jesus?'

'I think so,' I stammered, very much taken aback. She looked at me sorrowfully.

'Are you not quite sure?' she asked, in the tone of a judge. 'You know, it's a great thing to love Jesus. What happiness it was to me when I found Him. Think of your soul before it is too late, and if you have any doubts of it, come to me and I'll help you.'

I could not speak. I simply sat and stared at her. She rose to go.

'Now mind,' she said solemnly; 'if you don't want to go to hell, you must not delay. You'll promise to come to me if you need help.'

'Yes,' I answered meekly, not knowing what else to say.

Off she went. I thought of what she had said all the evening. I wondered what her idea of loving Jesus was. I used often to hear her speaking ill of other girls to Edna. I believed it to be simply jealousy, because they were better-looking than herself. She was a pimply-faced girl, and wore her hair straight back off her face, which had the effect of adding to her plainness. I knew too that she was spiteful. I began to feel very annoyed at myself for having been so humble to her. I was so lonely among all that crowd of girls, that I thought at first

that she might be a friend to me. I very soon realised that her religion was only a cloak which she wore for her own advantage. I wondered why she wanted to whitewash my soul, as I could not benefit her any. Perhaps it was that she wanted to impress the other girls, by showing them that she was concerned about even an insignificant creature like me.

My idea of religion was altogether different. I had nobody in the world to open my heart to when I was unhappy. I had always the feeling that God knew all my troubles, and would help me when I most needed it. I liked to think of God as a kind, loving father, and so I wore my religion in my heart. I did not care whether other people thought me good-living or not. God knew what was in my heart, and that was all that I considered necessary.

Many a time after that 'Holy Mary' came to talk to Edna, but took not the slightest notice of me. She had evidently forgotten that I had a soul, or it may have been that she thought I was past redemption.

I had a good distance to walk to my lodgings. On late nights, it was generally half-past nine before I got home. I comforted myself all the way by thinking I would have a nice warm fire to sit at when I got there. The key was generally under the door-mat. I would open the door and go in. In the kitchen I would find the fire out, and my landlady sitting on a chair, dead drunk. Meg and the girl would be in bed, too disgusted to sit up. The man would be off to a theatre or music-hall. There would be nothing else for me to do but go off to bed, and try to get warm there.

The days wore on. It was coming near the New Year holidays. Meg and I thought we would like to go home for a few days. The restaurant Meg worked in was connected with a large work, and it was shut during the holidays. As she earned more money than I, she began to save up to buy a piece of waxcloth to take home. She wanted enough to cover the kitchen floor. It would save my grandmother having to scrub the bare boards.

How proud we were the night we bought it. We were to stop work at dinner, on the last day of the year. We meant to hurry home, get dressed, and go off with the first train we could catch.

I almost flew along the street that day. How excited and happy I felt at the thought of seeing them all at home again. I ran up the stair like the wind. When I got to the landing, there was Meg, the man and the girl. They said they had been hammering and kicking at the door for the last ten minutes, and thought something must be wrong, as they had got no answer. I gave them a hand, and we hammered and kicked for other five minutes, but it was of no use. At last the man got mad, and, putting his shoulder to the door, burst it open. We followed him into the kitchen, fearful of what we might see. There was the landlady lying on the floor, helplessly drunk. In attempting to wash the floor she had upset the pail, and had fallen with her head inside it. She was soaked from head to foot.

'Good God!' exclaimed the man wrathfully. 'Is that no' a sight for any man to come in to?'



He and the girl, with very ungentle hands, trailed her up on to a chair. They took off her wet things, lifted her into the bed, and left her. The man was going to carry our waxcloth to the station. The girl was coming too, just to see us off. We all helped to mop up the water on the floor. It was so funny, seeing the man sprawling over the floor on his knees, and wringing his cloth so awkwardly into the pail, that I got fair helpless laughing. Meg was afraid the man would get angry, and kicked me viciously on the shins, but I could not stop.

The fire was out, so there was no chance of any dinner. We had an awful scurry to get ready. I could not get near the sink at all to wash my face, so I carried some water into the room, in the frying-pan, which happened to be clean, and washed there. All the time, the woman kept groaning away on the bed. Nobody paid any attention to her.

At last we were ready. The man hoisted the roll of waxcloth on to his shoulder.

'What are you going to do with her?' asked Meg questioningly, pointing towards the woman on the bed.

'She can lie there an' cool herself 'til we come back, the drunken old swine that she is,' answered the man, with a contemptuous look at the bed. 'Come on now. We'll have to look dashed smart, if we're to catch that train.'

He opened the door, and we filed out, he leading the way. Half-way down the stairs there was a sharp turn. The man was in such a hurry he forgot

to lower the end of the waxcloth, which knocked against the wall with such force, that it threw him down on the stair. As we were immediately behind him, we all fell. Meg had a jar of honey on her arm, that she was taking home. It dropped with such force, that it smashed into pieces.

'Damn it,' roared the man angrily, 'can you's no' keep from walkin' on a man's heels altogether.'

'Didn't you tell us you'd go first, and we were to come at your back,' snapped the girl. The end of the waxcloth had come down on her toes.

'I hope you'll always do exactly as you're told,' retorted the man bitterly.

Off we started again down the stair, the man this time bringing up the rear. Our passage along the streets was somewhat slow, especially as the man would insist on taking Meg's arm. Two people walking arm in arm in the crowded streets might manage with difficulty, but, if accompanied by a long roll of waxcloth, the matter assumes serious proportions.

Meg was mad at the man taking her arm, and so was I. It attracted attention.

'Oh, look at the young lassie and the old man,' I heard a message-boy remark jeeringly.

The girl and I now kept discreetly behind, and listened to the rude remarks passed on Meg and the man as a hat was knocked off here, and a cap there by the vagaries of the waxcloth.

I heaved a sigh of relief as we reached the station. At any rate, we would get rid of the man now. Alas! it was not so. He took the waxcloth to the

luggage van, then suddenly announced his intention of going home with us to see our people, and, at the same time, relieve us of our burden to the very door. What could Meg say? No doubt he meant to be kind, so we had to pretend we were delighted. The guard began to wave his flag. The girl received her final instructions about looking after her mother when she got home, and off we started on our homeward journey. Home again! How our hearts beat. It had often been an unhappy home for us, but what did we care for that now?

Whatever had been, and very likely would be again, at any rate loving hearts would welcome us that day. I felt so happy that I got quite friendly with the man, and very nearly, out of my full heart, was asking him if he would not stay the night with us. Fortunately I caught myself up in time, and, receiving a nip on the arm from Meg, as a gentle reminder, began to cool down a bit. I sat and stared out of the carriage window, Soon familiar landmarks came into view, and I forgot about the man altogether.

## CHAPTER XIV

### QUEER TALES

For spirits, freed from mortal laws with ease,  
Assume what sexes and what forms they please.

POPE.

THEY did not know at home what train we were coming with, so we thought we would surprise them. When we arrived at our village, the man again shouldered the waxcloth. Meg and I hurried him along the streets so fast, that he was breathless when we reached our house.

We dashed up the passage before him, and round to the door. There they were, all standing waiting. They had evidently been on the watch for us. We were so excited, we were all talking at the same time. Every one's face beamed.

'Ye're at the wrong house. We order't no waxcloth. Try up the stair. Damn it, I'm tellin' ye it's no' for us,' we heard my grandfather's voice exclaim impatiently at the door after we had gone in.

How terrible of Meg and I. We had forgotten altogether about the man for the moment. We ran to the door. The poor man was frantically trying to explain and induce my grandfather to let him in, and my grandfather, not understanding,

and thinking it was some one trying to impose on him, was grimly determined to keep him out.

We explained matters, and apologised for our forgetfulness. My grandfather lifted down the waxcloth from the man's shoulder, and with great cordiality invited him in. Very soon the tea was ready, and we all sat down together, a thing that had never happened before.

Neither Meg, Ann, nor I had ever sat at the table with my grandfather. Indeed my grandmother hardly ever did either. We generally took our food in our hand sitting just anywhere. Jack sat with him though. He would not have minded my grandmother, but if any of us girls had placed ourselves at the table beside him, we would have got a few words of comfort, accompanied by a look that would have crushed us. We never were allowed to put ourselves forward either, if there was any one in.

The tea passed off all right. The man was a good talker, and, as it chanced, a bit of an Orangeman, which pleased my grandfather mightily.

He waited until the last train, and then my grandfather convoyed him to the station, and pressed him to come back and spend another day with us.

They were so delighted with the waxcloth, that they started to put it down that night. The kitchen was so small, that we all got in each other's way. Each one knew exactly how it should be laid, and as every one's plan differed from the other's, some bitter words passed. However, the job was done

at last to every one's satisfaction, and we sat down to admire it.

Meg and my grandfather went to the midnight service. I stayed at home and cleaned the fireside.

I took out all the ashes too, as my grandmother thought it very unlucky to do any cleaning, or put out any rubbish, on New Year's Day.

The bottle and the glass were left out on the doormat as usual for my grandfather to first-foot us. When he and Meg came in we had a glass of ginger wine and a piece of cake. After wishing each other a happy New Year, we went off to bed.

The few days we had at home passed very quickly. The day came on which we were to take our departure. After tea we were all very quiet. Jack asked me if I would come back if he could get work for me. I said I would, because I knew he was lonely. He said if he heard of anything he would send me a telegram. We put on our things to go. Meg and I felt so sorry to leave them all. My grandfather looked at us wistfully, as he said good-bye.

'Do ye's no' think ye's would come back home again?' he said in a husky voice. 'Your mother's no' very able to do much. If we had two lodgers, we could do fine with the two o' ye at home.'

My grandmother wiped her eyes silently. What could Meg and I do but promise we would. We said we would go back to Glasgow for a little longer any way.

I felt miserable all the way up in the train. The tears would come into my eyes when I thought of them sitting sad and lonely at home.

When we got to our lodgings we found everything as usual. The three of them seemed to be the best of friends. The episode on the day of our departure was never alluded to.

I was back at my work just about a week, when I received a telegram from Jack. I did not know whether to feel glad or sorry. I would not have liked to go back, just to be in the house again. Anyhow, I had promised, and I would go. I went to Meg's place of work and told her. She was vexed to be left alone, but she said she would not go home in the meantime.

I tied up my things and got ready for the train. My landlady was sorry I was going away. She said they would miss me, as many a good laugh I had given them.

When I arrived home I was greatly disappointed to find that Jack had no work for me at all. My grandmother had not been feeling very well, and he, the sly one, had made that the excuse.

A few days after I had come home, we got word that a sister of my grandfather's, the only near relation he had, was coming on a visit to a married son she had in a neighbouring town. She was to arrive that day from Ireland, and was coming to see us the following night.

My grandfather was very pleased, as he had not seen her for years. Next night we hurried the tea past, and got the kitchen tidied up.

She arrived soon after, accompanied by her son. She was a little old woman, with a yellow, shrivelled face. A black bonnet, and a black cashmere plaid,

worn three-corner ways, and with the ends nearly touching the ground, gave her a quaint, old-world look.

She shook hands with us all. When she came to me she asked :

‘ Is this Nora’s lassie ? ’

‘ Ay,’ answered my grandfather, a note of pain in his voice.

There was dead silence for a minute or two. I felt my face flush. The old woman stood peering at me.

‘ She’s a nice enough bit lassie,’ she said at last.

The conversation became general, and I heaved a sigh of relief.

There was a great raking up of old stories between her and my grandfather. All the exploits of their young days were lived over again. I listened with eager interest. Betty, as my grandfather called his sister, spoke in a queer, solemn kind of voice, and told of some of the wild pranks they had played.

‘ Do ye min’,’ she said to my grandfather, ‘ o’ poor Johnny Green, that met his death through a widger ? ’

‘ Ay, fine,’ answered my grandfather, in an awed voice. ‘ Faith ! that was a terrible affair.’

‘ What was that ? ’ asked my grandmother eagerly. ‘ I don’t min’ o’ any Johnny Green.’

‘ Tell them how it happen’t,’ urged old Betty, nodding to my grandfather.

‘ This was the way o’ it,’ he began. ‘ About a dozen fellas took on a widger with Johnny o’ half a sovereign, that he wouldna go to the graveyard an’ cry three times, “ Rise, ye dead ! Christ has come to judgment.” Well, Johnny, who was feart for



nothin' that walked in shoe leather, took on the bet that he would do it.'

'It was a fearful thing to widger about,' interrupted old Betty. 'No wonder the Lord sent a judgment on him.'

'Well,' continued my grandfather, 'Johnny took the widger on anyway. He was to go to the middle o' the cimitry, an' cry it three times. The other fellas was to stand at the gate an' watch him. Well, it was a fine moonlight night when they started off for the cimitry. Boul' Johnny opens the gate an' goes in. The rest crowdet roun' the gate outside to get a good view o' him. Just when Johnny was half way through, an' had cried what he had to cry, up rose a figger in white an' shouts, "Yea, Lord, here I come."'

'God preserve us,' said my grandmother, in a shaking voice.

'The other fellas saw him fallin', an' they ran in,' went on my grandfather. 'When they reached him, the breath was out o' his body altogether. He was stone dead. With the fright he got his heart fail't him. The figger in white had disappeared. They discover't after that it was a kin' o' half-daft crater that was in the habit o' sometimes wandering through the cimitry. She was wearin' a white shawl at the time. That was the last o' poor Johnny. Wi' sad hearts they carried him home.'

'Ay, that settlet them for a while,' said Betty, shaking her head solemnly.

'Do ye min' the tailor that stayed beside us when we were merriet first?' said my grandmother.

'Ay, fine,' answered Betty. 'What about him?'

'He played a fine trick on the folk at one time,' laughed my grandfather.

'Was that wee Geordie Smillee?' inquired Barney.

'The very boy,' answered my grandfather.

'There was two brithers,' explained my grandmother. 'As good tailors as ye would have got in the north o' Irelan', but terrible drunken craters. They were sent for to work at all the big houses roun' about. Kin' heartit they were too. I min' once there was a raggit soul o' a herd-boy used to go about. They took him in to their house one day, an' made him a new suit from head to fit for nothin'.'

'But what was the trick they played?' asked old Betty's son impatiently. He was a little man, with a round, shining bald head, and a serious way of speaking, just like his mother.

'Tell it, Wullie dear,' said Betty, nodding over to my grandfather.

'Well,' began my grandfather, 'it was one time they were terrible hard up. Not a penny had they, an' they were fair mad for a glass o' whisky. They could get no credit anywhere. Well, they made it up they would let on one o' them had died. Patrick, the youngest, hadna been feelin' very well anyway. He lay down on the bed, an' Geordie spread a sheet over him. Out he goes, an' locks the door.

'M'Iloy had a public-house at the corner at the time. In goes Geordie wi' a long, mournfu' face. M'Iloy looks at him.

'"What's wrong the day, Geordie?" he asks.

“ Oh,” says Geordie in a trimblin’ voice, “ poor Patrick passed away this mornin’.”

“ Is that a fact? I didn’t think he was as bad as that,” answered M’Ilroy sympathetically. “ Poor fellow, it must have given ye a turn him ta’en so suddenly, an’ yer only brither too.”

“ Ay,” said Geordie, ribbin’ his een wi’ his napyin. “ I’m that much put aboot I don’t know whether I’m stanin’ on me head or me feet. An’ I haven’t a glass o’ whisky to offer to the neighbours when they come to wake him the night.”

“ Don’t let that worry ye,” answered M’Ilroy kindly; “ I’ll surely trust ye wi’ as much as wake the poor sowl decently.”

‘ He liftit down two five-gillers, an’ handit them over the counter to Geordie. Geordie promised that as soon as it was all over, the very first money he had, he would come in an’ pay for them.

‘ Home he went, wi’ the two bottles under his oxtar. The news soon spread. Neighbours began to come to the door to sympathise wi’ Geordie. Two or three o’ them, knowin’ he was hard up, brought a bottle o’ whisky. He kept them at the door though, an’ pointin’ to the bed, would say sorrowfully:

“ I’m no fit to speak to anybody the now. Ye can all come in in the evenin’. Then he locked the door, an’ never open’t it to anybody.

‘ The neighbours, thinkin’ he wantit to be alone in his grief, bother’t him no more till night. Then they all gather’t at the door for the wake. They knock’t and knock’t, but got no answer. Heth! they thought something was wrong, an’ burst open

the door. There was Patrick and Geordie, lyin' at the fireside, drunk as lords. Boys, the folk went clean mad, an' nearly wrecked the house, when they seen how they had been done.'

'That was a good one,' said Barney with a chuckle.

'Never min' Geordie. He got a good skinfu' off them any way.'

'Do ye min' the tinker woman an' her six weans that ye let stay wi' ye for a week in that house?' asked Betty of my grandfather.

'I min' o' them any way,' said my grandmother, tossing her head. 'The folk sent all the tramps that come about to our house. They knew Wullie would refuse nobody a night's shelter.'

'Faith! neither would you,' returned my grandfather with a smile, as he refilled his pipe, which had gone out.

'He niver would let me lock the door at night,' continued my grandmother. 'One night we were sittin' weavin', when the door opens, an' in walks a big man about six feet. He goes right up to the fire, an' lights a bit paper for his pipe. I was lookin' roun' for somethin' that I could fell him wi', when he turns roun', an' walks out the door without a word. We heard next day that he was a deserter. The sodgers got him down in the moss, poor sowl.'

'It was a bad place, down there,' said Barney. 'They said it was hauntit. There's no' many would pass it at night any way.'

'Well, I don't know,' remarked my grandfather thoughtfully. 'I niver believed in these kin' o' things, till one night I was drivin' a horse along

that road. When we got to the moss the horse stopped. I tried to lead it, then I leather't it. It was no use. It wouldn't move on a step. The sweat was rinnin' off it, an' it was all trimblin'. Evidently it seen somethin', for move forrit it would not. I turn't its head back home again, an' off it went like stoor.'

'They said there was a man murder't there,' said Betty in an awed voice.

'Is big Jock M'Grath livin' yet, Betty?' asked Barney.

'He's dead these three years,' answered Betty.

'He was a wild divil,' said Barney with a laugh. 'I min' o' him bein' at a wake one night. Oul' Nancy Wilson it was. A hard oul' screw she was when she was livin'. Anyway, we were all gether't, when in comes Jock. Over he goes to the bed where Nancy was laid out, an' lifts her up wi' her back again the wa'.

'Then he startit a clog dance in front o' her. The rest got feart, an' pulled him down on to a chair. When he could get doin' nothin' else, he stuck pins into the lassies an' had them yellin' "Murder!"'

'Much he cared for either dead or livin',' remarked Betty. 'He's away now. May his sowl rest in peace.'

The clock struck ten.

'Dear me!' she exclaimed in surprise, 'is it that time already? We'll have to go. Come on, Robert John,' to her son.

She shook hands solemnly with us all, and bade us good-bye with tears in her eyes.

' I 'll niver see ye's again in this world,' she said sadly. ' Good-bye, weans, dears, an' may God bless an' keep ye.'

She passed out into the night, a quaint, pathetic old figure. I never saw her again.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN A TEA-ROOM

Meg was meek, and Meg was mild,  
Bonnie Meg was nature's child ;  
Wiser men than me 's beguil'd—  
Whistle o'er the lave o't.

BURNS.

IN another month Meg came home. She did not like being alone, and my grandmother wanted her help as she was going to get two lodgers. Besides, she felt the heavy washings too much for her.

My grandfather always wore white moleskin trousers. He was so particular that they should be snow white, like linen. What a work they were. First they had to be scrubbed. We took turn about of scrubbing them until our arms ached. Then they had to be boiled. After that they were bleached for a day or two. When they had been worn for a day they were perfectly black. Jack hated to see him with them on. He thought they were so poorhouse looking. He generally wore an old tweed pair.

The lodgers came. This time it was two Highlandmen. One of them, a conceited kind of character, with a blue chin, a scarlet nose, and beady eyes,

took a great fancy to Meg. She did not tell me, but I knew.

They had a cup of tea in their own room at night, before going to bed. She always served it. One night, after she had taken it in, I thought I heard a scuffle. I flew to the door and listened. It happened that Meg's admirer was in alone that night. I peeped through the keyhole. He had the hold of Meg by the arm, and was wanting her to kiss him. She looked so mad, I thought for a moment that she was going to throw the hot tea in his face. I noticed what evidently he did not, that she had still the hold of the cup by the handle. She did not do it though, much to my disappointment. She just knocked his arm away roughly, and dashed out of the room. She came out in such a hurry that before I could get up from the keyhole, she fell over me in the lobby.

'What the divil's that?' shouted my grandfather angrily from the kitchen.

'I tripped over the door-mat in the dark,' explained Meg, darting an angry look at me.

My grandfather looked at us suspiciously for a minute, but let the matter drop.

Meg could hardly speak civilly to the Highlander after that. When she was not looking, I used often to see him casting admiring glances at her.

About the middle of the summer Meg went to work in a tea-room. On days when they were extra busy I went also to help. I liked to work in it as it was always cheery. There was little doing in the winter, so there was only one girl kept. As



the wage was too small for any of the other girls, being only three shillings a week, Meg thought I might take it. It was the end of October when I started. I went to the house in the morning for the keys, and was in sole charge of the shop all day. Sometimes Mrs. S——, the proprietress, would come in in the afternoon and sit a little while, but often I would not see her all day. I never felt at ease with her. She had a stony eye, and a very abrupt manner. Her complexion was florid, and she wore her black hair in a Japanese kind of style.

She had been married twice, but her second husband did not live with her. Often in the evenings she went for long walks. She seemed to have few friends.

Meg told me that her husband used to come in the summer sometimes, and stay a day or two. She thought him a queer man. Mrs. S—— told Meg that he had quarrelled with her once because he had seen her servant down on her knees scrubbing. He said the girl should not have to scrub, because it spoilt her figure.

One afternoon Mrs. S—— came down with a book in her hand. She said, as there was nothing doing, she would read to me. I liked the story very well. It was one of Conan Doyle's, but all the time she was reading, I was wondering what kind of woman she was. I never could penetrate the least bit below the surface. After she had finished reading, she began to tell me about a public-house she had had in Edinburgh, just shortly after she had married her second husband.

She said it was frequented a great deal by travellers. As a rule she served in the bar herself. One night she was there, a very nice-looking man came in for a drink. Not knowing that she was married, he asked her if she would go for a walk with him. She told him she was sorry to disappoint him, but she was afraid her husband would object. He laughed and apologised. Next day she found out that he was the officiating hangman.

While we were talking, a tall gentleman, with a black beard came in. He was rather good looking, and wore gold eyeglasses. We were sitting behind the counter. He just looked at us, and walked into the tea-room. I followed him, to see what he wanted. He ordered tea and cakes. I served him, and sat down beside Mrs. S—— again. She had her head bent over her book, and did not speak.

The gentleman finished his tea, and came to the counter to pay it. Mrs. S—— gave him his change without a word, and he walked out.

‘That ’s Mr. S——,’ she said to me quietly.

I was astonished, having never dreamt that the man was her husband. I did not like him somehow. We sat very quiet for a long time, then she sent me out to see if he was anywhere about. I looked round, but could not see a sign of him. I was just coming back to tell her so, when, chancing to glance in at a public-house door as I passed, I saw him standing at the bar. I ran back and told her. She seemed to be frightened. It was dark, so she said we would just shut the shop and go home.

We locked the door, and hurried up the street as

fast as we could. About half-way, I looked back. My heart jumped. There he was, coming after us as quick as he could. I told Mrs. S——. We hurried round the corner, and hid in another building, and considered what we would do.

Very soon he appeared, and went up the stair to the house where she stayed. We heard him ringing furiously at the bell. Then he came down and stood at the entrance, evidently watching for us. He waited there for ever so long. At last he did go away. I waited until Mrs. S—— got into the house, and then ran home.

Shortly after she announced her intention of going to Edinburgh. She meant to take a hotel there, and asked me if I would go with her. I was mad to go to Edinburgh, to see Holyrood Palace, so I said I would go.

A few weeks after the shop was shut. She was not going for two months, but I stayed with her to help in the house.

I generally got home about seven at night, but sometimes she kept me later. I hated when she kept me late, because my grandfather would never believe I was there. He was angry when I went home, and said I was just running the streets. There was no use explaining. He simply would not listen.

It drew near the time when she was to go away. Jack urged me strongly not to go. He did not like Mrs. S——. I did not know what to do. I was afraid I would not get on with her, and would have to come home again. At last I told her I would not go. She was very much annoyed. I left the next day.

I felt it very dull being at home again. Meg and I were hardly ever out at night. My grandfather objected. He seemed to think we should not go out in the dark. If we did go, and waited until ten o'clock, we would be pulled in by the hair on entering the house. Then we would get a volley of abuse that would make us feel dejected for a week. We thought when we came back from Glasgow that things would be different. They were for a short time, but very soon came back to the old order again.

Before the winter passed we heard several times of my mother being in jail again. Each time it gave my grandfather a fresh stab. His face got more lined every day. He would lean his head wearily on his hand and say :

'Oh, well, the Lord has afflicted us sorely, but it 's maybe for some purpose. He knows best.'

'Ay, faith, God's ways are strange,' my grandmother would answer, solemnly shaking her head. 'Wherever she is, poor misguided sowl, may He look down on her with mercy.'

## CHAPTER XVI

### WORKING IN A MILL

Alas! that dreams are only dreams!  
That fancy cannot give  
A lasting beauty to those forms  
Which scarce a moment live.

R. DAWES.

AT the beginning of the summer Meg and I thought we would try again in the neighbouring town for work. This time we went to the factories. We were lucky enough to get taken on in a large merino mill, for the knitting department.

We got up at half-past four in the morning. Meg wanted a cup of tea before going out, then we had to be dressed in time to catch the five-twenty train. When we reached the town we had a long walk to the mill. We were very anxious to know how we would get on. When we arrived at our destination, we were told to wait in the gatehouse. In a few minutes the manager who had engaged us came in. He gave us a friendly nod, and told us to come with him. We followed him through passages and up stairs, until we reached the place where the knitters worked. He left us there with the forewoman. She took us up to the end of the room and gave us a stocking machine each. She then told two girls,

who were working at their own machines, to teach us, and walked away. As soon as her back was turned, the girls made faces after her. Afterwards, I became addicted to the same habit myself. We soon found out that she was a bit of a warmer.

Many were the curious glances cast in our direction. I was glad our machines were in the very back row, so that I could keep my back to the girls.

We were allowed a girl for a week to teach us. For that week we were to get five shillings, and I think the girl that taught us got the same. After that, we were to be on piecework.

I was much relieved to find that the girls were a different class from those of the warehouse in Glasgow. They were more homely, and had no airs about them. I liked working beside them. Those who did not go home for their dinner were allowed to stay in the workroom. About half a dozen stayed in. Meg and I made friends with them.

I did not like going up and down to the mill though. The knitters were decently dressed, but the flat girls (those who span the wool), of whom there were about three times as many, just wore shawls on their heads. The flat girls bore a great enmity towards the knitters, because they went dressed to their work.

At that time my hair was pretty short. I wore a large bow of ribbon at the back to hide deficiencies. Two of the flat girls noticed this the second day after I started, and began to shout :

'Toozy Lizzie. A pennyworth o' ribbon, an' a halfpennyworth o' hair.'

That started others. Very soon there were about two dozen yelling it at me every time I went up and down the road.

Sometimes they would come close to me, and shout it into my face. I did not dare say a word, or put out my hand to push them away. That, indeed, was what they wanted, and would have been the signal for a battle royal. Nothing would they have liked better than a tussle with the knitters.

This lasted about a fortnight. It got so on my nerves, that I thought I would have to leave. Then all at once they left me alone. Either something else had taken up their attention, or they thought me too poor game.

Very soon we could make a pretty fair wage. Stock, we got on fine with, but orders were a terror. Everybody tried to jink them. Stock would be perhaps a dozen pairs of stockings all the one size. An order would be just one pair, and we would get a stocking as a pattern, to make the pair exactly the same. The orders were generally given out late in the afternoon. Whenever we saw Miss A——, the forewoman, sorting out the orders at her desk, we ducked under our machine, pretending we were arranging our work, hoping she would pass us over. But no. Down the message girl would come with a ticket and a sample to measure by. It was always a great relief to the girls when they did not get an order. It took such a long time for a mere nothing. We would knit, and keep measuring it with the

pattern. When it was finished we had to take it to Miss A——. She would measure it, and pull it this way and that.

‘Take it back,’ she would snap. ‘It’s two inches too short.’

Back we would go to our machine and do it over again, muttering a blessing on her in every row. Out we would go again. She would glare at us, and snatch it out of our hand. The measuring would begin again.

‘An inch too long,’ would be her verdict, and she would throw it over the desk to us.

Very often she was done though. I have known the girls take it back to their machine, but never touch it. In a while, back they would go with it, and she would say it was all right.

She was the most disagreeable young woman I have ever met. She hardly ever gave us a civil word. Before she became forewoman, she had been a knitter, and I suppose she thought she could show the superiority of her position better by being stiff. The only time she smiled and looked pleasant was when the foremen came to talk to her. But that is women all over. They think they can be as disagreeable as they like to their own sex, but there is always an angelic smile for the men.

A new rule was made, that all the girls must be out of the workroom at the meal hours, and the doors locked. On fine days we sat on the grass by the roadside, in front of the mill, and ate our dinner. The flat girls sat there too. They shouted insulting things to every one that passed.



We were paid every fortnight. If we happened to have good work, and earned a little more, Meg and I shared it with Ann and my grandmother.

If we had given it to my grandfather he would just have expected the same every time.

One Saturday my grandfather went to the town to see a man that belonged to the same Orange Lodge as himself. There he met the man's son, and invited him to see us.

He came the following Saturday. John Wilson his name was. My grandparents were away in the town when he came. He said 'Hullo' when Meg opened the door to him. She asked him if he was John Wilson. He said he was, so she told him to come in.

He was a stout, not bad looking young man of nineteen. We did not know what to do with him. We had not the slightest experience in entertaining young men. Anyhow, we thought we would make a beginning by giving him some tea. We set it down on the table, but, not being in the habit of dining with the male members of our family, we made no exception in his case. Meg invited him to sit at the table, alone, then we all stood round and stared at him eating. It seemed to embarrass him a great deal. He gulped his tea down so quick, I'm sure the skin of his throat was tender for a considerable time after.

When he had finished, Meg suggested that I should take him into the big room and play the piano for his entertainment. I did so, and played all the choruses I knew by ear.

He seemed to be greatly taken with the piano. After a little he said he would like to try it himself. I politely offered him the chair which did duty for a piano stool. He sat down, and stuck there for a solid hour trying to play 'We're a' noddin'' with his one finger.

Meg came in and sat down for about ten minutes. Finding that he took no notice of her, she went over beside him and said something almost in his ear. He looked at her for a minute with a vacant stare, then fixed his attention on the piano again. Disgusted, she returned to the kitchen. Not so with me. It was the first time I had had the honour of entertaining a young man, so I stuck to my post. It certainly was slow work, but it gave me an opportunity of surveying him from all points of view. I thought him a pretty tough-looking customer.

At last he stopped, apparently well satisfied with himself. I took him into the kitchen again. He sat for a little while, speechless, unless when spoken to, and then rose to go. We saw him to the door. He said he would be back the following Saturday.

Soon after my grandparents came in. My grandfather was very pleased to hear that the young man had come down.

The next Saturday he again turned up. This time he had a roll of music with him. He presented it to me. We gave him tea in the same solitary way as before. He did not seem to enjoy it any better. Afterwards, he had an hour at 'We're a' noddin'' at the piano. He asked me if I could play any of the

music he had brought. I managed to pick out two or three tunes slowly with one finger.

After that he came every Saturday. It was generally understood in the house that he came after me. I marvelled at my grandfather allowing it. If I had been seen speaking to a young man in the street I know what would have happened. It must have been because John Wilson's father was an Orangeman. Or perhaps my grandfather thought that if I got married young, it might save a lot of trouble in the future. It made me feel very important to have a young man courting me. But then, I was never sure whether it was me or the piano he came after. In fact, looking back even now I'm afraid I must give the piano the benefit of the doubt. My romance had a sudden ending.

One Saturday Meg and I went to the town for a walk. We met a young man who worked in the mill, and he joined us. Turning to look at something, I saw John Wilson staring at us. I pretended not to see him, and walked on.

The following Saturday when he came down I said for fun that I had heard he was going with a girl.

'Who told you that?' he asked quickly.

'Oh, I heard it,' I answered with a laugh.

'If I knew who told you that,' he said sullenly, 'I'd spit in their eye.'

I started. I felt very proud to think he would want to spit in any one's eye just for my sake. To me it was just as great an honour as if he had said he was going to fight a duel for me. He sat two and a half hours after that, and in that time only said four

words. I kept moving my feet, and shifting my chair about to see if I could rouse him. It was no use.

The next Saturday evening we walked with the same young man, and met John Wilson as before. He must have been on the watch for us. He never came to see me again.

I did not trouble much about him though. My cousins were coming for a few days, as it was the Fair holidays, so I thought I might get some fun. Meg and I were having our holidays too, so we were busy cleaning the house. I was busy whitewashing the kitchen wall when there was a knock at the door.

'If that's a bowl wife, there's some rags under the kitchen bed she can get,' said my grandmother. 'She'll maybe give us a cup or two for them.'

'Can you not open the door to see who it is?' cried Meg impatiently, from under the bed where she was busy scrubbing.

I had on an old shirt of my grandfather's, and a red nightcap with all my hair pushed under it. My feet were bare, and I had no skirt on. I certainly was not in a fit state to open the door to any one, but I did not care for a bowl wife. I dived under the kitchen bed, grabbed an armful of rags, and flew to the door.

I thought I'd better have a look through the key-hole first. I saw it was the minister, so I never opened the door at all. I disliked any of the church people visiting us. I could not bear their condescending way of talking to us. I did not see what

right they had to speak to us as if we were so very inferior.

Next morning my cousins arrived. Nell's sweetheart came down with them to spend the day. He was a jolly kind of fellow, and a fine baritone singer. He was a music-hall artiste. Nell disgusted us by sitting on his knee the whole time he was in the house. I was surprised my grandfather did not give her a dig about it. He did not though. He just smiled at them. I know that if Meg or I had done such a thing we would have lost a few hairs, not to speak of the bruises we would have got.

But then my cousins never could do anything out of place.

We did not know where we were all to sleep. My grandparents went into the little room, and gave my brother and his wife the kitchen bed. The three girls, Meg, Ann, and I were to sleep in the big room bed. We did not lie up and down, but across, with chairs along the front to put our feet on. We laughed so much at first, that we did not want to sleep. After that we felt so uncomfortable that we could not sleep. I could not get my feet on a chair at all. They always slipped down between. I tried to rest myself by drawing up my knees, but Meg promptly objected to that.

'How do you expect to get lying sprawling comfortably on your back with six in a bed?' she demanded. 'Be content with your share.'

Which advice she followed up by giving me a violent push over on my side. I rolled over so quickly that I landed heavily on Nell's face. She

yelled with the pain. I had bled her nose. The next thing I heard was my grandfather's foot coming along the lobby. I quickly covered my head with the bedclothes and pretended I was asleep. He had a lighted candle in his hand, and looked wild in his shirt and red nightcap. I peeped warily out to see what would happen.

'What the devil's up wi' ye's?' he cried angrily.

Nobody spoke. We were all, as far as appearances went, sound asleep.

'Damn't fine I know who it is,' he said bitterly, giving me a shake. 'Ye're up to some o' yer tricks again.' Nobody moved.

At last, shaking his fist threateningly at the bed, off he stamped.

The following night we tied the chairs in against the bed and managed not so bad.

Next day they went home. Our cousin Mary was coming to spend the week end with us. She arrived in the evening when all the others had gone.

On the Sunday night, she and I went to the church together. After the service was over, I got her to go for a walk to the town. Just as we were turning to come home we met John Wilson. We stopped, and I left Mary to go and speak to him. Perhaps I had stood longer than I had thought; anyhow, when I left him, and turned to look for Mary, she had disappeared. I was in a state. I knew that if she went home without me I would get into a row. She was nowhere to be seen, so there was nothing else for me to do but take the car home. When I knocked at the door, Meg let

me in. I slipped into the room feeling frightened. Then I heard Mary's voice in the kitchen. She was in a terrible temper.

'Who does she think would look at her, the b——d that she is?' I heard her say. 'I'm sure no decent fellow would be seen speaking to her. She 'll no' make a fool of me in a hurry.'

Meg and Ann sat in sullen silence. My grandparents were in bed.

I listened to no more, but shut the big room door gently. I sat down at the window, feeling as if my heart would burst, looked for a while at the stars, and at the dark hills in the distance and a little peace came into my heart. I loved the stars, and the hills. I always felt that they were friends. I wondered miserably if it was true that no decent person who knew who I was would have anything to do with me. If I did make real friends, and they discovered my history, would they drop me like a hot coal? I had never had a friend that I could trust, but I had dreams of some day having one. I don't think I could have had any happiness at all, if it had not been for my dreams. There was very little in my life to brighten it. It was not life, but merely existence. Work, eat, and sleep. I suppose I ought to have been content, but I was not, so I lived in my dreams. What wonderful romances I used to build in the evenings, when I sat at the window, with a piece of work in my hand. My life was sordid, but I could wander at pleasure in a world of my own.

And now Mary had made me realise that I was a

person to be shunned by decent living people. I opened the window softly to cool my face, which felt burning.

The moon peeped out from behind a cloud. A light wind brushed against my hot cheek, soft as velvet. Somehow, I began to think less of what Mary had said. What did I care what people thought? Besides, I knew they were all wrong. If I had inherited my mother's weaknesses or vices, then God would certainly give me the power to cast them out. By and by I crept into bed, feeling a great deal calmer.



## CHAPTER XVII

### I LEAVE MY HOME

You've done enough, for you designed my chains,  
The grace is vanished, but the affront remains.

DRYDEN.

THE autumn came, and passed all too quickly. The bronze leaves fell from the trees with little whispering sighs, as if with regret that for them life was over.

Meg and I felt the cold very much in the mornings. Sometimes we slept in. Meg would not have time to make tea, and we would not get ourselves properly dressed. We just had to push our hair under our hats any way and do it up in the train, which was full of workmen going to the shipyards. We were the only girls who travelled so early.

We always got a compartment to ourselves unless we happened to be very late. In that case we had to make a rush for it, and get in anywhere. The train would be almost on the move. Two or three hands would drag us into a compartment. Meg just laughed, but I hated it, the men chaffed us so much.

A new girl came to work beside me. She was tall and slim, with great staring blue eyes. She had a way of glaring angrily at any of the girls who

chanced to look at her. Several of the girls made fun of her, and the girl who taught her made a fool of her behind her back. I felt sorry for her, knowing too well myself what it was to work among strangers. She did not go home at the meal hour, so I went and made friends with her. She was pretty dour at first, but I managed to get round her, and we got kind of chummy. Afterwards, she and I used to go for walks together at the meal hour.

She was a very passionate girl, with a strong hankering after a gay life. Our walk generally led us to the moor, which was near the mill. I liked the solitude, after the deafening roar of the machinery. Lizzie, as my friend's name was, seemed indifferent to it. Her thoughts were too much taken up with how she could have a good time. I did not like her explanation of how she would enjoy life. I wondered greatly if she really meant what she said, or if it was only for the sake of talking.

We never came back until the last whistle blew. If we were not in then, the big gate was shut. We had to go through a little door, take our check from the wall, and give it to the gateman. We were fined a penny for being late.

A great number of the girls were always late. There was generally a crowd of the flat girls running at the last minute. The gateman, an ill-natured old man, would begin to draw the big gate over before the last whistle was finished. He would manage it almost shut. With a wild yell, the flat girls would make a rush for it. The old man would shove with all his might. It was no use, with-

perhaps a hundred girls forcing it open. He would be almost knocked off his feet, the gate would be thrown back, and in they would surge with wild yells of derision.

Lizzie and I usually waited for this. We enjoyed the scramble and pushed and yelled with the rest.

At this time Jack bought a mandoline. I tried it, and liked the sweet, fairy-like notes. I began to practise it a little every night. I always sat in the big room in the dark. My grandmother could not bear the sound of it.

'That's not music at all,' she would say. 'I would rather hear a rattle on an oul' tin can. For any sake throw it out yer han' an' no deeve us.'

The only thing she could understand was the 'Protestant Boys' banged with all my might on the piano. Then she would pull up her skirts and jig round the room, crying 'Hooch' and singing:

'Fleeter flatter, holy water, christen the papishes every one.

If that won't do, we'll cut them in two, and the Protestant Boys shall carry the drum.'

I got at last that nothing would induce me to play it. We all hated it except my grandparents.

I don't know why, but my grandfather began to get very cross if Meg or I wanted out on a Saturday night. Each time he got worse. Then he said we would have to be in at eight o'clock, or not get out at all.

It was pretty hard to be working and get no

liberty. Jack was very angry at the way we were kept down, and said we were fools to stand it. He had not much pleasure either. He was going to be married, and my grandparents were mad at him. He said if his home had been happy, he would not have wanted to leave it.

One Saturday we stayed out until ten. Ann was with us. She was seldom out, but she had wanted to see the shop windows in the town. When we arrived home, we knocked at the door, then stood in fear and trembling. We heard my grandfather's footstep in the lobby, then the door opened.

It happened that Ann was nearest. My grandfather caught her viciously by the hair, and pulled her into the lobby. Meg and I managed to rush past him. He followed us into the room. What dreadful names we were called.

He told us if it happened again he would throw us out of the window into the street. Then, with a final curse, he returned to the kitchen. We sat trembling. Meg and Ann began to cry silently and hopelessly. I sat and stared out of the window into the darkness, my heart filled with a terrible despair. We sat for an hour thus. Poor Ann! To think he could say such things to her, who had suffered so much.

I managed to get a little pleasure through it all though. Jack had a great aptitude for picking up music. I taught him the notes, and very soon he could read them fairly well. The time seemed to come natural to him. He inspired me to practise too. Soon we could play some jigs and reels together, he playing the mandoline as an accompani-

ment to the piano. He had bought a mandoline tutor. Our playing was certainly very amateurish, but it gave us a few happy hours. Meg and Ann enjoyed it, and my grandparents made no objection.

I took a fancy to learn the mandoline. Jack said he would pay half of a quarter's lessons, if I could save up the other half. I was delighted. Jack thought if I went to the town I might get a better teacher. He offered to pay my car. One day, at the meal hour, I made arrangements with a lady in the town. I was to get a lesson one night a week.

The first night, when I was getting ready, my grandfather asked me where I was going. I told him. Jack was in at the time.

'Ye 've damn't big need o' that,' said my grandfather angrily, drawing down his brows. 'Where the divil are ye goin' to get the money?'

'I'm sure you don't need to care, as long as we're not asking you,' said Jack, with some heat. 'I'm paying for her. Is it any harm?'

My grandfather glared at Jack. 'Huh!' he snarled. 'The money's plentiful with ye, when ye can fling it away on such damn't nonsense.'

I slipped out, thinking that would be all that would be said about it. The following week, when I was going for my lesson, my grandfather glared at me, but said nothing. The third time, however, I thought from the look on his face that there was trouble brewing. I felt nervous, as Jack was not in to take my part. He had gone to the theatre in the town. Meg or Ann would not have dared to say

anything. My grandmother, I knew, had egged my grandfather on to stop me going.

Often, when they had gone to bed, I had heard her telling him awful stories about us. What could he do but believe them? I could not understand how she could say such things of her own family. There was not one word of truth in them, but I think she really believed them to be true. When I heard the murmur of her voice, I used to creep to the kitchen door and listen.

I was washing my hands at the sink, when I heard my grandfather rising from his chair.

I looked round, startled. He was standing before me, a look of terrible anger on his face.

'It's like this,' he said, in a tense voice, 'if ye go out o' this house the night, ye don't come in again. Ye can choose whichever ye like. It makes no damn't odds to me.'

I breathed hard. My nerves were at a fearful tension. Meg and Ann stared at me. My grandmother was sitting in the corner at the fire with her hands clasped on her lap. There was a pathetic look on her face.

Suddenly I made up my mind. I would go. Anything was better than this life of bondage. I said nothing, but walked out of the kitchen. I lit the candle in the room, and gathered all my things together that I could find. I found a piece of paper, and a bit of string, and began with trembling fingers to tie them up. Ann came in, and began to sob beside me. She pleaded with me not to go.

'I know it is hard to stand it,' she said brokenly,

'but don't go. Maybe Jack 'll make it right when he comes in.'

Tears blinded me, but my mind was made up. I took my parcel in one hand, and my mandoline in the other, and went into the lobby. When I was passing the kitchen door I looked in, and said :

'I 'm away, then. Good-bye.'

My grandfather looked startled, but he only said :

'Very well, then.'

Meg and my grandmother got up quickly, and came into the lobby. My grandmother's lips were trembling.

'Are ye goin' away?' she asked in a shaking voice.

'Yes,' I answered, and held out my hand.

She took it like one in a dream, then the tears started to run down her wrinkled cheeks. Ann held on to my hand, sobs shaking her fragile body.

'You 're quite right,' said Meg huskily, making an effort to speak bravely. 'Wait until Jack comes out of the theatre. He 'll advise you what to do. Go to Lizzie's first, and leave your parcel. I 'll see you in the morning. Be sure and wait for Jack.'

I couldn't answer. I stumbled out, and along the passage. It was a fearful night of wind and rain. I couldn't think of going into a car, feeling as I did, so I started off to walk to the town. I didn't care a bit about the rain. Before I had gone very far, I was soaked to the skin. The water was squelching in my shoes, which had been needing mending for a long time. The paper on my parcel got soaked, and came partly off. I had to carry it up against my body, to keep the things from falling out.

When I reached the town I took all the back ways. I was afraid people would be looking at me. I meant to go to Lizzie's mother, who stayed at the far end of the town, and ask to get staying the night. I had been in the house several times, and had liked her. She was a nice, kindly old Highland woman. When I got there, she was very sympathetic, and wanted to make me tea, but I wouldn't let her. I left my mandoline and parcel, and hurried out to wait at the theatre for Jack. Lizzie went with me.

It would be two hours before the play was over, but there was the chance that Jack might come out before it finished, so I stood where I could watch the door. He did not come out until the end.

He was very much concerned when I told him. He was wild at my grandfather, but said I had done perfectly right. I could see that he was very anxious about me. We stood in a passage and talked. He said to Lizzie that he was very grateful to her mother for being so kind to me. The next day was Saturday, so he arranged to come up when he had finished his work, and try to get me lodgings.

He came to Lizzie's next afternoon, and I went out with him to talk it over. He handed me half a sovereign to buy shoes. I bought a pair, put them on, and carried the old ones in a parcel. He asked me if I did not need anything else. I said that was all I wanted. I needed lots of other things, but did not like to take advantage of his kindness.

We went to a married woman, a Mrs. Grant, whom we knew well, to see if I could get lodging with her. She was delighted to have me. Her



husband worked out of town a good deal, and she said she was lonely—just herself and the children.

When that was arranged, Jack went home. I brought my clothes, and got settled in my lodgings.

After a week or so, I thought I would like to see Ann and my grandmother. Meg said she would watch for me, and give me a sign if my grandfather was out. On the Saturday I went down. My grandfather was out, so in I went. They were both very glad to see me. Ann, I think, never took her eyes off my face the whole time. After that, I managed to slip in pretty often. They always hurried to make me some tea. I was glad of it. I never liked to eat much at my lodgings—I was so afraid I got more than I paid for. One day, when I was paying a flying visit home, my grandfather came in. He looked at me a minute, then said kindly :

‘ Well, how are ye gettin’ on ? ’

‘ Fine,’ I answered, feeling embarrassed. I rose to go soon after, and did not go back for some time again.

One night Jack came up to tell me that he was going away to be married. His intended belonged to the North of Scotland. He had offered to pay Meg’s fare and my grandfather’s, but they would not go. He was very vexed at having to go alone. He gave me a few shillings to help to pay my music lessons, which I was still keeping up.

Most days, Meg used to get away ten minutes earlier from her work. It allowed her to catch the workmen’s train, and saved her a long wait at the

station. When any one wanted out before the time for stopping, they had to ask a pass from Miss A——. She hated giving passes, but seeing that Meg had to catch a train, she gave it to her readily enough.

Lizzie and I used to wish we could get out early. Sometimes I would get Lizzie coaxed to go to Miss A—— and ask for a pass. Out she would go. I would watch her going up to the desk, certain she would be snubbed. Back she would come, looking wild.

‘ Did you get it ? ’ I would ask eagerly.

‘ Get it ! ’ she would answer bitterly. ‘ No, and fine you knew I wouldn’t. Go yourself next time.’

I took another way about it though. The gate-man got so used to seeing Meg going out, that he stopped asking her for a pass. Two girls going out just got one pass between them sometimes. I got Meg to give me hers, and made it do for Lizzie and me. We did not dare risk it too often.

To get out of the workroom was the worst part of the business. We had to crawl under the tables right from the back of the room.

One day Miss A—— caught me crawling out from under the last table. I pretended I was picking up something from the floor, and then walked solemnly back to my machine. Some of the girls laughed, and I think she must have suspected something. As a rule, she was too busy with her books to notice much, but after that she kept a sharp eye on us. We never got a chance to get away early again.

I began to have a terribly tired feeling at my work. I did not understand what was the matter with me. Gradually I got worse. My work was simply a toil to me. We stopped at six, but when it came to about half-past four, I had nearly always to sit down at my machine. The pain in my head was dreadful, and I felt sick and ill.

I struggled on, never dreaming of stopping my work. Soon I felt it a toil to walk to the end of the room for wool when I needed it. I could not be bothered making fun with or even talking to the other girls. I wondered drearily what would become of me if I got too ill to earn my own living. I really did not care much. I felt I would not mind anything, if I just could get a long rest.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### LOOKING FOR WORK

With labour I must earn  
My bread : what harm ? idleness had been worse :  
Labour will sustain me.

MILTON.

I GOT worse every day. I did not know what to do. Mrs. Grant advised me to stop my work for a little. I did so. At the end of a week I felt a little better.

When I returned to my work, my brother in Glasgow wrote, asking me to come to the city again, where I might get something light to do. I thought it over, and decided to go. I told Mrs. Grant that I was going away. She begged me not to go. She said she had liked so much having me in the house, she would be very lonely if I went away. She offered to keep me a few weeks for nothing, until I got well. I felt very grateful, but could not think of accepting. I knew she meant it, but I did not want to be under an obligation to any one.

Next day I got my wages, parcelled up my things, and off I went that night.

The following morning I set out on my search for work in Glasgow. None of my brother's girls offered to accompany me. I would have liked one

of them with me, but I was not going to ask them. The weather was piercingly cold. The ground was covered with snow, and a biting wind blew, which penetrated to my very marrow.

I thought as I had a little experience in a tea-room, I might try some of them. I went into a few, but was told curtly that they did not want any one. I returned home at night, unsuccessful. The following day, when I was looking about, I came to a large biscuit factory. I screwed up my courage to go in and ask. I was shown out of one place into another, until I reached a private office. A very overbearing gentleman sat at a desk writing. He had on a white linen coat and cap, and wore a large, gold signet ring on his little finger.

I stood patiently waiting, until it should please him to lift his head and look at me. After a little he raised his eyes and looked me over as if I were some objectionable kind of insect. Having finished his scrutiny, he began to question me—all about my parents, what they did for a living, and other things. I'm sure he asked me fifty questions. It made me feel like a criminal. I wondered how I could have had the audacity to think that I, with my pedigree, was worthy even of pasting the labels on his biscuit boxes. When he had finished with me, he said I might call back in three weeks. He might, or he might not, have something for me. I did not breathe freely until I was outside. Not for untold gold would I have gone back. Even now I feel a dislike to that man. Men of his class are too common. Give them a little authority, and they become un-

bearable to those under them. Surely the desire to earn an honest livelihood by humble work does not degrade one.

I felt very tired. My last interview had taken the spirit out of me altogether. I walked about a while longer, but had not the heart to go anywhere else that day.

I tried every day for a week, with no better results. I would leave about ten in the morning, and go back to my brother's after tea. He stayed in an outlying district, and it was a good distance for me to walk. I never had any food all day. I had two shillings in my pocket, but I was afraid to spend it. I bought the *Citizen* when it came out, and looked up the advertisements. Sometimes I have walked from one end of the city to the other after situations. How I envied the girls in the streets. They had work, and a home to go to. I had thought from my brother's manner the last few days that he wanted me away. They had wanted me up for a purpose. Nell had got a mandoline, and as I knew how to play it, they thought I might teach her. I had shown her all I knew, and they wanted rid of me. I meant that they should be rid of me very soon. I had never intended staying long with them anyway.

One day I saw an advertisement in the paper—girls wanted for a large tea-room. I went to the place at the hour appointed. There were a great many girls waiting. The shop was full, and there was a long queue standing at the side of the pavement. They all looked like city girls, and were very smartly dressed. I knew it was hopeless, but I took

my place at the end of the line. In about an hour my turn came.

The first thing the manager asked me was if I had had any experience in city tea-rooms. I said No. He said he was sorry, but he could not take me unless I had. I turned out.

I felt so benumbed with cold, that I could almost have cried. I did not know what to do, or where to go. I walked along aimlessly, until I reached Glasgow Green. I had never been in the People's Palace, so I thought I might rest a little while in it. The door was open, so in I went.

There were only a few girls about, and, at the further end, two men. I did not take much notice of them. There was a delicious warmth in the place. I sat down on one of the benches at the side, and gazed with delight at the beautiful tropical plants and creepers that festooned the place. I had never seen such plants before. To me, it was a dream garden. With a sigh of content I settled down on my seat. I thought I might give myself an hour's rest anyway.

After a little, my attention became attracted to the girls. Two of them, seated together, were giggling loudly. The noise jarred on me. The two men were talking to them, and they were all looking at me, a thing which annoyed me very much. Beyond them, an elderly, well-dressed lady was hovering about, apparently inspecting the plants.

At the other side, two girls were standing together talking. In a little the men joined them. The next time I looked, the lady was speaking to the girls the

men had left. She seemed to be very serious, but the girls were not paying much attention to her. I wondered greatly what she could be saying to them.

Soon she left them and sauntered my way. She did not come directly, but examined a plant here and there. The girls watched her progress with interest. At last she came to where I was sitting.

‘Are you taking a rest?’ she asked with a smile.

‘Yes,’ I answered, feeling that this was an opening for something else.

She hesitated a minute, then she said.

‘Have you no home to go to?’

I looked at her in amazement. My face flushed and a wave of anger swept over me. Her words and manner had enlightened me at once as to what her business was. The girls she had been speaking to were evidently bad living, and she had been making a futile attempt to turn them from their evil ways. What angered me was that she had taken me for one of the same kind. I’m no good at snubbing any one, but I think I managed it that time. With a murmured apology she hurried away.

When she had gone I got up quickly and left the place. I felt sad to think that one could not rest for ten minutes in a beautiful place like that without being humiliated. I felt somehow that I did not want to stay any longer in Glasgow.

I knew that domestic service was more easily got than anything, so I made up my mind I would go the next day to the small town where my cousin Mary worked, and put my name in a servants’ registry. The train fare was sixpence. I told my



brother what I meant to do. He did not say much. I also told them about the little affair in the People's Palace.

A long time after I heard that they had told the story at home, but had twisted it in such a way that made it appear very discreditable to me.

Next morning I left them. Mary was quite glad to see me. I told her my plans. She said that the Glasgow registries had the best places.

I had only a shilling, and I would need that to pay the registry fee, so Mary lent me a shilling to pay my return fare to Glasgow. I started off very early the next morning to try again.

## CHAPTER XIX

### IN A SERVANTS' REGISTRY

O, the poor  
Are the poor's almoners, else would die crowds  
That none know how they live, how life in them  
Still feebly lurks, from morn to ghastly eve,  
From eve to haggard morn.

ANON.

It was my first experience of a Servants' Registry, and I entered the dark, gloomy-looking office, feeling extremely nervous. It was a large room. The farther side, opposite the door, was partitioned in the middle, forming two open compartments, in one of which the ladies interviewed the maids. At the other side of the partition there were forms for the maids to sit.

A haughty-looking young lady, with eyeglasses, sat at a desk writing. I walked over to her. She lifted her head, readjusted her glasses, and looked me over from top to toe.

'You want a situation?' she inquired frigidly.

'Yes,' I answered meekly.

She opened a ledger and took up a pen.

'Name please?' she asked.

'Jean Roy.'

'Ever been in service before?'

'No.'

'You won't get more than a pound a month to begin with.'

'Very well,' I said. 'And I don't want to go where there is a large family.'

'That will do. You will see some ladies when they come in. Two shillings, please.'

I started. I had always thought a shilling was the fee, and I had only a shilling in my possession.

'I'm sorry,' I faltered, 'but I've only a shilling.'

'That will do,' she said curtly. 'You can pay me the other shilling when you get a situation. Sit over there.'

She indicated with a wave of her hand to where the maids were sitting.

I went over and sat down on one of the forms. There were four occupants, early as the hour was. They looked at me curiously. After a time, when I felt that their attention had begun to wander, I, in my turn, studied them.

Next me sat a girl with a heavy, stupid face. She wore a faded blue costume, the skirt of which was all frayed round the foot. Straggling ends of hair hung down over her jacket at the back of her neck. High up on her head was perched a small black satin toque, evidently the discarded property of a former mistress. It made her look so funny I could not help smiling to myself.

In the corner sat an old woman. I'm sure she would be about sixty. She was dressed in black, poorly, but so neat and clean. Her cotton gloves

were carefully darned, and the white lace scarf, tied in a bow under her chin, was like snow. She had such a sad, patient look on her kind old face, that my heart warmed to her at once.

Sitting opposite was a girl about twenty, rather pretty, but with a discontented expression, and very stylishly dressed. I wondered what kind of situation she was after. Beside her sat a plump, middle-aged woman, well dressed too, but rather common like. There was a very determined, wide-awake look about her.

A lady entered the office. The young lady at the desk looked up, all smiles, and they engaged in conversation. What a difference from the way she had spoken to me, and the servants paid the same fee as the ladies.

Maids and ladies now began to arrive quickly. Our forms were almost full. Tongues were loosened.

'Oh no,' I heard the stylishly dressed girl say to the stout woman. 'I simply couldn't put up with it any longer. Father got simply unbearable. We could get no freedom at all. I'm trying to get a situation for my sister and myself. We want to be together.'

'Indeed it's no' easy to put up with your folk sometimes,' said the stout woman, keeping her eye on the outer room. 'There's plenty of places the now. This is the best time to get a good one. I'm a cook. I left my last place for bigger wages. Look at him,' she exclaimed excitedly, as a gentleman walked over to the desk.

'My word! it'll be a pity of the one that gets his

place. I was there two months, an' it was fair starvation. Catch me goin' back.'

'Losh! I got rare meat in my last place,' said the stupid-looking girl next me. 'Hame-made jeely to your tea every night, and on Setterday night the mistress gave me a pastry and a lump of toffee. It's no' every place you'll get that.'

'What made ye lave it for then?' asked an Irish girl sarcastically.

'There was that many weans I got fed up nursin' them,' answered the stupid girl.

The gentleman glanced over at us, then said something to the young lady. She nodded over to the cook, who rose, and, after speaking to the gentleman for a few minutes, disappeared with him behind the partition.

'Are you looking for a place?' I asked the old woman sitting in the corner.

'Ay, my dear,' she answered, 'but it's no' easy to get one. I was here all day yesterday. They all seem to think I'm no' able to work much.'

She opened her bag, and took out two biscuits wrapped in paper.

'Will you take one of these?' she asked me. 'I don't think you've brought a piece.'

I thanked her, but said I was not hungry. I was very hungry, but had not the heart to take it from the poor old soul.

The others now began to take out pieces from their bags and pockets.

'It's a pity you have to look for work at your age,' I said. 'Have you nobody of your own?'

Her lips trembled.

'I had a son,' she answered. 'If he had been living I would never have wanted. He's dead two years. I'm all alone now.' She tried bravely to smile. Poor, lonely old soul.

Here the cook returned, all smiles.

'I'm goin' with him,' she informed us. 'I've to get four shillings a month more than I had before.'

'But you said you were starved,' said the stupid girl.

'Oh, his housekeeper's away now,' she answered airily. 'I'll be at the lug of the law myself, and,' she winked slyly at the stupid girl, 'maybe I'll get pastry every day. Well, ta ta, and see and be good.'

With a nod and a parting wave of her hand she was gone.

The stupid girl sat gaping.

'Losh! she's a fly one,' she remarked.

'Shure you've got to be fly,' snapped the Irish girl, who was quickly consuming a roll and jam. 'The last missis I had was a warmer, but I fixed her.' She took a huge bite of her roll, chewed and swallowed it, then went on. 'My month wasn't up for three days yet, but last night I told her me mother was badly, an' asked her to give me my pay, as they were ill off for money, an' let me take a run home. She handed me the wages, an' said I was not to stay long. I had me box at the back, an' me boy was waitin' for me, so here I am.'

She put the last bit of roll in her mouth, licked her fingers, and looked round for approval.

'But you were wrong to deceive her,' said the old woman reprovingly.

'And you 'll no' get a character,' said the stupid girl.

'Character!' returned the Irish girl scornfully. 'Faith! you 're a green one. Shure I don't need one. I 'll say I niver was in service before.'

The young lady at the desk beckoned to me. I rose and went over.

'Lady wants to see you,' she said, nodding towards a pleasant-looking lady seated at a little table.

I walked across to her. She pointed to a vacant chair, and told me to sit down. I did so, feeling very self-conscious.

'You are looking for a situation?' she asked pleasantly.

She was very pretty, with fluffy fair hair and nice frank eyes. I liked her at once.

'Yes,' I answered. 'I want a light place.'

She smiled. 'Well,' she said, 'I don't think you would find my work heavy. I do a good deal myself. You 'd have to take baby out in his pram a little every afternoon. Have you been in service before?'

'No,' I replied.

'That really does not matter,' she said. 'I think we would get on nicely. My maid won't be leaving for three weeks. Could you come then?'

I felt greatly disappointed. I could not possibly do without work for three weeks.

'Oh no,' I answered. 'I couldn't wait until then.'

'What a pity,' she said regretfully. 'I would

have liked you so much. Have you no friends you could go to ? ’

‘ I ’m sorry I haven’t,’ I replied.

‘ Oh, well, I suppose it can’t be helped,’ she said in a disappointed tone.

I rose to my feet. The interview was at an end.

I returned to my companions feeling very much depressed. I would have gone almost anywhere rather than sit there waiting. They all looked at me, but did not ask any questions, and I was in no mood for talking. I had barely sat down, when I was again called out. This time, it was a stout, red-cheeked young lady. I did not like the look of her at all. I had my mind made up before she even spoke to me, that I was not going to engage with her.

‘ Would you like to come to the country ? ’ she began immediately. ‘ There are nine of us, but I make up all the beds myself, and do most of the cooking. I ’m sure you would find it a good place. I suppose you can make porridge. You would get out every Thursday, and every Sunday evening from six until nine. It would be a good home for you. You would have to sleep in the kitchen, but I don’t suppose you would mind that. Six o’clock is the hour for rising. There would be nine pairs of boots to clean, and of course if you cared to rise a little earlier you could please yourself. We would like you soon. When could you come ? ’

‘ I ’m sorry,’ I answered, ‘ but I ’m afraid I can’t come at all.’

‘ Why ? ’ She looked astonished. ‘ Surely you can make porridge. It would be a home for you.’



'I wouldn't care to come,' I said. 'Good afternoon,' and I turned away and left her.

'Really, I don't know what servants are coming to,' I heard her exclaim angrily to the young lady at the desk. They both talked a little, then the red-cheeked person sat down to await the next victim.

'Shure she 's here ivery month for a girl,' said the Irish maid, indicating with her thumb my late interviewer. 'I knew a girl that was there. Faith! she gave them their character. Half-past five ivery blessed mornin', an' niver off yer feet 'til eleven at night, an' hungered forbye. I'd see them at the divil before I'd slave to the likes of them. Empty nothin's that they are.'

She took out a dirty handkerchief and blew her nose violently.

It was nearing the closing hour. With the exception of the Irish girl, the old woman, and the stupid-looking girl, the others had all gone. Some had engaged for situations, and others had got tired of waiting and left. The last of the ladies had departed. I got up, said good-night to the others (the old woman kindly hoped I would have better luck to-morrow), and moved towards the desk.

The young lady looked up, a bored expression on her face.

'You can come again to-morrow at ten o'clock,' she said, 'and look here, Jean, you might wear your hair tighter back off your face. You can wear it as you please on your nights off. That will do. Ten o'clock to-morrow.'

She bent her head over her desk again. I was dismissed.

Burning rage took possession of me. What business had she with my hair? Her own was fluffed all round her face, and it was like the stuffing of a chair. I thought of that shilling of mine she had in her desk, said nothing, and walked out.

When I was stepping into the train I thought of a cutting answer that I certainly ought to have made her.

## CHAPTER XX

### I BECOME A BARMAID

O that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! that we should, with joy, pleasance, revel and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!

SHAKESPEARE.

THAT evening, when I got to my cousin's, she told me that she had heard of a baker's shop in Paisley, that often had places for girls, and did not take a fee.

Next morning I walked there—three miles it was—and found the baker's shop. They gave me the name and address of a lady who wanted a maid. I found the district I had to go to was out of Paisley altogether. I walked on and on, I'm sure for miles. At last I found it. It was a large house in a quiet road, which seemed to lead to the open country. How I hoped I would suit, I liked so much the quietness and solitude of the place. I walked up the path and rang the bell. The door was opened by a prim-looking old lady. When I told her what I wanted, she said at once that I would not suit.

'You know,' she said, 'there is a good deal of work, and I need a strong girl. You look rather

delicate. Don't you think you would be better to try and get into a shop ?'

'It isn't so easy to get into a shop,' I answered.

She seemed to be sorry, but as she evidently did not think me strong enough, there was nothing further to be said.

With disappointment in my heart, I retraced my steps back along the road I had come. When I reached the baker's shop they offered me another address, but I did not take it. I was far too tired to go anywhere else that day.

That night, a woman who worked beside Mary in the mill came in to see her. Mary told her I was looking for a place. She said that Willie Jardine, the publican across the Square, was wanting a girl.

'But I wouldn't go there if I was you,' she said. 'There's a houseful of weans, and you'd be run off your feet. Forbye, I don't think Willie's the clean tattie himself.'

'How?' asked Mary. 'Did you ever hear anything about him?'

'Oh no,' she said, 'I never did, but I've just that kind of idea.'

No more was said at the time, but after she had gone away I said to Mary that I thought I might try it. I knew the shop well enough. It was on the opposite side of the Square, straight across from Mary's house, and was of very old standing. My grandfather had frequented it for years, every time he had come up to see my cousin's mother when she was alive. It had passed from one generation to another.

Mary thought there would be no harm in trying, so off I went.

The Jardines stayed above the shop, so I went up the stair. Mrs. Jardine, I found, was a very pleasant woman. I told her my errand. She asked me in at once, and took me through the kitchen into the parlour. She seemed quite pleased with me, and we soon came to terms. I was to begin the next morning. My duties were to work in the house, and help in the shop a little, to relieve Mr. Jardine.

I went over after breakfast next day. I found them very nice people, homely and plain. The thought of Mr. Jardine being not just the 'clean tattie' troubled me a little. I found, however, that it was a wicked slur on his character. All the time I was there, I found him to be kind and courteous, and a perfect gentleman. Afterwards, I found out that the woman had not wanted me to go there, as she was in the habit of slipping in for a dram on the sly. She had thought I would hear about the place any way, or she would never have mentioned it.

I was greatly interested in the house. I have never seen another like it. It was about a hundred and forty years old. The man who built it must have been an exceptionally kind-hearted one. Every time I looked out of the kitchen window, I had proof of it before me.

Cut out on the wall, so near I could touch it with my hand, was a little archway, leading to a small aperture. At the foot of the arch was a kind of balcony, with the words cut on the stone, 'Sparrows'

home. Cats not invited.' On several of the chimneys was a man's face, with the mouth wide open that the birds might build in it. On the wall at the back were the figures of Adam and Eve, but, being low down, they had got somewhat broken away.

Who, when building a house nowadays, would ever dream of providing apartments for the little feathered tribe?

Mr. Jardine was very much attached to his house. He was a great pigeon fancier, and kept a large stock in a loft behind the shop.

The second day I was there, he asked me to go down to the shop for ten minutes. I thought it would be a fine thing to serve in a bar, so I was delighted to go. I found it a frightfully cold place. It had a stone floor behind the counter. Being a corner shop, with a door in the front, and one in the side, there was a continual draught through the place.

Mr. Jardine had instructed me before he went out about the different drinks, and the measures.

I had not been long in, when I heard a tapping behind me. I looked round, startled. The tapping continued. At the end of the counter was a little window, with a wooden shutter, which was snibbed. I discovered that the tapping came from there, so unsnibbed it, and pushed back the shutter. It was a tiny little room, with no light in it but what came from the bar, and was called the 'Family Department.' It was impossible to see the face of any one standing within. The hand which was held out was all that was visible.

'Gie's hauf a gless o' yer best Irish,' said a hoarse voice.

'Irish what?' I asked, in a business-like tone, feeling very important.

'No, it's no' Irish what, or Irish stew either, ye fat heidit sowl that ye are,' growled the voice. 'Gie's a hauf gless o' yer best Irish whisky, an' look damn't smert about it.'

A dirty fist banged impatiently on the little ledge of the window.

Feeling somewhat taken down, I turned round to look for the Irish whisky. The different blends were there right enough, but Mr. Jardine had forgotten to say which was Irish. There was a glass barrel, which held about a gallon. I thought that must be it. I went towards it hesitatingly.

'Ay, that's it,' said the man eagerly. 'That's the yin I always get it oot o'.'

'You don't need to tell me,' I answered stiffly. 'I know Irish whisky when I see it.'

'Ye do indeed,' returned the man, with a chuckle. 'Yer a smert divil too.'

He grabbed the glass out of my hand, drunk it off, and smacked his lips noisily. The hand returned me the empty glass, banged down three halfpence, then disappeared.

My next customer was a very evil-looking tramp. He came in at the front door, so I had a good view of him, which, however, did not reassure me. He took three empty bottles out of his pocket, and asked for a half of the sixpenny whisky. I was at a loss what to do. Mr. Jardine

had not given me any information about empty bottles.

'I can't take empty bottles,' I said, trying to speak firmly.

The man edged down to the end of the counter, where it turned into the bar, eyeing me evilly all the time. I got terribly frightened he would come behind, and rob the till.

'All right,' I said quickly, 'I'll give it this time.'

I poured out a generous half glass from the glass barrel. He drunk it without a word, then went out.

The ten minutes lengthened into two hours, and still Mr. Jardine had not returned. At the end of another half-hour, he did come however. I found out afterwards that his ten minutes were very elastic, and might stretch to anything.

I told him that I had served two half glasses out of the glass barrel, one for Irish whisky at three halfpence, and the other for three empty bottles. He said the whisky in the glass barrel was special and the most expensive whisky in the shop. As for empty bottles, the place was simply choked with them. I suppose he saw I looked crestfallen. He told me not to worry about it, as it was his fault for not telling me.

After that I managed better, and was a great deal in the shop. One thing always worried me, though.

Mr. Jardine had impressed on me never to give drink to any one that was the worse of it. I never could discriminate. Several times I gave drink to men that were simply dead drunk. They had



walked in straight, and asked for it quietly, so I had thought they were all right. It gave Mr. Jardine a good deal of worry, especially as one of them fell on the floor, after drinking what I had given him, and could not move hand or foot. He had to be carried into a back room, in case the police might see him, and left there until he got sober.

I was so worried about it, that I made up my mind I would be very careful in future. Soon after, I roused a bitter enmity against myself, by refusing to give a man a drink who was perfectly sober.

He had slipped on a piece of orange skin on the floor, and I, always on the look out, had taken it for an outward and visible sign of an inward and well-spirited place.

Mr. Jardine was the most unsuspecting man I ever came across. There was money lying about in every odd corner—scattered about the shelves and everywhere.

We sometimes had a 'pay off' in the room up the stair, which was entered through the shop. There was a large engineering work in the town. As soon as an apprentice's time was served, he had to stand a treat to his fellow workers. It was called a 'pay off.'

It amused me greatly to see the young men coming in. Some of them said good evening to me quietly. Others were too shy to speak at all, and just nodded. What a difference when they came down the stair again. One would not have known them for the same. The shyness had disappeared. Maudlin sentiment had taken its place. They used to hold on to the counter, and talk silly love to me. I felt

vexed for them. Those poor boys, it was a sorry thing they called pleasure. Often I was asked out for walks. I always promised I would go. I would sit at Mary's window across the Square, and watch them waiting for me. It amused me to see how long they would wait. I did not want them at all.

The time of the holidays came round. The shows and other amusements began to arrive on the Square. It made us terribly busy. I was in the shop all day. The din outside was so deafening, that we could scarcely hear each other speaking. The show people all came into our shop. What queer mixtures they asked for. Half a glass of port wine mixed with a bottle of ginger was one favourite. Lime juice and ginger another.

I used to go out to see the fun. I would stay on the switchback for nearly half an hour. The men knew me by coming into the shop, and would never take any money.

The last night of the Fair, Saturday, was a terror. It was perfect pandemonium in the shop. There was a dense mass on the outside of the bar, waiting to be served.

Mrs. Jardine came down to give us a hand. Mr. Jardine was terribly excited. He would always say to me :

'Now, Jean, don't get excited. Just let them take their time, or go out without being served.'

It made me smile, because he was far worse than I. What a smashing of glasses there was. Once he knocked over a five-gill bottle of whisky. I wanted to save what was left in the bottle, but he

would not let me in case I would cut my fingers. The bells kept ringing in the rooms, driving us nearly distracted.

There was as much liquor spilled behind the counter as would have sailed a child's boat.

I was kept busy at the 'Family Department.' There was a continual stream of hands holding out empty bottles to me, which, when I filled and returned, disappeared like lightning. It was a good thing I could not see the faces belonging to the hands. Very often, when I was emptying the measure into the bottle, Mr. or Mrs. Jardine would bang up against me, and spill some on the floor. It was impossible for me to get it filled up again. I had not the time, besides, I could not always get to the tap. What did it matter when it was only stuff that would harm them anyway? I was really doing them a good turn. If it had been milk now, or some such nourishing beverage, my conscience might have troubled me some.

Anyway, they had not a chance to abuse me. Each one who was served was hustled away too quickly by the one who was waiting behind.

It was with a great feeling of relief that I heard the ten o'clock bells begin to ring. In a very few minutes the last customer was pushed out, and the door locked. They kept up hammering and kicking at the door for some time, but we took no notice.

The big kitchen kettle was lying behind the counter full of cold water, as I thought. I poured it down the sink, as I needed the kettle up the stair. I was

just going out of the shop door, when Mr. Jardine asked me if I had seen the kettle.

'I have it in my hand to take up the stair,' I answered.

'What did you do with what was in it?' he asked anxiously.

'I poured it down the sink,' I answered, wondering what he meant.

'Is it all gone?' said Mrs. Jardine quickly.

'Yes,' he returned ruefully. 'There's no use worrying about it. It was my fault for leaving it there.'

The kettle had been full to the top with rum, which he had been going to colour. I never heard another word about it.

Some few weeks after I began to feel ill. I went to a doctor, but he did not seem to know what was wrong with me. I worked on for a month, and then stopped. I went over to Mary's to stay. I had a month's wages, and I knew I could keep myself for another month on that. Perhaps by that time I might be well again.

I did not improve, and in about three weeks the doctor said I would have to undergo an operation. I made arrangements to go into an infirmary the following week.

## CHAPTER XXI

### LIFE IN A HOSPITAL

Yet once again I greet thee, thou fair sun!  
And now I look upon thy golden orb,  
And in anticipation feel my soul  
Partake thy essence, and inhale thy beams!

GOETHE.

BEFORE I went into the infirmary I took a run home. One never could tell what might happen at an operation.

They were all very glad to see me. I think they never expected to see me again. The idea they had of an infirmary would have quelled the strongest heart. To them, it was a fearful slaughter-house where one was simply cut up as practice for the doctors. I'm certain they would have died rather than go to such a place. Indeed I had a great fear of going myself, but tried to hide it. The day passed quickly. My grandparents came out to the passage to see me away. My grandmother was wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron.

'Will ye no' come back yet, an' get the doctor at home?' said my grandfather kindly. 'I'm sure ye'd be welcome to stay here.'

But my mind was made up. I was not going to

come home when I was ill. I bade them all good-bye and started back to my cousin's.

Next morning I was up very early. Mary did not go to her work, as she was going to accompany me to the hospital, and take back my clothes. We got to our destination after considerable wandering off our road. It was a large, handsome building, surrounded by beautiful grounds.

We did not know what door patients were admitted by. As we did not see any one we could ask, we just went to the main entrance. We found ourselves in a large vestibule, with corridors running in different directions from it. I saw several of what I took to be electric bells on the walls. I went to every one of them, and turned them, but there was no sound of any bell ringing. When I had been in some time as a patient I found it was the electric lights I had turned on.

Mary drew my attention to a trolley that was standing behind the door.

'That's to take away the dead folk,' she said, in an awed whisper.

I shivered with horror, and looked round in desperation for any one who could tell me where to go. I was afraid if I had to wait much longer, I would rush out and never come back.

At last we heard the sound of footsteps coming along one of the corridors. A tall, handsome young man appeared, accompanied by a porter. The porter went out, but the tall young man looked at us questioningly.

'I'm coming in here for an operation,' I said

breathlessly. 'Can you please tell me where to go?'

He looked interested.

'Oh, are you?' he said, giving me a kindly smile. 'Come along with me, then.'

What a lot a kind word can do. I immediately lost my fear of the place, and thought I would like it. He conducted us along several corridors until we reached a large ward. He beckoned to a nurse and left us with her.

The nurse told my cousin to wait at the entrance, and she would bring out my clothes. She then conducted me through the ward to the bathroom. I glanced nervously at the patients, expecting to see a look of suffering on each face. I was pleasantly surprised to see them looking bright and cheery.

The nurse turned the water on in the bath then left me, taking my clothes with her. I put my toes into the water, but found it scalding. I drew them out again pretty quickly. I waited to see if the nurse would return, but she did not. There were a lot of taps about, but I was afraid they might be for electricity. At last, getting desperate, I ventured to turn one a little. The water came out of it simply boiling, and filled the place with steam. I turned it off quickly. Then a terror seized me that perhaps the doctor might come in. There was nothing else for it. I must get it over. I plunged quickly into the bath, and stayed there until I was nearly parboiled. When I could stand it no longer I got out, and dabbed myself very gingerly with a towel. Just then the door opened,

and the nurse came in. She looked at the steam, then quickly at me.

'Good gracious!' she exclaimed, 'did you bath in that water?'

'Yes,' I answered; 'I thought I had to.'

'I'm so sorry,' she said. She really looked sorry. 'You should have rung for me. Why didn't you turn on the cold water tap?'

'I was afraid to touch anything,' I returned.

'You're simply like a lobster,' she said. I laughed, then she began to laugh too. She gave me a dressing-gown to put on, then put me into a bed in the ward. There were two hot bottles in it, and I felt very cosy, though my hair was dripping wet.

There were over two dozen beds in the ward. Mine was near the top. The patients were very friendly. On one side of me was a young married woman on the way to recovery. On the other was a middle-aged woman, who seemed to be very ill.

The young married woman, Mrs. Symonds, began a conversation with me at once. She was rather pretty in a Japanese kind of style. Her eyes were narrow, her hair very black, and her complexion olive. She asked me what was wrong with me. I told her, and received in return a fully detailed account of her own trouble, the causes thereof, and some other and varied information about similar troubles that were surprisingly new to me. She said the doctors would soon be in to take the patients away to the operating theatre. That rather



frightened me. I thought I might have to go that day.

Shortly after, the nurse began to go round the patients who were going to the theatre. She put each one's hair into two pleats, and tied them with white ribbon. Then they got white stockings on their feet. They looked as if they were dressed for their coffin.

When the nurse came up my length, I asked her if I was to go.

'Not to-day,' she answered. 'You needn't be in such a hurry. Your turn will come soon enough.'

Much relieved, I began to take a great interest in the things around me. A nurse came up the ward, pushing a trolley like the one outside the door at the entrance. She put it alongside the bed of the girl opposite me. The patient, a rather delicate-looking girl, about nineteen, with the help of the nurse, got on to the trolley, and lay down flat. The nurse covered her up with a blanket, and wheeled her quickly down the ward.

The tall young man, who I discovered was Doctor Linton, the assistant house doctor, met the nurse at the foot of the ward, and helped her with the trolley.

When they had disappeared, the other patients began to speculate on how long the girl would be under chloroform. It was three-quarters of an hour before we heard the sound of the trolley returning. Doctor Linton wheeled it up, then he and the nurse lifted the patient on to the bed. The nurse arranged the clothes round her. They then went to the foot of the

ward, lifted another patient, and quickly disappeared again.

I looked curiously at the girl they had left. She lay like one dead. There was no sound or movement from her. I noticed a little froth oozing out of her mouth. A nurse came and wiped it, then slapped her face gently. She showed no sign of life whatever.

The other patient was back in twenty minutes. There were two more after that, but they were not long either.

Shortly after there was the tramp of a great many feet coming along the corridor. About half a dozen doctors came up the ward, dressed in long, white overalls, or aprons. They were the visiting doctors and surgeons for the day. Doctor Linton was there too. They startled me very much. I had never seen doctors dressed so before. Doctor Linton had his apron partly gathered up in his hand. There seemed to be blood on it. They gave a casual look at all the patients, and stopped for a minute at the bed of the girl opposite me. Doctor Linton slapped her face again, but she never moved.

They then crossed over to me. One of the surgeons explained my case to the others. Apparently he was going to operate on me. I never in my life felt so ashamed of being stared at. After what seemed an age to me, off they went. Soon after we had dinner.

I had a little soup, followed by mince and two small potatoes. Mrs. Symonds, who was on different diet, had a small piece of a very shrivelled-looking fowl.

She asked me for one of my potatoes. I was loath to part with it, but I did not like to refuse. We had tea at half-past four, which consisted of as much tea and bread and butter as we liked.

At half-past seven we had porridge, after which the lights were turned down, and we were settled for the night. I could not sleep for ever so long. The night nurse flitted about like a ghost in the dim light of the ward. How strange everything was to me. At the top of the ward, near my bed, were the folding doors which led out to the balcony where the patients who were able to be up could get the fresh air. Struggle as I would against it, my eyes kept turning in that direction. In imagination I saw the spirits of all those who had died in the ward crowding round about the doors outside, and peering through to see if there were any others nearly ready to join them. I wondered with a growing terror how many had died in my bed. The wind blew the shrubs outside backward and forward, making the shadows change continually. I imagined in my terror that they were the ghosts of the dead struggling to see who could get nearest the door to look in. Shivering with fear, I drew the bedclothes tightly over my head. After what seemed hours, I fell asleep.

I was awakened by the feeling that some one was near me. I found that the bedclothes had been taken off my head, and tucked down at the side. I opened my eyes warily, and discovered that Doctor Linton was sitting on the side of my bed. The nurse and sister were bending over the woman next me. Evidently she had got worse. They were giving her

morphia. She was moaning dreadfully. I lay perfectly rigid, as I did not want to attract their attention. After a little they turned down the lights and went silently away. I fell asleep again.

I think it was half-past five in the morning when we were awakened for a cup of tea. How fine I thought it was to lie in bed and have nothing to do. The patients who were allowed up brought water to the others to wash themselves. There was a large window opposite my bed. In the distance I could see the outline of some hills. By and by the sun began to rise behind them. I have never forgotten the glory of those sunrises. I hardly ever took my eyes off the window from the time the first pale glow appeared until the sun burst forth in all its splendour. To be able to lie and do nothing but watch the wonderful changing colours was a thing I had never experienced before. Very likely, when I left the hospital I would not have another chance. Leisure to admire sunrises did not often come my way. To live, and keep myself decent, meant hard work for me all the time. While I was in the hospital, I looked forward with pleasure to every morning.

The nurse told me at breakfast that I was to be operated on the next forenoon. That day I got no tea nor supper. I did not get any breakfast either the next morning. Preparations began for the theatre. I donned the white stockings. My hair was short and curly, so the nurse could not tie it back. Another nurse brought up the trolley. I got on to it, and she wheeled me away. In the corridor Doctor Linton met us. He pushed the trolley, and

the nurse went to the other end, leant over, and had a ride. She was a bit of a harum-scarum anyway. When we got near the theatre she jumped off.

Doctor Linton gave me the chloroform in a little ante-room off the theatre. It was not altogether an unpleasant sensation. Of course there is always the thought that one may never come out of it. I knew nothing until I opened my eyes in bed again. For three days after I got nothing but a little milk and soda.

The time passed very quickly. I was a month in the hospital, and there were still no signs of me leaving. I was not worrying about that. I was perfectly content where I was. I had no visitors except Mary, who came to see me once. My cousins never came near me, although it would only have cost them a few pence in the car.

Sometimes it vexed me to see a crowd of friends round the other beds, and not a soul at mine. Often these strangers came over and slipped cakes and sweets underneath my pillow. Mrs. Symonds generally shared what she got with me.

One day the husband of the woman who was so ill came in to see her. She was too bad to talk to him, so he sat down beside me.

'I don't think she'll get better,' he said, nodding towards his wife.

'I'm afraid she won't,' I answered, feeling sorry for him.

He drew his chair a little closer to my bed.

'Do you know what I think would be my best plan if she dies?' he said confidentially.

'No,' I returned, wondering what he was going to say.

'Well,' he said slowly. 'I'll just get married again.'

I was amazed. I thought him a bit premature in his planning. He might have had the decency to wait until she was dead anyway. I did not know what to say, so I said nothing.

'You know,' he went on, 'there's no use of me breaking up my house. I've got good furniture. If I sold it, I'd get nothing like its value. I'll get a housekeeper for a little, but I'll get married soon.'

'Have you any family?' I asked.

'I have,' he answered. 'Two boys.'

I said very little. The time was up, and he rose to go.

'Well, good-bye, then,' he said, holding out his hand. 'I'll likely see you again.'

'You may,' I answered indifferently. Inwardly, I hoped not. The hand I ignored altogether.

'What was he yarning about?' asked one of the nurses with a laugh, when he had gone.

I told her. She seemed astonished too that any one could be so callous.

When the visitors were all gone, Mrs. Symonds slipped me some chocolates. Sweets and cakes were strictly forbidden, but we got them all the same.

We were both sitting up in bed enjoying them, when Doctor Linton came up the ward. We pretended we were not eating anything. He glanced at us, half smiled, but said nothing. He spoke to the nurse, then went away again.

'Isn't he a dear!' remarked Mrs. Symonds, whose eyes had followed him down the ward. 'It's a pity he's so shy.'

'Shy!' I exclaimed in surprise. 'I can't say I've noticed it. It's only imagination on your part.'

'Oh, it's Mrs. Symonds that's always trying to give him the glad eye, and she thinks he's shy, because he never takes any notice of her,' laughed Mrs. Lennie, a married woman across the ward.

'You're mistaken,' returned Mrs. Symonds, with a toss of her head. 'I'm sure I don't care a fig whether he looks at me or not.'

'That'll do you now,' answered Mrs. Lennie. 'Haven't I watched you eyeing him every time he comes into the ward.'

'You're welcome to think what you like,' retorted Mrs. Symonds, a little piqued.

'Oh, well,' I said, 'I like him, and feel quite happy when he throws me a kind look; and I would a hundred times rather have him dress my wound than the nurses.'

'You're right there,' said Mrs. Lennie. 'No matter how gentle a nurse is, she hasn't the tender touch a doctor has with a woman.'

When the chocolates were finished, Mrs. Symonds suggested a pillow fight.

'Go ahead, then,' I said. 'I'll have first go.'

I threw my pillow at her with all my might. It caught her full on the face, and landed her on her back. We had it hot for about five minutes. Her hair was all hanging down. Suddenly she stopped,

and lay down like a lamb. I threw my pillow at her head, but she never stirred. I glanced down the ward. Doctor Linton was standing in the passage leaning against the wall, and looking towards us. I lay down so quickly, that I gave my head a terrible thump against the wall. My pillow was lying at the side of Mrs. Symonds's bed, so I had to do without it. That finished our game for the day.

'How many did you count when you were getting chloroform?' Mrs. Symonds asked me after tea.

'Twelve, I think,' I answered.

'I counted twenty,' said an English girl, in the bed next to Mrs. Symonds.

'I don't believe you,' snapped Mrs. Symonds. 'I counted up to seventeen, and I'm perfectly sure you never got further than me.'

'But I did,' answered the English girl angrily. 'Surely I know best.'

'And I know perfectly well you're a liar,' retorted Mrs. Symonds.

They had a hot argument for a quarter of an hour about it. After that, they ceased to be on speaking terms until they left the hospital. I wondered how women could quarrel about such a trifle, and in a place like that too.

Next morning a little boy of two and a half came into our ward. He was the most spoilt child I ever came across in my life. Nothing would please him. He alarmed the whole place. I had to feed him with his porridge at night. Nurse wheeled his cot alongside my bed, then she and the doctor



watched my fruitless efforts to get the porridge down his throat. Just when I had the spoon at his mouth he would give a yell, push the spoon violently away, and splutter the porridge all over me. It made me mad. At last they had to take him away. His yelling annoyed the woman beside me who was so ill. They put him into the men's ward. The men were furious.

'What the devil was she bringing that yelling brat to their ward for?' they asked the nurse.

'The noise was too much for the women,' she answered.

'What about us?' asked a man angrily. 'The women are not to be annoyed, but it doesn't matter a damn about us.'

How we laughed when the nurse told us.

The day the boy went away, a new patient came in. She was a stout, elderly woman, and was put into a bed near me, but on the opposite side. Her case was very serious. If she underwent an operation there was a chance for her, but if she did not, there was no chance at all. The next day happened to be visiting day, and her two daughters came to see her. They were asked to decide. They decided to have the operation performed. They had brought half a pound of cracknel biscuits with them for her. When they had gone, the woman slipped them into the locker at the side of her bed.

She was to be operated on the next forenoon, so of course had no tea that day. Next morning, she

begged so hard for a cup of tea, that the doctor said she might have one, but nothing to eat. We were on the watch to get the biscuits. After she had been taken to the theatre, Mrs. Symonds, who was allowed up, went over to get them. Alas, the locker was empty! The woman had eaten the whole half-pound to the cup of tea she had had in the morning. We were flabbergasted. How could any woman do such a thing before a serious operation like what she had to undergo? She came through all right, though, in spite of her greed.

A few days after, the doctor allowed me up. When the surgeon who had operated on me came round, he asked me if I would like home. What could I say but Yes. He spoke very kindly, and said, as I would be able to get plenty of fresh air where I belonged, he would let me go the next day. Poor man, he thought he was doing me a favour, but it was exactly the opposite.

I felt very sad at the thought of leaving the hospital. I liked the bright, clean ward. The nurses and doctors had been very kind to me, and I hated to have to leave it all. It had to be, though. I wrote home to Meg to come and meet me, and bring some clothes.

She came the following afternoon. Mrs. Symonds was going that day too. After I was dressed, Doctor Linton sent word that he wanted to see me. Mrs. Symonds was mad because he did not want her too. But I had a wound that I had to get instructions about. He was very nice, and said I would have to be careful of myself.

'What did he say to you?' asked Mrs. Symonds curiously, on my return.

'Oh!' I answered, 'he said he was sorry I was going away, and hopes to see me back again soon.'

I bade them all good-bye, and went away, feeling very dejected.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE DOCTOR

Physicians mend or end us,  
Secundem artem : but although we sneer  
In health—when sick, we call them to attend us,  
Without the least propensity to jeer.

BYRON.

AFTER the hospital I thought our home very cramped and small. The 'wee room' I could hardly bear to sleep in. The coarseness and poverty of everything, the dirty, gossiping women at the doors, jarred on me terribly. My life in the hospital had awakened new thoughts in me. The refinement of the doctors and nurses made me feel dissatisfied with my life. It was not that I cared any less for them at home, but simply the environment that I could not bear.

At the hospital the nurses had talked a good deal to me. I had felt at home with them, and able to speak naturally. It was the first time in my life that I had had anything to do with educated people. It was a glimpse into a world that I had never known.

I never, of course, mentioned a word of this at home. It would have vexed them, and besides, they would not have understood.

Doctor Linton had told me to go to a doctor at home and have my wound dressed. The day after I got home I did so. He dressed my wound, and told me to come back in two days. I went, and asked him if I was to come back again.

‘What do you think yourself?’ he asked.

I thought it rather a strange question for him to ask me. How could I tell whether it was necessary for me to go back or not? I said I did not know.

‘I think you’ll manage all right,’ he said.

In a few days my wound healed up. I thought I would start work again. I went to the servants’ registry in the town, and got a situation as general servant the first day. I had the feeling that if I could get work with some nice, refined people, I should be happier.

I went on a Monday. Mrs. B——, the lady of the house, instructed me about the work. After a day or two I got into the swing of it, and always managed done about three. Then I would sit in my bedroom, a nice, sunny little room, and read or sew. I did not feel very contented, though. There was a formality about Mrs. B—— and her three girls that jarred on me. It was not that they were unkind, but simply that they gave me the feeling that they thought me a very inferior being. It awoke a feeling of hostility in me. I thought I would try to stay a few months anyway, as I was badly needing some clothes.

In three months I began to feel a pain under my arm. It grew worse, then a swelling appeared. In three weeks Mrs. B—— and her family were going

to Arran for a month's holidays. I was to have a week at home, and then follow them. I thought I would work on until that time.

Meg said there was a new doctor at home, so I thought I would try him.

The day they left for Arran I started off home carrying a large parcel. When I had got about half-way, the strain of carrying such a weight burst the swelling under my arm. It gave me some relief. I left the parcel in the house, and went to the new doctor's consulting-room. I was the only one waiting.

I sat wondering in a vague kind of way what kind of man he would be. I wondered if he would be as pleasant as Doctor Linton. Thinking of Doctor Linton made me long to be back in the hospital again.

The door of the room opened suddenly, making me jump. A young man entered, then shut it behind him. He was tall and dark, with thick, curly black hair, and very penetrating brown eyes.

'Well,' he said brusquely, 'what's the matter?' He spoke to me as if I were a child.

'Oh,' I answered, 'I don't think it's very much.'

I let him see my arm, and told him about my previous trouble. It was just as I had supposed. The wound had been healed up far too quick.

'Are you good at bearing pain?' he asked, looking at me critically.

'I think so,' I answered. I did not want to be thought a coward.

'What's your name?' he said.

I told him.

'Well,' he said, 'will you come down to my house to-morrow at twelve?'

'Very well,' I answered.

'I won't hurt you any more than I can help,' he said kindly.

He stood watching me fastening my blouse. It made me feel very embarrassed. I thought he might have had the sense to turn his head the other way.

'Can I help you?' he asked gravely.

'You cannot,' I answered hurriedly. 'I can manage fine myself.'

My blouse was fastened down the back. I simply could not get a button in. I slipped my jacket on quickly, knowing it would hide all deficiencies.

'Good-bye,' I said, and moved towards the door.

'Why didn't you fasten your dress properly?' he said abruptly. 'Do you want to get cold in that wound?'

'It's all right,' I answered quickly, wishing I was outside. 'I haven't far to go.'

'Very well, mind you don't forget the time,' he said. 'Good-bye.' He held out his hand. I shook hands, feeling pleased at his courtesy, and hurried out.

'Well,' asked my grandmother anxiously, when I got home, 'how did you get on?'

'Well enough,' I said. 'I've to go to his house to-morrow.'

'What kind of man is the doctor?' inquired Meg.

'I don't know yet,' I answered slowly. 'I couldn't say whether I like him or not. Anyway, he's a man that will have his instructions carried out, or know the reason why.'

'Is he?' said Meg, with a laugh. 'He'll have his work cut out for him with you, then.'

'How?' I inquired, not seeing anything to laugh at.

Meg, who was tidying the fireside, straightened herself up and looked at me.

'When did you ever do anything a doctor told you?' she asked.

'If it's an argument you want, you've missed your mark this time,' I returned stiffly.

She threw her head back, and laughed. Meg, somehow, always makes me feel that I am beaten.

Next day I was at the doctor's house at twelve sharp. Doctor Granger was the name on the brass plate. I rang the bell, feeling very nervous.

He answered the door himself, looking very severe.

'Come in,' he said. He led the way into his study, and I followed him.

'Why didn't you come at the time I told you?' he said sternly. 'I've had the nurse waiting here an hour. She's just away a minute ago.'

'But I did come when you told me to,' I protested. 'You said I was to come at twelve o'clock.'

He looked at me a minute.

'Are you sure I said twelve?' he asked.

'Quite,' I answered positively. 'I wasn't likely to forget it.'



'Oh, well,' he said, with a smile, 'I'm sorry if it was my fault. Will you come to-morrow, then?'

'Yes,' I answered, a little sullenly.

'Good-bye, then, and don't forget the time to-morrow,' he said.

I looked at him, feeling very much annoyed.

'I didn't forget the time to-day,' I replied meaningly.

'Of course not,' he said hastily. 'To-morrow, then.'

When I got home, there, of course, was Meg with her questions.

'Well, is it done?' asked my grandmother. 'I'm sure it must have been sore.'

'No,' I answered shortly, 'he didn't do it. He said I came at the wrong time.'

'So you were too late,' remarked Meg. 'I'm sure he didn't let you off with it. Faith, yon's the boy to smerten ye up a bit. What did he say?'

'I don't mind what he said,' I answered evasively.

Next day I was down a few minutes before twelve. The maid showed me into the study. The doctor and nurse were both there.

The nurse helped me off with my things, while the doctor prepared his instruments.

It was dreadfully painful, but I was determined not to show how I felt. The doctor looked at me several times. Perhaps he imagined I was going to faint, but I never made any sign that I felt anything. When he had finished, he asked me if I would like a drink.

'Oh no,' I answered. 'I'm all right.'

I hurried on my things.

'You're a little brick,' he said.

'Now, mind,' he admonished me, 'you're not to use that arm. You ought to have it in a sling.'

'I'm not going to use it,' I answered quickly. I had not the slightest intention of going about making an exhibition of myself with my arm in a sling.

'Good-bye, then, and come to-morrow again.'

He watched me out at the gate. I was feeling very faint, but I walked quickly until I got out of his sight. Then I went into a passage, and sat down on a stair for a little, until I felt more sure of myself.

'Well,' asked my grandmother, as soon as I had entered the door, 'is it done this time?'

'It is,' I answered.

'Was it bad?' she questioned.

'Bad enough,' I said, 'but it might have been worse.'

'I hear he's a clever doctor,' remarked Meg, always on the hunt for information.

I turned a deaf ear to her, and went into the big room and banged the piano for a while.

At the end of the week I told the doctor that I was going to Arran on the Monday.

'For a holiday?' he inquired.

'Yes,' I answered.

'That's all right,' he said. 'When you go to Arran you must go to the doctor there.'

'Very well,' I answered. 'I won't be back to you again.'

'Of course you will, as soon as you come home,'

he said sharply, stopping in the middle of bandaging my arm.

On Monday I got the boat for Arran. When I got ashore I had a long way to walk before I reached the farm where the B——s were staying. It was right on top of a hill. There was a glorious view from it. I was delighted to think I was to be there for three weeks.

That evening I asked Mrs. B—— if she knew where I could get a doctor.

‘A doctor,’ she exclaimed in surprise. ‘There’s no such man here. But what do you want a doctor for?’

I explained.

She said I should not have come. I said that perhaps I could manage myself. But there were no shops to buy dressing in. I wrote home to Meg to send me some.

Next afternoon I got a telegram. Wondering who it could be from, I tore it open. It was from Meg, to say that I was to come home at once. I was greatly surprised, and wondered what could be wrong at home. I showed it to Mrs. B——. She said I had better get the last boat, which sailed in half an hour.

It was a wet, miserable day. It was pretty rough crossing, and I became very sick. The captain, a brawny Highlandman, got me into a sheltered nook, and fastened up an old oilskin to keep off the draught. Two gentlemen came at intervals, and pestered me to take a cup of hot tea. I could not think of it.

It was dark when I got home. Everything was all right. My grandmother advised me to take off my wet things at once.

'What made you throw away sixpence on a telegram?' I inquired of Meg, who was making some tea.

She was looking serious.

'The doctor'll let you know that,' she answered. 'You're to go down at once. He's mad. He says you told him you were going for a holiday.'

'You had no need to go and tell him,' I said crossly.

'I didn't know what kind of stuff you wanted,' she returned.

I started off for the doctor's very reluctantly. I was shown into his study. He was sitting reading a book. He looked up quickly.

'Well,' he said solemnly, 'you're back.'

'Yes,' I murmured meekly, thinking it best to appear humble.

'Why did you tell me you were going for a holiday?' he demanded.

'So I was,' I answered.

'Your sister said you had gone back to your work,' he said sternly.

'Oh, Meg,' I said weakly. 'Maybe she thought it was work. I didn't.'

He was silent. Meg had told me that he was not going to dress my wound after what I had done. I was at a loss what to do. I felt like breaking down, what with one thing and another.

He sat back in his chair and looked at me. I sat

on the end of the couch, and stared at the carpet. At last I could suffer it no longer. I got to my feet.

'I'd better go, then,' I said, in a shaking voice. 'Good-night.'

'Sit down,' he said quietly. 'I'll let you off this time, but you don't deserve it.'

'I know I don't,' I answered, feeling greatly relieved. 'I'm sorry,' I added humbly.

He softened a bit before I came out, though, and gave me a pat on the shoulder.

When Mrs. B—— returned I resumed my work again.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A SHORT ILLNESS

All hail, Remembrance and Forgetfulness!  
Trace, Memory, trace, whate'er is sweet or kind—  
When friends forsake us, or misfortunes press,  
Oblivion, raze the record from our mind.

BLAND.

I HAD always been troubled with headaches. Since I had been in the mill they had become more frequent. I dreaded them very much, as they made me unfit for anything. I had some laudanum in the house that I had bought once for toothache. I tried some of it one day for my headache, and found that it gave me relief. After that I always had some handy. I knew that laudanum was a dangerous thing to take, but when my headache was bad, I would have taken anything.

One night I was home I went to Doctor Granger and asked him if he could give me anything to cure the headaches. He asked me if I had been taking anything for them. I said I was taking laudanum. He lectured me for a quarter of an hour on the evil of taking drugs, and gave me some tabloids as a substitute.

Drugs, he said, were ruin both to soul and body.

I left the doctor with the promise that I would not buy any again.

I did not give much thought to what he had said. I had not felt any ill effects from what I had taken, but had saved myself many a day's pain. I had taken only a few drops at first, but latterly, I had been taking almost a pennyworth at a time. Besides helping my headache, I liked the delightful, care-free feeling it gave me.

I disliked very much my life of continual servility, and thought if I could take anything that would lift my mind off it for a few hours, all the better.

I have a strong will, and felt that if I wanted to stop taking laudanum I could do so, but I was not really caring whether I stopped it or not. However, I thought I would give the tabloids a trial.

I found that I had to take three times the amount the doctor had told me to, and even then they were not very effective. Very soon they were done.

I thought for once more I would buy some laudanum. My grandmother sent me to the chemist's for something. I took the opportunity to ask for a pennyworth. The shopman, a nice, quiet fellow, looked confused.

'What is it for?' he asked.

He had never asked me that before, and it struck me at once that perhaps the doctor had told him not to give me any. I felt annoyed.

'It's for neuralgia,' I said, 'but never mind. I can get something else.'

'I'll give you a powder,' he said eagerly.

'I won't mind it just now, thank you,' I answered.

'I'll give you the laudanum if you get a line from your doctor,' he said.

'It really does not matter at all,' I returned indifferently.

I got my other message and came out. I was in a dilemma. I knew perfectly well that the first time the doctor was in the shop, the young man would tell him. I thought my best plan was to go and tell him first myself. I was terribly afraid of going, but it would be less humiliating than if he heard it in the shop.

His housekeeper said he was just at his tea, and told me to wait in the study. I sat down on a chair in a shadowed corner. In a minute he came into the room.

'It's you, Jean,' he exclaimed. 'But why are you sitting in that dark corner? Come over here.'

He pushed a chair opposite himself, for me to sit on. I moved over, very unwillingly. He looked at me a minute.

'What's the matter?' he asked quickly.

'I had a bad headache,' I explained breathlessly. 'I went into the chemist's for some laudanum, and he wouldn't give me any.'

He leaned back in his chair, perfectly silent, and stared at me.

I breathed hard, wondering what was to come.

'Look here, Jean,' he said at last, very solemnly, 'you don't understand the seriousness of what you are doing. After a little you won't be able to stop it, even if you want to. You must never buy any more, in any shop. Will you promise that?'



'Oh yes,' I answered eagerly, really meaning it. 'I'm finished with it this time.'

I rose to go, feeling very much relieved.

'Sit down, I've something more to say to you, Jean,' he said quietly.

I sat down again. He asked me a lot of questions I could not see the drift of at all. Indeed, I was not listening much to him. I liked him, but I stood in awe of him all the same. He was clean shaven, and I thought what a determined-looking jaw he had. He was a bachelor, and I wondered what kind of girl he would choose if he married, and if he would strike her if she roused his temper. I pondered this question in my mind for a while, and had just come to the conclusion that he certainly would strike her, when his voice pulled me up quickly.

'Do you hear what I am saying to you?' he exclaimed sharply.

'Oh yes,' I answered hurriedly, 'I never intend to buy any more.'

'That's right,' he said kindly, leading the way out.

He smiled as he opened the door, and I changed my mind suddenly, and decided that he would not strike her after all.

I worked on at Mrs. B——s for other two months, then I began to feel unwell. It made me miserable to think that I might be going to have another illness. I could not expect to get on in the world if I was always ill. I said nothing about it to any one, but went to the doctor, thinking that I might get something that would prevent me from getting

worse. He said he was afraid I would have to go through a slight operation.

It could be done in the house, and he would give me some chloroform.

I hated to tell them at home, but I just had to. As I expected, they made a fuss about it, and thought it far worse than it was.

I arranged to leave Mrs. B—— at the end of the month.

The doctor was to come to our house that evening, and tell me what time he would be there the following day. About ten o'clock, a very late hour in our house, he came.

Meg showed him into the big room, and lit the gas. He told me that the district nurse and another would be coming to give him a hand. I was unpleasantly surprised. I had thought it was a small thing, and that I would not need a nurse at all.

'Don't be frightened,' he said, with a smile, patting my cheek.

He went out quickly, saying he was in a hurry to go to an urgent case. As he passed the kitchen door, he went in for a light for his cigar. He spoke to them all cheerily, and said something to my grandfather that made him laugh. It is wonderful what a kind, cheery word can do. From that night, every one in our house liked the doctor.

'That's a fine fellow,' I heard my grandfather remark, when he had gone.

'He's the boy that's no' blate about makin' himself at home anyway,' answered my grandmother.

Then she and Meg and Ann came into the room to hear the news.

‘What time is he coming the morn?’ asked Meg.

‘He!’ I answered. ‘There’s to be two nurses besides him.’

My grandmother threw up her hands in horror.

‘In the name o’ God,’ she exclaimed, ‘what are they goin’ to do with ye anyway?’

I told them what time the nurses were coming. Next morning the house was all cleaned and ready by half-past ten. They were coming at eleven. I was in bed, but, getting wearied of waiting, I got up to have a tune on the piano. My grandmother came into the room, with Meg at her heels.

‘Och, och,’ she exclaimed, in horrified tones, ‘is that no’ lamentable? Sittin’ at a piany, an’ ye don’t know but that ye may be in yer shroud before night. It would fit ye better to be down on yer knees prayin’.’

‘Indeed, it’s a nice looking thing,’ said Meg, trying to egg on my grandmother.

Just then there was a knock at the door, and they had to leave me.

It was the two nurses. After a great deal of running out and in to the kitchen, they got everything ready. They pinned sheets on the table. I watched them with interest. Very soon the doctor came. He took out his instruments, and gave them to the nurses to sterilise. Taking off his coat, he rolled up his shirt sleeves in a very business-like manner.

He reminded me of a washerwoman just starting

a hard day's work at the tub, and it made me smile.

The table was shifted to the light of the window, then I got on to it. The chloroform affected me very quickly.

It seemed only a few minutes until I opened my eyes in bed again. I saw the nurses moving about, but I felt so sleepy I just shut them, and lay still. Some one came and rubbed my cheek. I was afraid to open my eyes in case it would dispel the delightful dreamy feeling that I had. I heard the doctor's voice saying :

'She 'll do all right now,' then they all went away.

Before they were right out, Meg, Ann, and my grandmother were in the room. It distressed me so much to speak to them, that they had to go away. I lay for about an hour, half asleep and half awake, and then the doctor came back.

'Sleepy?' he asked.

'Yes,' I answered.

'That's good,' he said. 'Just you try to sleep, and don't lift your head off the pillow, mind.' Off he went.

Soon after he had gone the sleepiness left me. I felt very well, so I thought I would sit up and read a book for a while. I put my pillows up against the head of the bed, and leant back against them. In about five minutes I felt so horribly sick, that I had to lie down. Every time I tried to move my head off the pillow the sickness returned worse than ever. I got terribly thirsty, and asked Meg for a drink.

'Indeed I will not,' she answered emphatically.

'You shouldn't have sat up, and you wouldn't have been sick.'

I asked Ann and my grandmother for some water, but Meg would not let them give me any.

'If you're wise, you'll give her nothing of the kind,' she warned them.

'All right,' I said to Meg. 'Wait until the first time you are hard up for a drink. I wouldn't give you one if your tongue was hanging out the length of my arm.'

Meg only laughed. The hours dragged on. My thirst got awful, and I felt utterly miserable.

About eight o'clock the doctor came.

'Well, dear, are you feeling better?' he asked, sitting down on the side of the bed.

'I would like a drink, please,' I said eagerly.

'Of course you'll get a drink,' he answered, rising quickly and going to the kitchen. I heard him telling Meg to bring him a cup of water and a teaspoon. I wondered what the teaspoon was for. Meg brought what he wanted. She had her hat on for going out.

'Jean's been sick all the afternoon,' she said, giving a quick glance over at me.

'Sick,' exclaimed the doctor in surprise. 'What made her sick?'

'I don't know,' answered Meg innocently, 'unless it was that she sat up in bed to read a book, just when you went away.'

'Oh,' he said quietly. 'That'll do, thanks.'

Meg went out, and he shut the door. I felt wild at Meg. She had had no occasion to tell him at all.

He came over and stood with his back leaning against the table, and his hands in his pockets, and looked at me. I was shaking, and kept my eyes fixed obstinately on the rail at the foot of the bed.

'You don't deserve a drop,' he said grimly.

I never answered.

'Do you know what you deserve?' he asked.

'No,' I said.

'A good whipping,' he returned quietly.

An angry retort rose to my lips, but a quick glance at his face made me change my mind and say nothing. He stood looking at me a while longer. I thought it was to see if I could not be tempted into saying something back, but I was not to be caught. I did my best to assume an absent-minded expression, which, under the circumstances, was not exactly easy.

At last he lifted the cup and spoon from the table. Coming over to the bed, he raised my head on his arm, and gave me a few spoonfuls of the water.

'Isn't that nice?' he asked, putting the cup back on the table.

I felt annoyed. It was a drink I had wanted, and not to be fed like a child. I never expressed any thanks for it.

'Now,' he warned me, 'you've got to lie quiet, and try to sleep.'

He lifted his hat from the table, and, taking the cup with him, went out. When I had heard the door shut, I turned my face to the wall and had a good cry.

There was a knock at the door. My grandmother

opened it. I heard the doctor's voice, saying he had forgotten his stick. To my dismay, he came right into the room himself for it. I covered my head quickly with the bedclothes.

He found the stick, then came over and stood at the side of the bed. Suddenly, he sat down on the bed and, without any warning, pulled the clothes off my head.

'Oh, I see,' he said softly.

He began to stroke the hair gently from the side of my head. I never looked round, or pretended I knew he was there.

He sat for a good while, then rising, tucked the clothes behind my shoulders, and went quietly out of the room.

Next day I was a good deal better. At the end of the week I was up again, and quite well. I was anxious to get back to work. I wrote to Mrs. Jardine, and said I would like to go back, if she had no one else. On the Saturday I had a letter from her saying they would be glad to have me, as soon as I cared to come. I decided to go on the Monday.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### MY MOTHER VISITS ME

Thoughts ? what are they ?  
They are my constant friends ;  
Who when harsh fate its dull brow bends,  
Uncloud me with a smiling ray,  
And in the depth of midnight, force a day.

FLATMAN.

THE Monday I returned to the Jardines was a bitter cold day. They seemed glad to see me. I was not long there until Mr. Jardine asked me to go down to the shop for a few minutes. As usual, the minutes turned into hours. He must have been pretty much confined when I was away. Now that I was back he was taking full advantage.

The shop was terribly cold. The east wind blew right through in gusts, sending the papers flying in all directions. If I had been busy I would not have felt the cold so much. I tried to tidy up things behind the counter, to keep myself going, but my teeth were simply chattering. My fingers were benumbed washing the glasses in the cold water.

One night I was sitting at the kitchen fire knitting. I rose from my chair, and found that I could not walk without great difficulty. I thought the pain would pass away, and I would be all right in the



morning. When the morning came I could hardly dress myself. I believed the cold in the shop had given me a chill after my recent illness. I did not say so to Mrs. Jardine, though. It was not her fault. I said I would have to go home at once. She was vexed to think I had to go away again, but there was nothing else for it.

I dressed and got my things tied up. I was very worried about how I was to get to the station. I had a long country road to walk. There was no conveyance unless I hired a cab, a thing which never for a moment entered my head.

Anyhow, it had to be done. I bade the Jardines good-bye, and started off. I managed a good bit, then I had to put down my parcel and rest against the hedge by the side of the road. After that, I had to stop much oftener. Several farmers' carts passed me on the road, but I was too shy to ask for a lift. I would not have liked to sit on a cart anyway.

I reached the station at last. The rest in the train helped me a little.

They got a great surprise when I walked in at home. I explained what was wrong. Meg said she would go for the doctor at once. She was not long back when he arrived. I was waiting in the big room for him. When I told him what was the matter he looked terribly solemn. He sat down on a chair and never said a word. I thought it must be something bad to make him look like that. After a little he got up.

' You 'd better get to bed, Jean, and I 'll see you

in the morning,' he said kindly, and went into the kitchen.

He was a long time in the kitchen, and I wondered uneasily what he could be saying. As soon as he had gone Meg hurried into the room.

'You've done it this time,' she blurted out. 'He says he can do nothing for you. He said something about wanting to get another doctor from Glasgow.'

'You're telling lies,' I retorted angrily. 'He never said anything of the kind to me.'

'It's hardly likely he'd tell you,' she answered, 'but it's true anyway.'

I was shocked. I had often wished I were dead, but now that death seemed staring me in the face, I shrank back in terror. I leant my head against the mantelpiece, and tried to think what I would do. I knew that if a specialist had to come it would cost a lot of money. I thought it would be ten pounds anyway. Then the idea came into my head that when I got better I could go back to the Jardines. I got a pound a month, so in ten months I could earn what would pay the doctor. On the other hand, if I died, who was to pay him? I turned it over and over in my mind until my head ached. I did not think somehow that I would die. I thought I might risk getting a doctor, and being able to pay him. I asked Meg what she thought of my plan. She said she thought I might manage it that way.

'Well,' I said, 'when Doctor Granger comes in the morning, if he speaks about getting another doctor, just say he can bring him.'

She said she would ; so, that being settled, I became quite cheery again.

About two o'clock in the morning I turned very ill. I bore it as long as I could, but the pain got so bad that Meg had to go for the doctor. My grandmother and Ann got up and sat at the kitchen fire.

'No, no, I'm sure she'll niver see the mornin',' I heard my grandmother say.

Ann came into the room to see if there was anything she could do for me, but the pain was so bad that I could not bear to have her near me. Meg could not have been long away, but it seemed hours to me. Ten minutes after she had come back, I heard the doctor's quick step in the lobby.

He threw his hat on the table, and came hastily over to me. He had the collar of his coat turned up round his neck.

'Is the pain bad, dearie?' he asked gently.

'It's been dreadful,' I answered, trying to steady my voice.

He took something out of his pocket, and went into the kitchen. He returned in a few minutes, and injected some morphia into my arm. It acted like magic. In a minute or two my pain was all gone. A happy, dreamy feeling came over me. He put the syringe on the table, and sat down at the bedside.

'You must go to sleep now,' he said quietly.

I tried hard to sleep, but could not. I pulled the bedclothes over my head to see if I could induce sleep that way, but he would not let me do that. I felt sorry for him, sitting waiting there in the cold, so at

last I just shut my eyes and pretended I was asleep. In a few minutes he got up and tiptoed from the room.

Next morning the pain was as bad as ever. The doctor came at ten and gave me some more morphia. Meg came into the room after he had gone.

'He's left his box of drugs,' she said.

'Has he?' I exclaimed eagerly. 'Let me see them.'

She handed me a little round box. I opened it and saw three round pellets.

'They must be very strong,' remarked Meg. 'All that you got was a little scraped off one of them.'

I examined them curiously. I would very much have liked to try one of them, but I was too afraid of the doctor's anger to risk it. I looked over the box carefully, thinking perhaps there might be a loose grain or two. There was not a speck. Disappointed I put on the lid again. Meg eyed me hard all the time.

'If you're wise,' she advised me, 'you'll leave those things the way you got them.'

'Did you imagine I was going to poison myself?' I retorted. 'Surely I can look at them?'

'You can,' she returned. 'Look at them all day if you like for me.'

'I'd better put them under my pillow till he comes,' I said. 'If you put them away, you'll likely forget where you've laid them.'

'All right,' answered Meg. 'But don't forget to give him them.'

All afternoon I thought about them. Several times I took them out and looked at them. The effect of what I had got in the morning was beginning to wear off, and the pain was coming back. It was very tantalising to have the stuff beside me, and not be able to touch it. I had almost made up my mind to risk scraping a little off with a pin when I heard the doctor's knock at the door.

'There was some one asking for you, Jean,' he said, when he came in.

'For me,' I said in surprise. 'Who was it?'

'Your minister,' he answered. 'I was telling him you were ill.'

'You needn't have bothered,' I returned huffishly. 'I don't want him.'

I felt mad. I hated any of the church people coming near me with their condescending airs.

He laughed.

'You're a little sinner,' he said. 'I'm sorry, though, but I thought perhaps you would like to see him.'

'Why should I want to see him, or any of his kind?' I answered passionately. 'What better are they than me, because they happen to be better dressed, and live in a fine house? God made us all alike, and I simply can't bear to have any of them coming staring at me as if they were doing me an honour to sit in the same room with me. I feel neither honour nor pleasure.'

He stood staring at me. I suddenly became conscious of my outburst, and felt a little ashamed of it.

'Do you know, Jean,' he said thoughtfully, 'you are perfectly right in what you say.'

'Then you don't think they are any better than me, doctor?' I asked eagerly.

'Indeed I don't,' he answered emphatically.

It pleased me very much to hear him say that. Nobody, who has not suffered it, knows the pain of being spoken to as if one were made of different clay. God only uses one kind of material, which He gives to us to form. The beauty or ugliness of the modelling depends on ourselves.

'I'm glad you think that,' I said warmly.

'But why should you imagine I would think otherwise?' he asked with a smile.

'Your class generally do think otherwise,' I answered.

He laughed.

'You're a strange girl, Jean,' he said. 'You'd better lie still, and put all those thoughts out of your little head for the present.'

He was just going out when I remembered the tabloids.

'You forgot something this morning, doctor,' I said.

He turned round quickly.

'What?' he asked.

'A little round box,' I said.

'Where is it?' he inquired, returning quickly to the bedside.

I could not help smiling at the suspicious way he looked at me. I took it from underneath the pillow.

'It's here,' I said. 'I was afraid it might get lost.'

He took it hastily from my hand, opened the lid, and examined the contents. Apparently satisfied that it was as he had left it, he put it into his pocket.

'I suppose you would have kept it if you hadn't been afraid!' he said, trying to look stern.

I laughed. He pulled my hair and went out.

There was no word of getting another doctor. I began to think that Meg must have misunderstood Doctor Granger, and felt much relieved. Late that evening I heard the doctor's knock at the door. He came into the room, accompanied by a tall gentleman. I knew at once that it was the specialist.

He spoke in a drawling voice, and was very nice to me. I was perfectly dumbfounded when he told me that I would have to lie in bed for six weeks. It appalled me to think of being ill at home all that time, without earning a penny. I had given my grandfather some money when I came home, but it would not keep me for six weeks. I could make up for it when I got well, of course, but that did not make my mind easy now.

I was not feeling very ill. If I had, perhaps I would have been glad to lie. I had no books to read, and I wondered how I was going to get through the time, staring at the four walls of the room. The nurse was to come every day, so that was something to look forward to anyway. And I would have Doctor Granger too.

When the nurse came in the morning, I told her

that Doctor Granger had brought another doctor the night before.

'Why,' she exclaimed, evidently greatly astonished, 'that must have been Doctor L——. He was down here at a case yesterday.'

'Who's he?' I asked curiously.

'He's one of the best specialists in the West of Scotland,' she answered. 'Do you know what he takes for an operation?'

'No,' I answered anxiously. 'What?'

'A hundred pounds,' she answered impressively.

I was dumbfounded.

'A hundred pounds,' I said faintly.

She laughed.

'He won't likely charge you anything,' she said. 'Isn't he a very handsome man?'

'I didn't notice,' I answered absently.

'Do you know,' she went on, 'he has the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen.'

But beautiful eyes had no interest for me just then. I was too much troubled about how the owner of the beautiful eyes was to be paid his fee.

I waited anxiously for Doctor Granger to come. When he did appear I asked him as soon as he came into the room.

'Don't worry yourself about that,' he said. 'It won't cost you anything. He just came to oblige me.'

What a relief I felt. Then I began to be vexed because he had come to me just for charity. I felt that all my life I would have to feel indebted to him,



I looked forward to the nurse's and doctor's visits every day. The nurse always waited to chat to me a little, and sometimes the doctor also, if he was not too busy. Before they came I passed the time in thinking of a lot of things I would ask them about. After they had gone, I lay and thought of the things they had been speaking of.

One day the nurse and I had a discussion about love. It was a problem I had been thinking of for some time. I had never mentioned it to any one, but I thought I would like to ask the nurse her opinion. She did not seem to have much faith in it at all, which rather disappointed me. For a while, I had been studying the people I knew, who had got married. As far as I could see, marriage seemed to end the romance. I have repeatedly heard married women bewail their lot, and wish they were single again. I heard a woman say once, that the only love that lived through life was the love of mother and child.

I had a different idea of the matter. I believed firmly in a love that would last for ever. Often I have felt disgusted at the girls I knew. One time I saw them, they would be deeply in love with some young man, who seemed to be all in all to them. Perhaps the young man would take a fancy to some other girl, and leave them. They would be inconsolable for a week or two, then some other young man would turn up. It would be the same game over again. It made me marvel how they could change like that. Lizzie, my companion in the mill, was one of that kind. Every time I saw

her, she was just on the point of getting married to a different fellow.

I wondered if the nurse had ever been in love. I did not think so, because she seemed to have a pretty poor opinion of men in general. There was nobody else I could ask unless Meg, and it never entered my head to do that. She would only have laughed at me, and said I was silly. There was the doctor, of course, but it was too delicate a subject to broach to him. He would only have looked at me with the gleam of amusement in his dark eyes, that I had got to know, and which was sometimes so exasperating. Besides, I hoped he did not know about love. I had all my life felt a terrible loneliness, and longed passionately for a friend I could trust. I liked the doctor, and hoped to find a friend in him. If he knew about love, then he would likely be getting married, and I liked him better as a bachelor.

The specialist had left a prescription for me. It was the most awful stuff I had ever tasted. Meg delighted to give me my dose.

When I had been in bed about a fortnight I took neuralgia in my feet. The dull, gnawing pain nearly drove me mad. It always came on after tea, and did not go away until the morning. I could get no sleep.

One night I got Meg coaxed to go to the chemist's to get something that would make me sleep. The young man in the shop said the neuralgia would likely be caused by the bottle I was taking. Apparently, certain kinds of medicine did that. I took

no more of my bottle the rest of that day, or the next.

When the doctor came in the evening he lifted the bottle, to see how much was out of it. He turned to me quickly.

'Why haven't you been taking your medicine?' he demanded.

'I've no intention of taking it, if it's going to give me neuralgia in my feet,' I answered firmly.

'Oh, have you not?' he returned grimly.

He gave me a big dose on the spot. Meg explained matters, and he went down to the shop and had it hot with the young man. I was terribly vexed at getting the chemist into trouble, and never complained of anything again.

The piano was at the side of the room. I began to think that if I had it in the corner opposite me, it would make the room look better.

I had got sick of looking at things always the same way. I asked my grandmother if she would let it be shifted.

'Put it wherever the divil ye like,' she answered.

I called Meg, and asked her to give me a hand with it.

'Are you mad?' she exclaimed in amazement.

'Rising out your bed to shift a heavy piano. I'll have no hand in it any way.'

But I was already out of bed, and pushing as hard as I could, so she had to help me. She took a fit of laughing at me pushing, and that set me off too. We had to take a rest until we got our breath again.

Having the piano where I could see it brightened me up a little.

When the doctor came in at night, he noticed the change at once.

'I see you've got the piano moved,' he said, looking keenly at me. 'Who moved it?'

'I suppose it would be Meg,' I answered evasively. 'She has a mania for pushing the furniture about.'

'Oh, has she?' he said.

'I'm sick of lying here, doctor,' I exclaimed impatiently.

'You ought to be jolly glad to get lying in your bed, Jean,' he answered teasingly. 'I wish I could get a week in my bed.'

'It's a pity you can't stay in it,' I began hotly.

He was lifting his hat off the table, but he wheeled round quickly.

'Very likely you'd be the better of a day's rest if you are tired,' I concluded lamely.

He laughed, patted my cheek, and went out. I felt crushed. It was humiliating to expect sympathy, and only be stroked like a cat.

One day I was startled by hearing my mother's voice at the door. I heard her going into the kitchen, and I lay shaking. I would have given anything to have hidden myself, but I dare not. They would be sure to tell her I was ill, and she would come in to see me. I did not want either to see or speak to her. She was a long time in the kitchen, then I heard her getting up. My heart began to beat rapidly. My grandmother and Meg came first, and she behind them.

She had her head bare. Her hair was cut in the front, and curled. She had no jacket, only a shawl over her shoulders. At the room door she gave a careless glance over at the bed.

'What's the matter with you?' she asked indifferently.

I made some answer about not being very bad. The next minute she was looking out of the window at something. Then she began to talk of other things, and had apparently forgotten all about me. Soon they returned to the kitchen. In a short time she went away. Meg and my grandmother came running to the room window to look after her.

'There's no' much repentance there,' said my grandmother sorrowfully.

'No,' answered Meg. 'She makes a brag of being in jail so often. It's terrible.'

When my grandfather came in at night they told him. He sighed deeply, but did not say much. Words were useless.

The house was terribly quiet for the rest of the night. My head ached. The tick of the clock got so on my nerves I could have screamed. I was glad when they all went to bed, and the place was in darkness.

I could not sleep at all, and I knew that if I could look into the other beds, I would only see sleepless eyes, with a look of pain in them.

The next day I noticed that my grandmother was the worse of drink. I was getting soda water, and it happened that day that the syphon was done.

Meg said she would not ask my grandmother to get

any more, in the state she was in. Ann did, and the answer was a volley of abuse. When my grandfather came in, my grandmother began to say things about me, and turned him against me. They both spoke so loud, I heard what they said quite plain in the room. Ann came in trembling, and begged me never to mind. I had not been feeling very well that day, and it agitated me greatly. I cried until my head was like to burst. A wild idea came into my head, to slip out, and throw myself over the pier. Something held me back. I always thought that taking one's life was a thing God never forgave. All through the night I lay wondering sadly if any happiness would ever come into my life. I was so weary of everything, I did not care whether I got better again or not.

Next day the soda was brought in, but my grandmother sulked all day.

When the six weeks had passed, the doctor said I might get up a little every day. In a week's time I felt all right, and the doctor and nurse were not coming back. How dreadfully I missed them. I caught myself listening continually for the doctor's footsteps in the passage. I could not rest in the house. I somehow felt suffocated.

Often I made excuses to my grandmother that I must go out for fresh air, to get my strength back again. I would go down to the shore, take off my hat, and let the wind blow through my hair.

There I would sit and think, and wonder if my life was always to be sordid. I was less unhappy out there where I could watch the water, and feel the

soft, fresh wind blowing on my face, than I would have been in the house. My grandmother had a habit of making coarse jokes that jarred on me. Meg did not mind, but I could not stand it.

Then the thought of the doctor's account began to worry me. In a few days I went down to his house and told him I was feeling quite well again, and would like to go back to work.

'Why are you in such a hurry to go back to work, Jean?' he asked in surprise.

'Because I can't rest,' I answered. 'I want to work.'

'Well, if you feel that way, perhaps you might,' he said thoughtfully. 'But you must be careful.'

'Yes,' I answered, moving towards the door.

'And remember this, Jean,' he said earnestly, 'that I'm your friend whenever you feel you need one.'

I looked at him quickly. There was sincerity in his dark eyes, and I knew he meant it. I felt vastly comforted.

That night I wrote to the Jardines, to say that I was coming back.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE STRANGE WOMAN

But och, I backward cast my e'e,  
On prospects drear ;  
An' forward tho' I canna see,  
I guess and fear.

BURNS.

As I was going to the Jardines on the Wednesday, I left home the day before to spend the night with my cousin Mary.

She stayed in a single apartment, up a rickety wooden stair. The entrance was dirty and squalid. There were always some low-looking women hanging about the stair foot. I hated to pass them. Often they had made sarcastic remarks about me. I was glad it was dark when I arrived. Going up the stair, I could hear a drunken woman yelling a vulgar song at the pitch of her voice.

Mary was glad to see me. Inside her house everything was clean and bright. It was not exactly a beautiful apartment, but it was all she could afford. The ceiling was so low that a tall person would have had to stoop. The iron bedstead took up a great deal of room. There were two large wooden chests standing at one side, and so many clothes hanging about, that it reminded me of a pawnshop. I could



not have said that to Mary though. It would have made her mad.

The wall was so thin we could hear the people next door speaking. An old man and woman, with their idiot daughter, stayed in the next house. The man seemed to be decent enough, but the woman drank continually. The house was filthy. Mary had taken me in one day to see the daughter. She was the queerest-looking woman I had ever seen. She was extraordinarily small, and had a broad, flat face, with very small eyes. She kept muttering curses to herself, and gave me such queer looks, that I hurried Mary out quickly.

I told Mary all the news from home, then we prepared for bed. She always went to bed very early, as she had to be up at five in the morning. I was not a minute undressing, then I sat down at the fire to wait until she was ready. She had such a lot of garments on it took her an age to get them off. When she was undressed, she started to put about as many on as she had taken off. When ready for bed, she was simply a bundle of clothes. She tied a shawl on her head. I wondered uneasily how I was to sleep with her. There was a load of blankets on the bed, the window was shut tight, and a good fire on.

Last of all, she went down on her knees at the bedside to say her prayers. While she was kneeling, the soles of her feet were so tantalisingly near me, that I could not resist the temptation to tickle them.

She jumped up with such a roar, that I laughed until the tears ran down my cheeks. She was wild.

'That's a terrible thing to do, and folk at their prayers,' she exclaimed angrily.

I got her coaxed round, though, and had her laughing before we were settled in bed.

I had been sleeping some time, when I was awakened by something brushing against my cheek. I thought it was just the bedclothes, and tried to sleep again. Mary was snoring loudly. Soon I felt the same thing again. I began to get frightened, and lay scarcely breathing. In a minute something furry ran across my face. I shrieked and jumped up in bed. My cry awoke Mary, and she too sprang up, terribly startled.

'What's wrong?—what's wrong?' she cried excitedly.

'There's something in the bed,' I answered, making a jump clean over on to the floor.

Except for a small glimmer of the fire, the place was in darkness. I was as frightened standing there, as I had been in bed.

Mary had got such a shock, that it took her an age to light the oil lamp. Meanwhile, I had perched myself on top of the two boxes. Having lit the lamp, she stood blinking at me, as I explained what had happened. We looked towards the bed, and, to our horror, saw several mice running over it. They were over the floor and everywhere. I was like to go out of my mind.

'That's terrible,' Mary exclaimed in amazement. 'I never saw the like of that before.'

She began to pull the bed out from the wall. Behind it, there were several large holes. She piled

wood and things in front of them. It was all she could do. After a while she went back to bed. I remained on top of the boxes, with my legs under me, like a figure of Buddha, for the rest of the night.

I went over to the Jardines after breakfast the next day.

I did not feel contented. There was no one that I cared to talk to. If I could have got reading a little, even at night, it would have occupied my mind, but there was no possible chance of that. I never read in the shop because I thought it looked lazy. In the house, we all met together in the kitchen at night, the children too, so it was hopeless to try to read there.

I meant to wait anyway until I had earned what I thought would pay the doctor's account, then I would try something else.

We had a few regular customers at the 'Family Department.' They were mostly women. One especially I could not bear. She had very evil eyes, and her language disgusted me. She always tormented me to give her credit, but that was a thing I would not have given to any one.

One very wet day I was standing behind the bar, when a lady came in. She was not the usual class of customer, and I looked at her in surprise. She walked into the back room. I followed her, to get her order, and also to get a good look at her.

She was stylishly dressed, and very good-looking. I noticed when she sat down that she had two lovely rings on one of her fingers. She asked for a glass of brandy.

When I served her, she made some remark about the weather. I answered her, and returned to the bar. I stood at the top where I could look right into the room and watch her. She must have noticed me staring curiously, for after a while she signed that she wanted me. I went, thinking she wished another drink.

'Can you not sit down beside me for a little?' she asked, in a very friendly voice.

I was surprised.

'I have to watch the bar,' I answered.

'Well,' she said, pushing a chair opposite the door, 'sit there, then you can see any one that comes in.'

I did not care about doing that, but I did not like to refuse, so I sat down.

'Do you like to work here?' she asked, with a smile.

'Oh, well,' I answered, 'I'm not particularly fond of it.'

'What wage do you get?' she inquired.

It was rather a cheeky question, but I thought I would answer it civilly.

'A pound a month,' I informed her.

'Is that all?' she exclaimed, evidently shocked to think I put such a small value on my labours.

To me it seemed a good deal.

'I think it's very good,' I said.

'My dear,' she returned, in a pitying voice, 'it's too bad that you should have to work for a wage like that.'

I had nothing to say. She bent towards me confidentially.

'Do you know,' she said, 'I've taken a great fancy to you, and I'll tell you what I'll do. If you come to Glasgow with me, I'll get you work where you'll get splendid wages.'

'But,' I objected, 'I've been in Glasgow working, and could hardly get enough to keep me from starving.'

She laughed.

'My dear,' she said, 'that's just because you were a stranger, and didn't know where to look for it. Do make up your mind and say you'll come.'

I was astonished at a stranger taking such an interest in me, and did not know what to say. I was tired of where I was, and had been thinking I would like to work near home, where I might see the doctor and nurse occasionally. If I could earn more money in Glasgow, I would get home all the sooner. I would have to wait such a long time with the Jardines to make up the money I wanted. I did not know what to do.

'I would like to go,' I said uncertainly, 'but I'm not sure.'

'Couldn't you come to-night?' she asked eagerly. 'You could easily slip your things out.'

'Oh no,' I answered hastily, 'I couldn't do that. It wouldn't be fair.'

She urged me to change my mind, but I would not. It was decided that she would come back for me.

Two days after I heard that she had been arrested in Glasgow. Detectives had been on the watch for her. I knew it was she from the description

given to Mr. Jardine by a gentleman who had been watching her. It seemed that she had been in jail before for masquerading as a man.

It made me realise that I ought to be careful with whom I made friends.

That day a travelling theatrical company arrived at the hall up the street. It distracted my mind from my late acquaintance. The company was to give a performance for one night only. I ran to the side door, and watched, with tremendous interest, the scenery being taken off the lorry, and carried into the hall. Anything connected with the stage had a great fascination for me. Every minute I ran into the shop to see if any one was helping himself to the contents of the bar.

Two of the actors came in for a drink. I was delighted, and was in such a hurry to serve them that I upset a full bottle of beer all over the counter.

That evening, when I was looking out of the shop window, the two actors who had been in for a drink dashed past, and simply flew across the Square, in the direction of the station. One wore stage clothes, and the other had only one arm in his jacket. Both were bareheaded. I wondered what could be wrong. Before they had disappeared, a crowd of young men and boys came dashing round the corner after them. I asked a woman what was the matter. She said the leading lady had got drunk. While the rest of the company were trying to bring her round, before the curtain went up, the manager had bolted with the drawings. Discovering this, some of the actors had followed, hoping to

catch him. As it happened, a train was just leaving when the manager reached the station. He caught it, and eluded them after all.

Shortly after, I had a letter from Meg, asking me home for a day, as she had something to tell me. I wondered what it could be, and felt very anxious. Mrs. Jardine allowed me to go the following morning.

When I arrived home I saw at once that something was wrong. It appeared that my mother had come to the door, half drunk, and kicked up a row. They had tried to coax her to go away quietly. She had got worse, and had threatened to break every window in the house. She had hung about until my grandfather came home, shouting out abusive language, and frightening them with threats of violence.

My grandfather had said that there was nothing else for it but to get a policeman and give her in charge. She had defied them, and said she did not care a bit for being sent to jail. Two policemen had taken her away. It had been a dreadful ordeal for my grandfather to appear at the court against her.

When my grandfather came in at dinner-time, his sad, pitiful look went to my heart. He seemed utterly broken. My mother had said at the court that if she had given him a handful of money, he would not have put her in jail. It was awful to think that she would sin her soul by telling lies on her own father.

I felt sick with the utter hopelessness of it all. I wondered wearily if there was never to be anything but sorrow in our home.

I had to be away early. I wanted to get to the Jardines before it was dark. Meg came to the station with me. I asked her if she had seen the nurse lately. She said that the nurse had gone away for good. It was a great blow to me. I had depended on her being there when I came home.

It was just beginning to get dark when I got out of the train. I felt utterly miserable. What was there in life to live for? I had not a friend in the world. My work was uncongenial to me, and my home was full of a lasting sorrow.

I was glad of the long, quiet walk on the country road. The silence and beauty all around had a soothing influence on me. I had a pretty hopeful nature. I somehow felt that God would not let me be always cast down. I could not see at all why my mother's sins should humiliate me, yet I had the feeling that if the Jardines knew what kind of woman my mother was, they would not have me there. They would not have given that as their reason, but I knew their opinion on the matter, from hearing them speak of girls in the same unfortunate position as myself. I saw plainly that I must always keep my parentage a secret.

When I arrived at the Jardines, they asked me what had been wrong. I said it was just something they had wanted to ask my advice about at home. I felt guilty somehow, and was glad to escape down to the shop for the rest of the evening.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### A NIGHT OF FEAR

If evils come not, then our fears are vain ;  
And if they do, fear but augments the pain.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

I GOT more discontented every day in the shop. I began to think I would be better in the town near home. My headaches troubled me a good deal. Often when they were at their worst, I would have given anything to have lain down for a little. It was impossible to do that. Mr. Jardine had got to depend so much on me being in the shop, that I did not like to complain. Besides, there was not a corner I could call my own. I slept in the kitchen, and the children were always making a noise there. Many a time I was tempted to take a little whisky, but I never did take it.

On my evenings off I went over and sat in Mary's. I always felt tired, I don't know why, and as Mary was not a very good talker, I often fell asleep.

One day I had a letter from Meg, telling me that they had gone to a new house, and that Jack had got a little girl. I was very glad to hear it. I welcomed anything for a change.

I worked on at the Jardines for another month, then I left for home.

The new house I thought was a good change for them. It was up a stair, and much brighter and cheerier than the old one.

That evening I went down to the doctor to ask about my account. Also because I wanted to see and speak to him again. I was anxious to take advantage of his promise of friendship. He gave me a welcoming smile, which made me think suddenly that life was not such a bad thing after all. I asked for my account.

'Do you want it now, Jean?' he asked, in surprise.

'Please,' I answered.

'But I haven't it made up,' he objected.

'But you can make it up, doctor,' I persisted.

He opened his book and looked over it. It gave me leisure to survey him. There was a look of strength about him which I liked. I was happy to think I was going to have him for a friend. I would have liked so much to tell him all about my mother, but I did not dare risk it.

He lifted his head suddenly.

'It'll be three pounds, Jean,' he said. 'Is that too much for you?'

I'm sure he never thought I was paying it all myself.

'No,' I answered, 'I'll pay it just now.' I was delighted to think I could pay it all at once.

'But, Jean,' he said quickly, 'I'm not going to take it all just now. You can pay half.'

I insisted on paying it all. I could not see the sense of paying half, when I had the money in my

pocket. I came out with just two shillings, but I was proud to think I had paid my debt.

I thought I had better look for work at once, but Meg advised me to wait for a week anyway. She did not want me to go back to service.

'Surely,' she said, 'there's something else you could get to do.'

'You know very well there's nothing else but the mill,' I answered, 'and I'm not going back there.'

'Oh, well,' she returned huffishly, 'please yourself. I know it wouldn't be my choice. You know perfectly well that servants are thought nothing of. You wouldn't catch a mill girl standing the things that a servant has to stand. They've got to suffer insults, and daren't say a word back. Then they've got to sit in a corner by themselves like a nun. A mill girl can keep her self-respect anyway, and that's what a servant can't do. She does her work, without having to cringe to any one. A forewoman wouldn't dream of saying an insulting thing to any of the girls under her. She knows perfectly well that she would get back just as good as she gave.'

'But there are different kinds of places,' I answered. 'People are not all alike.'

'Well,' she returned shortly, 'you've had a trial of service at Mrs. B——'s. How did you not stay there? And you said they were kind enough too.'

'No,' I answered thoughtfully, 'I won't stay at service unless I get something different from that. They always made me feel that I was on an entirely different level from them. I suppose that was what they would have called keeping me in my place.'

'I'm afraid, Jean, that if you expect anything else at service, you'll be disappointed,' remarked Ann, who was toasting some bread for the tea. 'Servants are thought nothing of, and if I was able to work, it wouldn't be my choice.'

'Oh, let her please herself,' interposed Meg crossly. 'It's her own affair, not ours.'

'That's right enough,' returned Ann, 'but I like to see folk tryin' to better themselves.'

'Oh, Jean'll never be anything but what she is,' retorted Meg, making an angry dive at the kettle, which was boiling over on the clean hearth.

I felt very unsettled. Two days after I started off to the registry in the town. I was hoping that Meg would come with me, but she was mad to think that, in spite of all she had tried, I was determined to go to service again. At the registry I was sent to two places. I did not engage in either, as I did not like the ladies at all. The woman in the registry was very much annoyed. She said she had nothing else for me, but to come back the next day.

When I got home, Meg never asked me how I had got on, so I said nothing.

Next day I did not go to the registry. I thought it would be better to wait until the following day.

In the afternoon my grandmother was sitting at the bedroom window, fast asleep. Meg, Ann, and I were talking in low tones at the kitchen fire, when there was a knock at the door.

'I wonder who that can be?' whispered Ann.

'It's maybe some of the church folk,' answered Meg softly. 'I'll look through the keyhole.'

Rising, she slipped quietly into the lobby. In a minute she came back, looking scared.

'Who is it?' whispered Ann, in a frightened voice.

'It's Nora,' answered Meg, in a low tone. 'What'll we do?'

Ann and I thought the best plan was not to open the door at all.

She had been so violent when my grandfather had charged her, and had threatened to take Meg's life for getting the police, that we were afraid to let her in.

Meg went quietly into the room, to warn my grandmother not to make a noise. My grandmother came into the kitchen, and we sat listening if we could hear my mother's footsteps going down the stair. In a minute, there was a loud thump at the door that made us all jump. Meg shook her hand warningly at us, not to take any notice. Again we silently waited. Suddenly, she began to swear, and shout out terrible things. She must have suspected we were in.

'What are we to do?' whispered Meg, looking very frightened. 'Do you think we should open the door?'

'Oh no,' I said quickly, 'don't do that.'

I felt perfectly terrified.

'No, no,' pleaded Ann, in a shaking voice, 'don't let her in.'

She kept on shouting, and using awful threats of what she would do to Meg when she got hold of her.

After a little we heard her going down the stair. In a minute or two she came slipping up again. Perhaps she thought we would imagine she had gone, and open the door. She waited a long time, quite silent, then went down the stair again.

Meg peeped cautiously out at the kitchen window, and saw her walking backwards and forwards opposite the house, on the other side of the street.

It came on for the time when my grandfather would be coming home from his work; still she walked there. Very soon we saw him coming. My mother saw him too. When he got near he recognised her. She stared over at him menacingly, but never spoke. Neither did he.

When he came in he was looking very white and agitated. He could not touch food. Indeed none of us thought of food.

'She 'll no' set her foot in this house the night,' said my grandfather sternly. 'God knows, I could forgie a lot to anybody that would come in a humble spirit, but that 's no' the case with her. I see by the look o' her, it 's a row she wants. The very devil 's lookin' out o' her face.'

'She looks as if she had some drink,' said Meg.

'Don't ye go out the door the night, Meg,' advised my grandfather. 'I wouldna put it by her to throw some vitriol on ye.'

We peeped out of the window often, hoping to find her gone. Each time she was there. Sometimes she would stop her walking, and stand staring steadily at the windows.

The evening wore on, and darkness began to fall.

There was a church almost opposite the house. One time Meg looked out she saw her sitting on the church steps, staring at the windows. It got dark altogether. We could not see her distinctly, but we could make out the outline of her body.

It grew late. My grandfather and grandmother went to bed.

'Go you's to bed too,' said my grandfather to us. 'God alone knows what she wants, or what she means to do.'

His face twitched, and his lips moved in prayer.

Feeling that it would be better to leave him alone, the three of us went silently into the room. We looked out of the window again. The moon was out, but the church was in shadow. We could make out the dark form sitting on the step.

We undressed in the dark, and got into bed. We never thought of sleeping, but lay talking in awed voices. Meg recalled what my mother had told her and Ann, of how she had met the devil at twelve o'clock one dark night. I had not heard it, so I asked Meg to tell me about it.

'It was one night when Nora was in Glasgow that it happened,' said Meg. 'She never said what she was doing, or where she was going, but she was on the street any way, near Glasgow Cross, when the clock began to strike twelve. Suddenly a huge black dog appeared in front of her, from nowhere. Its eyes were like two great balls of fire. She shrank back against the wall, her legs shaking under her. For a second she covered her eyes with her hand. When she looked again the dog had gone.'

Her blood felt frozen in her veins, and she ran, as fast as her trembling body would carry her, to the place she had been going to.'

'Wasn't that awful?' whispered Ann. 'Yet even that wasn't a warning to her.'

I was terrified to think of it. Meg got up to see if she were still there.

'I don't see her,' she said quickly. 'She must have gone away.'

Ann and I rose hurriedly, and peered through the glass.

'I see her now. There she is,' exclaimed Meg, pointing to a place almost opposite the window.

We saw a long, black shadow thrown across the pavement. It was clearly defined in the moonlight, and looked like the silhouette of a woman, with her head muffled in a shawl.

We crept into bed again. I could not get the thought of that shadow out of my mind. There seemed to me to be something so baleful beyond it. I have all my life had a terror of darkness. I fancied that malignant eyes were watching me. I lay trembling with a great fear, in the dark, keeping as close to Meg as I could.

In the early morning we looked out of the window. There was no one there.



## CHAPTER XXVII

LIZZIE

Oh, the heart that has truly loved never forgets,  
But as truly loves on to the close,  
As the sun-flower turns on her god when he sets  
The same look which she turned when he rose.

MOORE.

THE day after my mother's appearance I went back to the registry. I got two names. I felt so heartless, and had so little hope of getting anything that I would care for, that I hesitated for a long time what to do. I had heard that there were girls wanted in a laundry near. Meg wanted me to go there, but somehow I did not care to go. I looked at the names on the paper, and thought I would try the first one any way.

I found the house, and thought the lady very nice. A beautiful Persian cat sat on the table watching me, with its large, intelligent-looking eyes. The lady asked me if I objected to cats. I said certainly not. I loved all kinds of animals. After a little talk we came to terms. I was to begin work on the Monday.

In the day or two that intervened I thought a good deal of how I would get on with my new employers. I spoke very little about it at home.

On the Monday I started off, feeling very nervous. When I got to the house I was shown my bedroom, first thing. To my delight it looked into a garden, with a wood beyond. That was one thing that would make me happy. I had a great love of trees, and would have preferred the view from my little window to that of the gayest thoroughfare.

I soon got into the routine of my work. I began to think that I had really found what I had been seeking for at last. It was not a big family. Just a lady and gentleman, and their son. The lady, I learnt, was an artist. I was fond of pictures, and to be living in the same house as an artist gave me great pleasure.

There was only one other thing in art that equalled my love of pictures. That was sculpture. Once I had been in the Art Galleries in Glasgow, and had gazed with awe and delight on the statuary there. The beautiful symmetry of the limbs, posed so lifelike, was a marvel to me. I could have gone every day, just to look at them, but alas, fate gave me little time for dreaming. However, they gave me food for thought for a long time after. Many a romance I have built out of the few hours spent there.

Very soon I began to feel at home in my new situation. Mrs. M—— and her husband were neither stiff nor formal. They were fond of reading, and kindly offered to give me books to read. After a time, Mr. M—— got me a ticket for a large public library. What a delight it was to me to be able to get any book I chose.

Before I had read indiscriminately, but Mrs. M—— began to advise about the books that were really worth reading. I became acquainted with all the well-known authors. What a world of romance, travel, and adventure was opened out to me. Travel I was very fond of reading. Books on Egypt I never tired of. The silence of the desert, the splendour of the old temples, which remain to tell the glory of a bygone race, to me were full of a tremendous interest.

One night I was sitting reading, when suddenly the words of the 'dummy' came into my mind. Rather, I ought to say, the words he had written on the paper—'Father, mother, and son.' I wondered if it had any connection with my present situation, as the family corresponded exactly. A hope came into my heart that it might prove a turning point in my life.

I was allowed nights off, but I would much rather have stayed in the house with my books. I had to go home, though, or they would have been vexed.

Lizzie Grant, the girl whom I had become acquainted with in the mill, had taken a situation near me, and was always asking me to go out walks with her. She was a nice enough girl, but exceedingly fond of young men, and excessively vain. She used to make me mad when I called for her to go out. She would be sitting in the midst of her dirty dishes, reading a novel. When the dishes were washed up, she would find that her shoes needed cleaning. That done, we would go to her bedroom. There the bed would be lying unmade,

and the room would look like something that had been swept in by the tide. She would start to dress. Her hair had to be done over again. Several blouses and skirts had to be tried on. The looking-glass would be put down on the floor, to see if the foot of her skirt hung right. Then several large paste-board boxes had to be hauled from under the bed, until she would choose her headgear. Drawers were rummaged, and their contents strewn all over the floor in a search for bangles and neck chains.

By the time she was ready to go out, it was almost time for me to go home again. Time never seemed to trouble her. She went in at the front door at ten o'clock, then, after everything was quiet, slipped out at the back one, and came in when she chose. At least so she had told me. I never had been her companion on her nocturnal rambles.

It was always a wonder to me how any one could make such a work about their personal appearance. I liked to go out tidy, but about five minutes sufficed for my dressing.

She was always wanting me to go to Edinburgh. I was very anxious to see the Castle and Holyrood Palace, but I did not think I could afford it. At last I did promise to go.

I told Mrs. and Mr. M—— I was going. They said they were sure I would enjoy it. Mr. M—— wrote me out a programme of all the places of interest.

It seemed such a big thing for me to be going to Edinburgh, who had never been beyond Glasgow in

my life, that I felt quite uplifted. I told Meg and Ann, but I did not dare tell my grandparents. They would have been angry at me for wasting the money. Besides, my grandmother was so suspicious, she would have made my grandfather believe I was after some evil purpose.

The day arrived, and off we went. Lizzie knew a servant in Edinburgh who was to meet us at the station and show us round.

When we arrived at the station she was not there. We waited a while, then as she did not appear Lizzie said we would go to her place and find her. We got into a car, and went a long distance, quite out of Edinburgh altogether.

The house was a semi-detached villa. I stood back while Lizzie rang the bell. A woman opened the door about an inch. Before Lizzie had time to say half a dozen words, the woman slammed the door in her face. Back she came, her face scarlet.

‘What’s the matter?’ I asked in surprise.

‘The wizened-looking wretch I could choke her,’ she exclaimed furiously. ‘She must have thought I was begging. She says, “I’ve nothing for you to-day,” and slammed the door in my face.’

I could have laughed aloud. What a drop it must have been to Lizzie to be taken for a beggar, and she dressed fit to kill.

‘She must surely be daft,’ I said solemnly.

Lizzie stood hesitating, darting angry looks at the closed door.

We returned to Edinburgh on the car. I began to feel very depressed. My long-looked-for day was

slipping away, and I had seen nothing. It was coming on for late afternoon. There was a dense fog, and the Castle was only a blurred outline. We went into a restaurant to get some tea. Lizzie suggested fish, so we had a helping each. When the bill was presented, I was horrified to find that it was over three shillings. I knew very little about dining out, and had never had anything in a restaurant before but a cake and a cup of tea. I gave Lizzie my half of the bill, but it left me very short of money.

When we came out, Lizzie wanted to buy some furs. By the time she had got suited, it was almost time for the train. I was determined to see something, so I got her, very unwillingly, to go to the Art Galleries. We got there in time to see the door being closed for the day. Bitterly disappointed I turned away. Lizzie wanted some more finery, so we had to look at more shops. Chancing to glance at a clock, I saw to my dismay that we had only about ten minutes to catch our train, and we were a good distance from the station.

‘We must rush,’ I cried, pulling her arm frantically.

‘There’s no use of hurrying,’ she answered indifferently. ‘If we get the chance, we’ll just stay the night here.’

I could not see how we could stay the night in a strange place, where we knew nobody, and tried to pull her on.

‘I tell you there’s no use of hurrying. We can’t get it,’ she said impatiently, hanging back.

There was a car standing a short distance off.

‘ We ’ll get the car to the station,’ I exclaimed eagerly.

I tried to pull her along, but she would not be hurried. Just when we neared the car it moved off.

‘ There now,’ she cried triumphantly. ‘ We needn’t bother.’

I felt perfectly desperate, and, letting go her arm, made a wild rush after the car. I managed to get it. When I looked round Lizzie was standing on the step behind me, looking exceedingly sulky. We were anything but jovial on the journey back.

I did not see her for some time after that. The next thing I heard was that she had been going with a young man for about a month, and that he was mad for her to marry him. I listened to her, but thought it was just the usual story, and never gave the matter another thought.

About three weeks after, I happened to have a day off. I called in to see her on my way home. I found her in the wash-house, breaking sticks. She was untidier than usual.

‘ Hullo ! ’ she said, somewhat drily. ‘ It ’s you.’

‘ What about the young man now ? ’ I asked jokingly. ‘ When ’s the marriage coming off ? ’

‘ I might be dead for all you would care. You never trouble yourself coming near me,’ she answered sullenly. ‘ I was married yesterday.’

I stared at her in amazement.

‘ What ! ’ I exclaimed. ‘ Married yesterday ! But why are you still here if you are married ? ’

I thought what a queer bride she looked, with her

dirty wrapper and untidy hair, hacking away so viciously at the sticks.

'Oh,' she answered coolly, 'I may as well make as much money as I can.'

I did not wait long, as she was busy, besides, I wanted to get outside to think the matter over. She asked me to come in the following Sunday and see her hubby. He could slip in as often as he liked at the back door.

On the Sunday, feeling kind of nervous, I tapped softly at the back door. She came out smiling, and led me into her bedroom. The young man, I found, was tall, and rather good-looking. He seemed to be passionately in love with her. After I had been introduced, he pulled her down on his knee, and kept kissing her all the time. It disgusted me. To me there would have been no pleasure in a caress if a third party had been looking on. I got so sick of them that I did not wait any time.

I wondered how long it would last. From what Lizzie had told me, it seemed to have been a case of love at first sight with him.

A few months after she left her situation and got a house of her own. I visited her several times when her husband was not in. Then I stopped going near her for about a year.

One day I took a fancy to go and see her.

She was a bit dry at first, on account of my long absence. After a little she came round, and put on the kettle for a cup of tea.

When we had had a cup, I asked her how she was getting on with her husband. An unhappy look



came on her face, and she began to cry. She said he was very unkind to her, and accused her of deceiving him.

She showed me a large bruise. I gathered, through a storm of heartrending sobs, that it had been got through sudden contact with the toe of her husband's boot.

I felt a great pity for her, and tried to comfort her as well as I could. Poor humanity. It made me sad to think that that was the end of love.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### BOOKS

All hail, ye fields, where constant peace attends !  
All hail, ye sacred solitary groves !  
All hail, ye books, my true, my real friends,  
Whose conversation pleases and improves !

WALSH.

THE time passed very quickly at Mrs. M——'s. Almost before I was aware of it, two summers had gone. Two uneventful years they had been for me. I felt pretty contented.

Things had gone just as usual with my people. Jack had given up his house, and gone to stay with my grandparents. He thought it would make it easier for them if he paid half of the rent. I did not think the arrangement would work very well. My sister-in-law and Meg were too quarrelsome. Often I have gone down and found strained relations between them. It worried me a great deal, because I knew it made Jack unhappy. I used to make myself miserable, and think of all sorts of plans to make them friends again. Next time I went down, I would find them as friendly as ever. I could not understand them at all.

Sunday was a day I disliked very much. I got away from Mrs. M——'s after dinner, and so was

at home for the rest of the day. There was no use of me talking to Meg and Ann of the things I cared for. It would not have interested them, but would have bored them very much. Occasionally I took down a book, to try to get Meg to read it. The next time I saw her, I would ask her how she liked it.

‘I never looked at it, I’m sure,’ she would say disgustedly. ‘I wouldn’t be bothered reading a thick book like that.’

‘But it’s a good book, by one of the best authors,’ I would urge, feeling vexed that she would not even try to read it to improve her mind.

‘I know nothing about authors, and for any sake take it out of here,’ she would answer impatiently.

Sometimes I would take down a magazine, and read out a short story to her and Ann. I think Ann enjoyed it a little, but, as she could not read, she may not have understood it very well. At any rate, she tried to show an interest.

Meg showed little or no interest at all. Indeed sometimes she shut her eyes and pretended she was asleep. Then I would get hopeless, and leave off altogether in the middle of a story. There would be nothing else for it but to endure what I had been trying desperately to avoid—that was to listen to a lot of gossip. I hated gossip, and wondered how women could waste their time in talking about their neighbours’ affairs. There were so many things of infinitely more interest to talk of.

Another thing that Meg and I always disagreed about was the subject of marriage. Some time

before I had been introduced to a young man. I had gone out with him for a walk several times. His conversation had not the slightest interest for me.

He told me so many lies about people we both knew, that I dropped his company altogether. Meg was wild when I told her.

'You're a fool,' she said. 'I'm sure he was all right. You might have got married, then you would not have had to stay in service.'

'But,' I answered, 'I would much rather be in service than be married to any one like him.'

'I saw nothing wrong with him,' she returned huffishly. 'He's well dressed and earns a good wage. What more do you want?'

'But I would rather work than marry any one just for the sake of a home,' I said.

'I never knew any one like you, then,' she retorted. 'All the girls that I ever knew were on the look out for some one that would keep them from working. What do you mean to do when you get old? Go to the poorhouse, I suppose?'

'Well, if it should come to that, I don't know if I would care,' I answered. 'I'm not going to worry about that, though. There's always the chance that I might die before I was quite in need of the poorhouse.'

'You're the queerest lassie I ever knew,' she said impatiently. 'But maybe it's some educated gentleman you're looking for. If that is the case, believe me, you'll wait long enough. You might be thankful to get a decent working fellow.'

'I'm not on the hunt for a man, decent or otherwise,' I returned shortly, beginning to feel angry. 'I don't see why you should get so mad just because I have a different opinion of the matter from you. I'm quite prepared to work all my life.'

'So am I,' she said quickly, 'but if I can manage it, it'll be in a house of my own. I must say you've very little spirit or pride, if you would prefer to slave after another woman all your days, rather than be independent in a house of your own.'

'But I'm not slaving,' I objected. 'I'm quite happy at my work, and when it is finished I have books to read, and loads of other things to occupy my mind, that make me far happier than trailing through the streets flirting with fellows.'

It was always the same every time the subject came up. I hated it. I always got the worst of an argument with Meg. She succeeded somehow in making me feel a fool. Ann, too, was on Meg's side of the question. She was too much of an invalid to have quite so much to say on the matter. What she did say backed up Meg's opinion. I could not see at all why a woman should marry a man just for the sake of a home. To me, it would have been utter misery. I had the feeling in my heart that wealth and idleness brought happiness to no one.

I had never been well dressed in my life, having always had to buy the cheapest things I could get. Often, when I have been very badly needing a dress or something, I have imagined that if I just got it I could be so happy. When I did get it, I

soon began to realise that the getting of it had brought me no lasting pleasure.

It set me wondering what were the things that really did make for happiness. The idea grew in my heart that human love and friendship was what made life worth living. I tried vainly to express what I thought to Meg and Ann, but I could not make them understand.

I asked Mrs. M—— one day what she thought. It comforted me when she said she was of the same opinion as myself. Knowing that I was fond of pictures, she offered to give me some lessons in painting.

Afterwards, when I had progressed a little, she gave me some of her own pictures to copy. What a delight it was to me. One picture I was very fond of, and copied several times. It was of Venice, and was simply a blaze of lovely colour. How I lived in that picture. I would sit and look at it so long, that in imagination I would see the gondolas gliding past the old palaces, the beautiful occupants lying back on the rich cushions, their dark eyes sparkling. I could fancy that I heard the soft music of the guitars, and rich voices singing passionate love-songs.

I saw the doctor pretty frequently. I was always needing something for my headaches, and I was glad of the excuse to have a chat with him. I told him I was trying to paint, and described the picture of Venice. He was greatly interested.

‘Do these things make you happy, Jean?’ he asked, looking at me intently with his dark eyes.

'They do,' I answered. 'Don't you like pictures?'

'I do very much,' he replied. 'I must let you see the pictures in the dining-room, next time you come down.'

'I would like that,' I answered eagerly. I was curious to know what kind of pictures appealed to him.

'Would you like anything to read, Jean?' he asked.

He often lent me books. When I had read them, he would talk them over with me. The last one he had lent me had been one of Poe's. I could not read it to the end, it got so on my nerves.

'I didn't read the last one you gave me,' I said.

'Why?' he asked, in surprise.

'You should never have given it to me at all,' I answered reproachfully. 'It frightened me so much that I couldn't even have it in my room at night. I took it down to the cellar, and put it into an old box. I haven't gone down to the cellar since, after dark.'

He laughed heartily.

'I'm sorry, Jean,' he said penitently. 'What would you like, then?'

He opened the bookcase and took out a book on travel in Japan.

'Would you like that?' he asked.

'I would,' I answered, taking it from his hand.

'I hope you won't bury that one in the cellar,' he said, with an amused smile.

'Oh,' I said quickly, 'you mentioning burying reminds me of something I wanted to ask you.'

‘ Well, Jean, out with it,’ he laughed.

He sat down on a chair beside his desk, and rested his head on his hand, a smile hovering round his lips.

‘ How do people take death ? ’ I asked. ‘ Are they terrified, or what ? I have never seen any one die.’

The smile vanished, and he sat up in his chair.

‘ It ’s not good for you to think too much of those things,’ he said quietly.

‘ But I would like to know,’ I persisted.

‘ Well, Jean, I don’t think they realise it,’ he answered thoughtfully. ‘ Generally, they pass away quietly.’

‘ What do you think happens after death ? ’ I asked.

‘ Do you know, Jean, I sometimes think there is nothing at all,’ he said slowly.

‘ But it would be dreadful to think that,’ I answered. ‘ What would be the use of anything ? We might lie, steal, or even kill. Nothing would matter. What do you think we are put into the world for ? ’

‘ I think,’ he replied, ‘ that we are just here to do what good we can. To live as clean a life as possible, and that is all.’

‘ But,’ I objected, ‘ what would it matter what we did, if we hadn’t to give an account of it ? Then when our relations die, it would be unbearable if it wasn’t for the thought that we will see them again.’

‘ Yes, that ’s true, Jean,’ he answered thoughtfully. ‘ It wouldn’t be nice to think of loved ones being pushed into the ground and finished with.’



'But you don't really think that?' I asked anxiously.

'No, I don't, Jean,' he returned quickly. 'I oughtn't to have said it.'

When I had left him, I thought a great deal over what he had said. Many a time when I had felt very unhappy, I had had the feeling that God knew and understood, and would perhaps send me happiness some day. I felt very much troubled for a time. My doubts began to vanish, though, when I looked at the beauty of nature all round me.

What made the seasons in their turn? The birds to come back every year? What was the thing called conscience?

I do not know how any one can look round and doubt. Every time that I look at a sunset or sunrise, I have the feeling that there is One who knows and sees all.

If learning is only to raise doubts, then I would rather be ignorant and keep my humble faith.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### I BECOME A STEWARDESS

What are another's faults to me,  
I've not a vulture's bill  
To peck at every flaw I see,  
And make it wider still.

It is enough for me to know  
I've follies of my own,  
And on my heart the care bestow,  
And let my friends alone.

ANON.

I HADN'T been feeling well for some time. Mrs. M—— thought perhaps a change might help me. I suggested that if I could get on a river steamer for the summer months, as stewardess, it might make me all right again. Mrs. M—— thought perhaps Mr. M—— could manage that for me, and she would get some one else until I came back.

It was too soon in the year to know whether there would be a vacancy or not. I could hardly restrain my impatience. The sea had a strong fascination for me, and the thought of living on it for a whole summer delighted me.

The time wore on. One day Mr. M—— came in and said I was to go and see the superintendent of the steamboat company the following afternoon.

Next day I dressed myself and went down to the office. I was engaged, and was to receive notice when I was to take up my duties. I also got a note to a large outfitting establishment for my uniform.

I went there. The lady who measured me, a dismal-looking piece of humanity, with eyes like steel, and a mouth like a trap, which had not opened once during all the time she had been measuring me, informed me stiffly, when I was putting on my jacket to go, that I would not need to come back again. The uniform would be sent to the company's office. Evidently she was such a top hand at her business that she did not need even to fit on.

I was disappointed, as I had been dying to see the uniform. I thought I was going to be a great swell in my blue serge and brass buttons.

At the end of a month I received word that I was to join the steamer *Laura*, which I would find at the pier at 10.30 the following morning, and take up my duties as stewardess on board.

It put me in a tearing hurry, as it was such short notice. I was to get ten shillings a week, and my food, which I thought was splendid.

I had bought a cheap bag, the first I had ever had in my life. I thought it would not be the thing at all to take my things there in a parcel.

The following morning, Saturday, I started off carrying my bag, and feeling very excited. Mrs. M— gave me a wave from the window.

As I walked on the bag grew heavier, and my face felt like to burst. When I reached the pier the

*Laura* was just being tied up alongside. The gangways were rattling along to be in readiness.

I put down my bag and turned my face towards the water. I wanted to cool down a bit, and not be going on board with my face like a tomato.

When the passengers were all off I stepped on board. I felt extremely nervous. Except for the Sunday-school trips, I had only been on a steamer four times in my life. Then, of course, I had travelled steerage. I did not know where to go. I went hesitatingly down the cabin stairs. A girl was coming out of the saloon with her head bare. She looked at me.

'Are you the new stewardess?' she asked inquiringly.

'Yes,' I answered quickly. 'Perhaps you could tell me where to go?'

'Come in here,' she said, pushing open a door in the passage which led into the saloon. 'I'm the stall girl, and this is our room.'

'Oh, are you?' I answered, trying hard not to appear self-conscious.

It was a nice little room. There were two bunks behind the door, one directly above the other. A cushioned seat ran along the side facing the passage. In the corner, at the side of the door, was a mahogany washstand, with a looking-glass hanging above it. A silvered swinging lamp completed the contents of the room. The walls were white enamelled, giving it a cheery look.

I put down my bag on the settee and turned to the girl, to find her eyeing me over from top to toe. She

was tall, and rather thin, with bold, grey eyes, and a highly coloured complexion. Her impudent stare disconcerted me very much.

‘ Will you sleep in the low bunk ? ’ she asked.

‘ It ’s all the same to me, ’ I answered.

‘ That ’s all right, then, ’ she said, ‘ because I prefer the top one. What ’s your name ? ’

‘ Jean Roy, ’ I returned.

‘ Mine is Isa Campbell, ’ she said. ‘ Sit down and we ’ll have a chat and get to know each other. ’

We sat down on the settee, and she resumed her catechism.

‘ Is this your first season on the steamers ? ’ she asked.

‘ Yes, ’ I answered.

She looked pleased. Evidently she was anticipating the pleasure of knocking me into shape.

‘ It ’s my third, ’ she said. ‘ I ’ll show you what to do. What did you work at before you came here ? ’

I did not know what to say. If I said I was a servant, I would be looked down upon at once. I felt that with a girl like her, it would not do to be too humble.

‘ I was at service, ’ I answered. ‘ I ’m going back again when I leave here. ’

‘ A servant ! ’ she sniffed. ‘ I couldn’t stand service. I don’t work in the winter, I just stay at home and help mother. ’

I felt crushed, and wondered uneasily what question she would spring on me next.

‘ I ’ve got to earn my living somehow, ’ I said.

‘ My father ’s an engineer, ’ she explained, with a

toss of her head. 'I don't need to work in the winter. What does your father do?'

That was a poser. To admit that my father (meaning my grandfather) was a labourer would stamp me as an inferior at once. However, I was spared answering just then. There was a sharp knock at the door, and a man's voice asked:

'Is the new stewardess here?'

'That's the chief steward,' she said, hurriedly opening the door.

I had to show myself. He seemed a very nice man. He asked me my name. When I told him he looked surprised. It appeared that he knew Meg and Jack very well. He seemed quite pleased with me, and asked me to go into the saloon with him, as he wanted to give me my instructions. I went, feeling that I had a friend in him.

He told me my duties, which consisted of keeping the saloon in order, attending to the two tables that were there, and looking after the 'ladies' room.'

'And mind,' he added, in a lowered voice, 'don't let her boss you. She has nothing to do with you at all.'

He nodded significantly towards the other girl, who was standing at the end of the passage.

A boy wearing a white jacket came forward, carrying a parcel.

'This is for Miss Roy, Mr. Mackay,' he said to the chief steward.

'Oh yes, it'll be your uniform,' said the chief, handing the parcel to me. 'You'd better put it on.'

I disappeared into the room with it. On opening the paper I found, to my chagrin, a dress cut in a hideous, old-fashioned style. How I hated to put it on, but it had to be done. The girl came in to see how it looked.

‘Isn’t it awful like?’ I said.

‘Oh, they’re all the same, ugly looking things,’ she answered. ‘How does it fit?’

I drew it on, and fastened the bodice. Two of my size could have got into it everywhere except round the neck. There it was so tight I felt in danger of strangulation. I had to get into it at once, so, with Isa’s help, and a dozen or two of pins, I got it to look kind of passable.

Isa took me downstairs to see the dining-room and pantry. I thought the tables elegant with their glittering silver and graceful plants. The pantry seemed rather stuffy. She introduced me to the pantryman, and two of the stewards. I felt interested in the pantryman. He seemed a bit of a character. A pair of bright, twinkling eyes gave his face a youthful look. I think he would be about sixty.

‘How do you think you’ll like this job?’ he asked me.

‘Oh, I think I’ll like it all right,’ I answered. I turned to have a better view of the place, and half a dozen pins penetrated my skin.

‘What’s wrong?’ exclaimed the pantryman. ‘Have you a pain?’

‘It’s this abominable uniform,’ I answered impatiently. ‘It was so big that I had to pin it on.’

'Oh, they always make them like that,' he explained solemnly. I noticed him winking at the stewards. 'You see you get such good meat here, if the clothes weren't made big you might burst them before the end of the season.'

'Oh, shut up, and make us a cup of tea,' interrupted Isa. 'I'm dying for a cup. Come on, Johnny, hurry up.'

'Go to the devil and make it yourself,' retorted Johnny quickly. He went over to the sink and made a tremendous rattling at the dishes.

Isa made the tea. While we were drinking it the captain came down. He was a stout, jolly-looking man. Following on his heels came the two pursers and one of the engineers. I felt very timid as I had never worked among men before.

I was introduced, and found them all very nice. Each took a cup in his hand and never bothered about a saucer. I was surprised to find that men were so fond of tea. They had it between all the meals. It was the first thing before their eyes were right open in the morning, and the last thing before going to bed at night.

We were each supposed to wash our own cup. Old Johnny the pantryman made a row about it if we did not.

At one o'clock the dinner bell rang. I went downstairs with Isa. I was glad to find that we were first. The mess table was next the pantry. We were lying at a pier, so every one could get down at once. Mr. Mackay gave me the seat next the end of the table. In a few minutes the others



came down. The two pursers and the captain sat on my side, Mr. Mackay, the two engineers, and Isa on the other. I was glad Isa was opposite me, as I hated to take my food with strangers. Isa, of course, was a stranger too, but I did not mind her as much as the men.

We had soup, a fish course, a meat course, and pudding. I felt so nervous I could hardly eat anything.

'Come on, my lassie, eat up your dinner, and don't be sitting pecking at it like a hen,' cried the captain with a laugh from the top of the table.

That attracted the attention of the others, and they began to chaff me. It embarrassed me very much. I was exceedingly glad when it was over, and I could go upstairs again.

Isa and I went into the other room to have a talk. I got the character of all our companions at the mess table. Between her and one of them it appeared there was a deadly enmity.

'Did you notice him?' she asked. 'Why, he does not even know how to sit at a table. He eats like a pig. He's a beast anyway.'

'I never noticed. I didn't like to look down the table,' I answered evasively.

I felt very uncomfortable. I began to wonder if I had taken my food in the proper way. Perhaps she thought I ate like a pig too, and was just taking this way of showing me that she knew what was right and proper, to make me realise my inferiority.

'But how does he not eat properly?' I asked humbly. 'He seems a gentleman.'

'He thinks he is,' she answered sarcastically, 'but he isn't. He doesn't even know how to take soup properly. He always takes it from the front, instead of the side of the spoon.'

I felt my face burn. I had taken my soup from the front of my spoon too. I felt annoyed, because I was sure she had only learnt that that was the proper way through watching the passengers in the dining-saloon, and not from a superior upbringing as she would have had me believe.

'Another thing he does, too,' she went on—'he leans his elbows on the table.'

It was a habit I had myself, so I thought I would be more careful in future. I did not mind about her, but I had a keen dislike of appearing under-bred before the others at table.

It was a very busy day, and passed quickly. It was between eleven and twelve o'clock before we finished for the night. The cleaning in the steward's department was all left over for the Sunday. It was electric light we had on board, and after the sailors had washed the decks, it was turned off altogether. How dark everything was. I was afraid to move in case I would fall over something. All the men went along to the fore-cabin to smoke or play cards. We lit the lamp in our room, and locked the door for the night.

The captain's room was next ours. The rest of the officers slept for'ard.

'I'm glad the captain is next door,' I remarked to Isa. 'It does not seem so lonely.'

We had taken some bread and butter up to our

room, as we thought we would enjoy it better at our leisure there. Isa had pinched a tomato from old Johnny's private store. We divided it, and sat down on the settee to have our supper.

'It's lucky we have a room at all,' answered Isa, as she spread the tomato on her bread with the end of a spoon, nothing else being available. 'In most of the other steamers the girls have to sleep in the saloon or "ladies' cabin." We didn't use to have one either. This was the purser's room, but something happened last summer. After that, the pursers got a room for'ard, and we got this one. I wasn't on the *Laura* last summer, but I heard all about it.'

'But what happened?' I asked curiously.

She came closer to me.

'The stewardess was found dead one morning,' she said, in an awed whisper.

'What!' I exclaimed, feeling very much startled.

'Sh— don't speak so loud, or the captain 'll hear you,' she warned me. 'I'll tell you all about it.'

'But I never heard any rumour of that,' I said in surprise.

'Oh no,' she returned, 'it was kept very quiet. At the time it happened there was only one girl on board. One morning she didn't appear. The steward knocked at the door of the "ladies' cabin" where she slept, but got no answer. At last they began to suspect that something was wrong, and burst open the door. They found her lying on the floor at the washstand, stone dead. Lying beside her, also dead, was a new-born baby.'

'That was dreadful,' I said, feeling frightened,

She told me a few other things about the affair that made me shiver.

We went to bed, but it was hours before I slept. I could not get the story Isa had told me out of my head. The door of the 'ladies' cabin' was right opposite ours. I pictured to myself the agony of that poor soul, dying there alone, and thought she surely must haunt it. I had the dreadful feeling that the scene was re-acted every night.

All the time I was on the *Laura*, nothing would have induced me to go over there after dark.

Some time after, I met a young married woman on the *Laura*, who had been a stewardess in the company when the thing had happened. She said she had been sent on in the dead girl's place, and that they had had the nerve to ask her to sleep in the 'ladies' cabin.'

'And did you do it?' I asked in surprise.

'Indeed I did not,' she answered emphatically. 'I wouldn't have done it for anything. I'd have left the company first.'

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE MOTOR LAUNCH

The sun is up again, the dewy morn,  
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,  
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,  
And living as if earth contain'd no tomb—  
And glowing into day.

BYRON.

NEXT morning I was awakened by the rattling of chains, and a heavy footstep walking across the deck overhead. After a while, all was silent. The sun was shining in at the window, and the water made a gentle, rippling sound against the sides of the boat. I thought it delightful. Isa's story of the night before came into my head, but somehow it did not seem so dreadful in the bright sunlight.

I lay still, feeling quite happy. I did not hear a sound of any one moving about. Suddenly the bell rang loudly. A body flashed in front of my bed, and Isa landed heavily on the floor.

'What's wrong?' I cried in alarm, jumping up quickly, and landing myself a tremendous bump on the head against the top bunk.

'That's the breakfast bell,' she answered, making a grab at her clothes

'What!' I cried in dismay. 'I'll never be ready

in time.' I rolled out of bed sideways, in a tremendous hurry. Isa was standing right in front of my bed, with her back towards me. She did not know I was rising, and I collided against her with such force that she fell heavily on top of me.

'You might have waited until I had got some of my clothes on before you got up,' she said crossly. 'There 's not room for two of us to dress at one time. We don't need to bother much about dressing on Sunday morning anyway.'

'Oh,' I answered, 'so that was the reason you flew over the bed so quick when the bell rang. I 'll just be as sly the next time.'

She laughed. Very soon we were ready. She opened the door, and we went downstairs. Not a soul was at the table. Old Johnny and the boy were in the pantry.

'Hullo!' exclaimed Johnny, looking at Isa and me. 'The women are always first when there 's any grub goin'.'

'Oh, you 're always girning,' returned Isa. 'If we 're down soon it 's a fault, and if we 're late, we 're lazy beasts.'

Johnny winked at me behind her back.

'Well, Miss Roy, how do you think you 'll stick it?' he asked.

'Oh, all right,' I answered. 'But where 's all the officers?'

'The lazy b——s, they 're no' out of bed yet,' he said. 'Here, Jimmy,' to the boy, 'take this bell, and knock hell out of it at the purser's door, and see if that 'll shift them.'

Jimmy was a boy about fourteen, with a childish, innocent-looking face.

'I will not,' he answered stubbornly. 'Go yourself. I was there already.'

'Do what I tell you,' said Johnny, with rising anger.

'I told you I wasn't goin', and I'm not goin',', answered the boy cheekily, retreating quickly out of the pantry.

'If you don't go this minute, I'll tear the thrapple out of you,' cried Johnny, now mad with anger.

'Will you?' returned the boy viciously, 'and I'll lift a plate and brain you.'

I looked on in amazement. I wondered how the boy could have the impudence to cheek up to a man the way he did.

Johnny made a grab for a stick that was lying near. The boy quickly seized a plate, and threw it with savage force into the pantry. He then flew up the stair. The plate just skiffed Johnny's head, and smashed into pieces against the wall.

'You young scoundrel, you'll live to be hanged yet,' shouted Johnny furiously up the stair. 'Damn the bit of breakfast will you get. If you show your face down here the day, I'll knock you stiff.'

'He's a bad boy that,' I said to Johnny.

'Bad,' answered Johnny bitterly. 'I'll live to see that boy hanged yet.'

I did not wonder he was angry. I soon found out he was right. I never in my life came across such an evil-tongued, lying boy.

In a short time the engineers came down the stair ;

then the pursers, collarless, and very sleepy looking, and Mr. Mackay. The second steward—Frank, his name was—came hurrying down at their heels to wait the table. I wanted to rise and get my own plate, but Isa would not let me.

‘You ’ll do nothing of the kind,’ she whispered. ‘If you begin that, they ’ll always expect us to do it. We ’ve as much right to be attended to as the men.’

We were just beginning breakfast when the captain came tramping down the stair.

‘Good morning,’ he said cheerily. ‘Do you know, it ’s a funny thing, but there ’s an awful lot of sleep in that room of mine.’

Everybody laughed. His hair was standing on end, and his eyes were swollen in his head.

He joked all through the meal and kept every one cheery. Isa and I went up on deck when we had finished, and left the others yarning at the table. It was a lovely morning, and the water was as smooth as glass. The woods and hills were reflected with marvellous clearness. Two fishing-boats, a short distance away, gave the finishing touch to the scene. I thought I had never seen anything so beautiful before.

By and by the others strolled up from the dining-saloon, and smoked and chatted beside us. I kept in the background as much as possible. Isa and I soon went to our work.

It amused me to see men doing women’s work. And what a fuss they made about it. One woman would have done as much in a day as any of them would have got over in three.



Isa and I got finished and dressed ourselves before dinner. I went downstairs, and, of course, got something to do at once. Isa was better up to it than I, and kept up an appearance of being employed. Afterwards, I learnt the tip too. It was not that we minded helping them downstairs, but that we got no thanks for it.

The men wasted their time yarning while we were working hard, then they thought that we should do their work for them.

They are all the same—they think that women should never be done. We were always working for Johnny, but the more we did, the more we were expected to do.

'Come and see the galley and the "glory hole,"' said Isa to me.

'What's the "glory hole"?' I asked in surprise.

'Oh, that's where the stewards sleep,' she answered.

The galley, I found, was dreadfully hot. I wondered how any one could stand such a heat all day. The cook was a very nice, quiet young man.

We went downstairs to the fore-saloon, and looked in at the 'glory hole' door. The room was not any bigger than ours, I think, and there were six beds in it—two, one above the other, round three sides of the room. It was dark and stuffy.

The dinner bell rang, and we had to hurry up the stair.

The pursers had got tidied up a bit, but the others were just as they had been in the morning. After dinner, they all went into the saloon to sit and chat.

I felt too backward to sit among them, so I slipped into my room and shut the door. In a few minutes Isa came in and pretended to be looking for something.

'Are you not coming into the saloon beside us?' she asked.

'I don't like to,' I answered. 'I would rather sit here.'

She went and closed the door. In a few minutes it opened stealthily, and the assistant purser's face appeared. I looked at him in surprise. Without any warning, he dashed into the room, lifted me up in his arms, carried me into the saloon, and set me down on the captain's knee. Every one laughed and chaffed me unmercifully. After a minute, when I felt the captain's grip relax, I got up and slipped back to my room again. Very soon, though, I got on easy terms with them all.

The men, I gathered, had an exceedingly poor opinion of women.

'I wouldn't trust a woman as far as I could throw her,' I heard an officer say. 'They're as sly as the devil. You can never get to the bottom of them.'

'That's true,' remarked Frank, the steward. 'You never can tell what they're up to.'

'A man doesn't even know his own wife—no, not if he was married to her for fifty years,' went on the officer, warming to his subject.

'They're so innocent, to look at them, and even the best of them could buy and sell a man any day.'

That was the opinion of all the men, as far as I could gather.

One thing which surprised me very much, was to find that men were so petted. If Isa or I chanced to say a word thoughtlessly, they would be off in the huff for a week. It disappointed me, because somehow I had thought them so different.

I was only on the *Laura* a fortnight when Mr. Mackay got word that he was to be shifted to another boat.

He went ashore at tea time. Isa and I were sitting in our room talking, and wondering when the new steward would arrive, when the door opened suddenly. A man stepped in, shut the door quickly behind him, squeezed himself in between us on the settee, and put an arm round each of us.

'Well,' he said, with a laugh, 'how will I do for the new boss?'

He was a good-looking man, and suited his uniform very well, but I was not taken with his familiar ways at all. We sat and talked until some one came to the door, then we got rid of him.

The night after the new chief came we happened to be lying at a pier. Isa and I went for a walk. We met Mr. B——, one of our officers, with a gentleman Isa knew. They came over to speak to us. The gentleman, I noticed, had some drink. He insisted on us going for a sail in his motor launch. I did not want to go at all; besides, it was coming on for ten o'clock. Isa was wild with me. She said I was silly, and that if I did not go, she could not go either. At last I consented.

We had to go out in a small boat to get to the launch. When we were stepping into the little

boat, I noticed that the man was far drunker than I had imagined. I thought what fools we were.

It was fearfully cold on the launch. The man put up a tarpaulin against the wind, but it did not help much.

Darkness had fallen, and we could make out nothing but the dark mass of the hills, with here and there a light twinkling in some lonely house. We could not see any distance in front of us, and I was expecting every minute that we would be dashed into something and drowned. The wind rose, flapping the tarpaulin into our faces.

I felt a perfect loathing of the man. He was sitting at my side, and the whiff I occasionally got of his breath disgusted me.

On and on we went. Several times we asked him to turn, but he paid no attention.

'What's the use of going back?' he said drunkenly. 'We'll go ashore, a bit farther on. I know a house where we can make a night of it.'

At last, after a great deal of persuasion, Mr. B—— did get him advised to turn.

When we were stepping into the small boat, out of the launch, the man suddenly began to choke, and his face turned purple. Mr. B—— looked terribly scared, and had an awful job to get him round.

What a relief it was to get on shore again. It was about eleven o'clock when we got to the *Laura*.

'My God,' said Mr. B——, 'I was sure he was done for when he began choking. He'll never be nearer

death. It was just touch and go. You girls may be jolly thankful that it was I who was with you to-night.'

We slipped on board quietly. Every one else seemed to be in bed.

Next morning I told the others all about it.

'Mercy, I wish you had held your tongue. There was no need to let them know about it,' said Isa crossly.

'I'm sure it did not matter who knew,' I answered.

She gave an impatient exclamation, and turned away.

The new steward turned out all right. He was cheery, but very fiery tempered. He had a habit of opening our door at any time, without knocking, and coming in. One or two of the others got into the habit also. Johnny would come to borrow a needle. Some one else would want a button, or a pair of scissors, and so on. They seemed to think we had an endless supply of everything. Isa and I got that we never went into our room, for even five minutes, without locking the door inside.

The busy season came on, and we were to take up other sailings for a week. The night before we went away, we got on a lot of extra hands in the steward department. A wild lot they were, most of them.

Our new sailing ground was near the open sea. When we arrived there the weather had broken down. There was a good wind, and the sea was very heavy. We were not long at the pier until we were loaded up with passengers. We had a band on board, which made things lively.

As soon as we had left the pier the *Laura* began to heave badly.

When we got into the open sea it was much worse. The rain came down in torrents, and the passengers crowded into the saloon. The place was simply crammed.

I heard a smashing of dishes in the dining-saloon, and went down to see what it was. The stewards were flying about gathering up the remains of crockery, which had slipped off the table with the lurching of the boat. The chief was swearing awful. I was feeling kind of squeamish, but I could not help laughing. He looked at me a minute.

'Heavens, you 'll not be in a laughing mood long, I know by the colour of your face,' he said, with a grin.

'Don't you worry, I 'm all right,' I answered.

I was startled by a tremendous smash up in the saloon.

'That 's your little lot gone,' cried one of the stewards with a laugh.

I ran quickly upstairs, to find almost the entire contents of my two tables on the floor—butter, sugar, milk, cakes, and broken dishes all mixed up together. I stood and stared helplessly at the mess.

The contents of one of the milk jugs had landed neatly in a lady's lap.

She began to abuse me for not looking after my tables better. I said nothing, because I thought by the greenish pallor on her face that she would not talk much longer. I rushed into my room with an armful of the dishes that were not broken. When I

returned to the saloon the lady was sitting groaning, with her head hanging over the seat. I pushed a sick-pan under her nose, and left her to her fate.

The chief told me to put a thick wedge of paper under the cloth along each side of my tables. I soon got everything ready again; the paper was a great help, but I had always to be on the watch.

The passengers began to crowd in for tea. I had to go downstairs for everything I needed, wash up my dishes, and be ready to mark the checks, take the money, and watch that no one got off without paying. Also I had to attend to the 'ladies' room,' give clean towels, and get spirits from the bar for whoever wanted it.

It kept me tremendously busy.

Very soon every one was sick. Ladies were lying all over the place. In some cases their relations were bending over them, as if taking a last farewell. It made me wild to look at some of them. They did not seem to care what kind of mess they made. The place was awful. I had become dreadfully sick myself, but I just had to go on with my work. Even the stewards were sick. They occasionally relieved each other, and lay down a little.

Downstairs, it was perfect pandemonium. When I went to the pantry window for tea, there would be half a dozen stewards round it, shouting out their orders. What a swearing there was. Johnny would not pay the slightest attention to me. There were three serving out in the pantry, but they were all so excited they got in each other's way.

Johnny had put the counter down across the door,

so we could not get in for anything. I would make a frantic endeavour to get my teapot filled.

‘Go to H——!’ he would snap viciously at me.

Then I would dive under the counter when his back was turned, grab a teapot, and dash out again. If he happened to get a glimpse of me, he got mad with fury. The curses he heaped on me were awful. I did not care so long as I had got what I wanted. Sometimes a steward would bang up against me and upset the hot tea over my hands. We took no notice of such trifles.

The superintendent had come with us to see that all was right. He stopped me in the passage one time I was flying past.

‘I think, Miss Roy, you’d be the better of someone to give you a hand,’ he said.

‘I would, indeed,’ I answered.

He went off, promising to send one of the boys at once. In a few minutes a boy came to my room. I gave him a dish towel, and told him to dry some cups as quickly as possible.

He was at the third one when the chief threw open the door.

‘Is the boy here?’ he called angrily. ‘Damn you, what the blazes are you doing here? Beat it down the stair. We need you.’

The boy ran past him, and hurried below.

‘But the superintendent said I was to get him,’ I objected.

‘I don’t give a damn,’ he retorted. ‘We’re rushed downstairs, and I want him.’

There was no use arguing. I turned away in



disgust, and made a furious onslaught on my dishes. A man came to the door, asking a pillow for some one that was sick. I could have thrown a plate at his head. I thought they might have been jolly thankful to get lying without a pillow. I could have lain on the floor, but I would not have found room for dishes.

The day wore on. How thankful I was when we returned to the pier about five o'clock. We were having a cruise at night, but, as the chief thought it might be somewhat rough, he told me to clear off my tables. I did so with pleasure.

As soon as we had left the pier I went into my room to lie down for a little, to see if it would help my sickness. I could not keep my eyes off the clothes hanging on the wall. At every heave of the boat they swung round in a half circle.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Inwardly cursing whoever it was, I got up and opened it. It was the chief.

'Miss Roy,' he said, in a wheedling voice, 'you might go down to the bar for a little, until I go for'ard and get a smoke. If you're sick, I'll give you some whisky. That'll help you.'

'I don't want any whisky,' I answered crossly. 'I suppose if I were dead I wouldn't get time to stiffen.' Give me the key.'

He handed me the key, with a laugh.

'Keep an eye on things,' he said. 'You understand?'

I nodded, and off he went. He came back in a short time, but, as we had got busy I had to remain

in the bar until the cruise was finished. It was near eleven o'clock.

After that, there was supper. A little after eleven I was just thinking of going off to bed, when the chief shouted up the stair :

'Miss Roy, are you there?'

'Hullo!' I answered. 'I'm here. What do you want?'

'Oh,' he said, turning round, 'I thought you were upstairs. You might give me a hand with my checks.'

We both sat down at a table near the bar. It appalled me to see what a pile of checks there were. The others had finished supper, and gone off to bed. The stewards cleared the tables, then the electric light was turned off. Still we were not half through. One of the stewards brought us an oil lamp. We counted and counted. We would get about half done, when we would find there was some mistake, and have to begin all over again.

'Damn and curse the infernal things,' the chief would cry impatiently, throwing them down on the table.

He was in his shirt sleeves, and the perspiration was streaming off his face.

The *Laura* seemed strangely quiet after the noise and bustle of the day. The stewards had gathered to the opposite side of the saloon. They were sitting in darkness at a table, telling stories.

I could just make out the faint outline of their faces in the gloom. They spoke in low tones, but a word or two of what they were saying reached me

occasionally. I felt the colour flame into my face. I hoped earnestly that the chief did not hear. But no, he was too much worried about his checks, for which I was thankful.

At last, coming on for twelve, we got finished. It was with a sigh of relief that I said 'Good night,' and went upstairs to bed.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### DEATH OF MY GRANDFATHER

What's life? at best a wandering breath;  
When saddest, but a passing sigh;  
When happiest, but a summer wreath—  
A sigh of roses floating by.

CREDY.

THE summer passed very quickly. I was really sorry when it came to the end of the season. Considering everything, I had had a good time. It was with regret that I bade them all good-bye.

At the same time I was happy to get back to my little bedroom and my books again.

When I went home they told me that my mother had got sentenced to a long term of imprisonment in a home for ill-behaved women. It was terrible, but it would keep her out of trouble for a while.

I was rather relieved to hear it. I was always in dread of her appearing at my work. She might easily have got to know where I was.

They were all very dull, as my grandfather had not been keeping well for some time. Poor old man, I was shocked to see him. He had had to give up his work, and was sitting at the kitchen fire looking greatly changed.

Not being able to work was a blow to him. In

about a week he had to take to his bed. The doctor came often, but he said nothing could be done. I went home every night. Sometimes I stayed. They had to sit up all night with my grandfather. Jack, who had got strangely quiet and thoughtful, attended him faithfully.

My grandfather seemed to think a lot about me. If I was not down, he was sure to ask for me. Sometimes he did not seem to know the others at all.

He quickly got worse. Jack used to lift him out to sit at the fire a little. He would sit and look round us all. A glance of recognition would come into his eyes for a minute, then he would wander again. We all spoke to him in turn. There was such a sad, pathetic look on his face it made the tears come into our eyes.

I don't think he suffered much pain. The doctor said he thought he would pass quietly.

Once he asked us to read a bit of the Bible to him. Jack got the Book at once, and, sitting in the bed beside him as close as he could, read a few verses. He did not make any sign that he heard, but when Jack had finished, he lay quiet for a long time, as if thinking.

After that Jack often read to him. Even though he might not understand, it seemed to bring him peace.

Even in that sad time there was discord in the house. When my grandmother had gin, there was always trouble. She took the fancy into her head that my grandfather was being poisoned.

Meg turned on her, and there was an awful row.

It drove me distracted to think they could not be at peace and my grandfather dying. Poor Jack, he looked broken hearted. I think he felt it most of all.

Sometimes I had to go down to the doctor's for my grandfather's medicine. I used to tell him everything. I was always sure of sympathy, and generally left him with my mind more at ease.

One night I was startled by Mrs. M—— coming into my room. She told me that my brother and another man had been at the door at one o'clock. They had come to tell me that they thought my grandfather was dying. She did not tell me at the time in case I would get a fright. Afterwards, she began to think that if my grandfather died without me being present, I might be vexed.

I determined to go down at once. Mrs. M—— tried to persuade me not to go, but I would not listen. I thought perhaps my grandfather might ask for me. I began to dress hurriedly.

Mr. M—— said I could not walk home at two in the morning, alone. Besides, it was a very stormy night. The snow was on the ground to a good depth, and still falling heavily. They would not consent to let me go, unless I hired a cab at their expense. I promised, there being no other way, but had not the slightest intention of letting them pay for a cab. I hurried out, and Mrs. M—— locked the door behind me.

The snow almost blinded me. I kept to the middle of the road. I was afraid there might be some one lurking near the wall. The wind whistled among the trees, and sent the shadows dancing

fantastically in front of me. Every little while I would fancy I heard some one running behind me. I would turn round in terror. There was nothing but the blinding snow. Then I would run for a bit, often looking back over my shoulder. The few lamps that were lit only made the gloom more intense. Then again I would hear the rushing sound behind me. I would stand, terror stricken, and look round, my heart beating painfully. Sometimes I thought I heard my grandfather's voice calling me. I would run madly on, stumbling over everything.

At last the lights of the village came into sight. I had not met a soul on the way. I reached the house, breathless. Jack, who opened the door, could hardly believe it was I. He thought it very unwise of me. My grandfather was just the same.

When I entered the kitchen I was astonished to see my mother sitting at the fire. She spoke to me kindly, and said I should take off my wet things at once.

I waited until the morning. When I left, my grandfather was just as he had been the night before. Three hours later Jack came to tell me he was dead. He had passed away quietly. My mother was still there. Meg had written to tell her, and she had been allowed home because her father was dying. Later in the day I went down.

My grandfather was laid in the kitchen, but I kept away from it.

I could not bear to look at him. It seemed terrible that I would never see his face in this world again.

The day of the funeral my mother was still there. She and my grandmother had got some drink, and were quarrelsome.

There was a little excuse for my grandmother, as my grandfather's death had been a blow to her. There was none for my mother. It made me very unhappy.

Before they took him away, I looked my last on him. Poor, kindly old man! He may have been often in the wrong, but God alone knew that he had done his best. Who can do more?

My mother had to go back after the funeral, for which I was thankful.

Jack walked up to Mrs. M——'s with me that night. He told me how unhappy his life was. I felt so sorry for him, but what could I say? There are things that one is powerless to help. I was glad to think that he trusted me, and comforted him the best way I could.

For some time after, my grandmother was simply unbearable. She was always taking a little gin, and I think it had begun to affect her brain. The house was purgatory. Gradually she came round a bit, but they could never be sure of her for long.

The winter dragged on, and the spring drew near. How wonderful is the effect of spring. There is something in the feel of the air, and the first little touch of green on the trees, that makes our burden of care feel lighter.

I began to feel hopeful that things would come right at home again. Always I missed the kindly old face. The voice that was now still had many a



time spoken harshly to me, but I knew in my heart that it was only through love, and the desire to save me from evil.

I thought only of the love, and knew that where he had gone he would find peace.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### JACK DIES

Oh, never is the path we tread  
So drear, but if we upward gaze,  
The favouring smiles of heaven will shed  
Some solace for our darkest days.

W. J. BROCK.

WHEN my grandfather died my grandmother sold a lot of the furniture, and was going to sell the piano too. She got a man down to value it. He offered her eight pounds for it, but she would not accept the offer. I was vexed to think of it going out of the house. I said if she would let me have it I would give her seven, and pay it up gradually. She promised to do so. I was always giving her a little money. When I was on the *Laura* I gave her more.

At the end of the season Meg told me that she had been grumbling that I had not been paying the piano up quick enough. As it was an impossibility for me to give her more, unless I left myself penniless, I said she had better sell it to the man for eight pounds. She did so, and I had the vexation of seeing it taken away after all.

Jack began to complain of neuralgia pains in his head. His doctor told him to give up his work for a

week or two, and get his teeth out. He did so, but did not get any better. In fact, he got worse every day. I did not care for the doctor they had; I was always at them to get Doctor Granger.

My sister-in-law would not bother, because Doctor Granger had spoken sharply to her once, when she had not done exactly as he had told her. I asked Meg if she would get him. She refused too.

'If his wife does not bother, we needn't,' she answered.

I wondered how they could speak like that, and poor Jack so ill.

When I went home I generally went straight into the room first to see Jack. That was a terrible fault. When I did go into the kitchen the others would hardly speak to me. It vexed me very much.

Every time I went down I thought Jack looked worse. He had got pale and thin. He had big, innocent-looking grey eyes, with long lashes. Now there was a look of such wistful sadness in them, that almost made me cry to look at him. He did not lie in bed much, but just sat at the fire. Occasionally he would walk the length of the kitchen. Sometimes the pain in his head would be dreadful. I did not see him at his worst, but they told me he was sometimes wishing he was dead.

One day that he had been feeling very weak, and had lain in bed, my grandmother got the worse of drink. She began to hammer at the kitchen sink with an axe, to try to break it. Meg and Ann could do nothing with her. Jack had to get up out of his bed, and go into the kitchen to beg her to stop.

That was the kind of thing he had to bear, instead of being comforted and taken care of.

I went down as often as I could, because I thought he liked to see me. It always saddened me.

One day I said to my sister-in-law that I would go for Doctor Granger. I asked Jack if he would like to see him. He said he would. I left word for Dr. Granger to call. He came soon after. When he came out of the bedroom he looked very serious. He would not speak to my sister-in-law, but took me out of the room to tell me.

'What is it?' I asked anxiously.

'I'm afraid I can do nothing for him, Jean,' he said gravely. 'It's consumption. If I had been called sooner I might have been able to help him.'

I was terribly shocked. I had not thought it was as bad as that.

'Can nothing be done?' I asked unsteadily.

'Well,' he said, trying to speak hopefully, 'I'll do my best, dear. I'll make arrangements to get him into a home at once.'

When he had gone, the others came quickly to ask me what he had said. When I told them they began to cry. Jack did not realise he was so bad, and was hopeful of getting better.

We could not stay long in the room with him, it was so cold. The door and window both had to be kept open.

A day or two after I went down to the doctor's for some medicine Jack was to get.

'Jean,' he said kindly, 'you'll have to be brave. Your brother is just dying.'

Something seemed to be choking me. We were waiting for the ticket to get him into the home. A little hope had crept into our hearts that perhaps he might get better after all. I could not keep the tears from running down my cheeks.

'You mustn't be unhappy, dear,' said the doctor. 'He'll be better away. If he had lived he would have suffered all his life.'

I felt heart-broken. I reproached myself for not having tried to help him sooner. What would become of the two little girls he had? His whole thought had been to try to make their lives better than his had been. For their sake he had struggled on. I left him that night with a sad heart.

Next morning I got word of his death. Strange, no matter how much we are prepared for it, death is always startling. I think somehow that hope never dies while there is breath in the body.

Now that he was gone, I realised that I had had more in common with him than any of the others.

In the evening I went home. The darkness of the house, caused by the drawn blinds, sent a chill to my heart. I walked straight into the little bedroom where I knew he would be. What a look of calm, innocent peace was on his face.

The long eyelashes lay on his cheeks, but the wistful, yearning look I had last seen in his eyes still haunted me. I saw him through a mist of blinding tears. My heart was filled with remorse that I had not tried to be more to him. I knew just as well as if he had told me that he wished me to love and care for his two little girls, Anna and

Jess. I made a mental vow that for his sake and the children I would try to keep peace in the house.

Meg had sent word to my mother that Jack was dead. She thought if she did not do that, my mother might come down afterwards and wreck the house. I had just been in a short time when I heard her voice at the door.

She had to go back that night, for which I was thankful. She was very well dressed, and had been for some time.

That evening I went about with my sister-in-law, and helped her to make her arrangements. My grandmother was very angry, and watched me coming out and in, with a look of fury on her face. Somehow, that night I did not care. The greater sorrow had swallowed up my fear of her.

On the day of the funeral I felt very nervous. The first thing I noticed when I got home was that my grandmother was the worse of drink. Meg and Ann said she had been quarrelling with them all day.

My sister-in-law asked me to go a message for her. When I was passing the kitchen door, my grandmother opened it quickly, a look of awful anger on her face. I knew there was something coming. I began to shake.

'You're the chief mourner,' she cried sneeringly, and spat viciously at me. I put up my hand quickly to shield my face. She began to scratch my hand.

I opened the door, got outside, and shut it again, then ran down the stairs. I was so agitated I

could scarcely stand. I waited at the foot of the stair until I became a little calmer, then I went for the message.

When I returned to the house Meg said that my grandmother had been trying to strike Ann. She and my sister-in-law had to hold her back. Poor Ann was in a terrible state. She had got much worse of late, and was hardly ever without pain. Some nights she lay in bed for hours crying. My grandmother had got the idea into her head that she and Meg were plotting against her.

We were expecting my brother and his wife from Glasgow, for the funeral. My mother arrived about an hour before the time fixed, and my brother soon after. I noticed with alarm that my mother had had some drink. My brother got her advised to stay at home with my grandmother, who was not going to the service, but just as the last cab was driving from the door, she ran down and jumped in. Unfortunately I happened to be in that one.

A good many people were already in the church when we reached it. We all sat in the front seat, with the exception of my mother, who was some distance behind. The solemn words of the burial service, echoing through the quiet church, made me feel somehow nearer to Jack.

'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me shall not perish, but have everlasting life.'

The words brought comfort to my heart. Suddenly there was a burst of maudlin sobbing.

I knew at once who it was, and in that moment

I was glad that Jack was dead. For him all shame was over. Even in that hour my mother must attract people's attention to herself. I would willingly have taken my place beside Jack.

I wanted to go to the cemetery to see the last of him, but just when I was in the cab, my mother stepped in behind me. I got out, and made some excuse about having to go home to do something.

When I got home my grandmother was as bad as ever. I awaited my mother's return in fear and trembling.

It was some time before they got back. There was tea made for them all. My mother got worse. The afternoon dragged on. Suddenly my mother expressed her intention of staying for the week end. The thought of what might happen alarmed me very much. My brother and his wife were leaving for Glasgow in about an hour. I, too, was going back that night to Mrs. M——'s, and taking little Anna with me for a few days. I could not think of the others being left with my mother.

I got Meg, and signed to my brother to come into the bedroom to see what we could do. He agreed with us that my mother could not possibly be allowed to stay and kick up a row, but he could not form any plan of how we were to get her away. We saw plainly that he meant to slip away with his wife, and leave us to manage the best way we could.

I told Meg I could not think of leaving her and Ann to fight it out, and that I would 'phone to the Governor of the home where my mother came from, and see if he could do anything.



It was a fearful wet night. Before I was long out I was soaked through. The Governor of the home told me, through the 'phone, that her time was served there. As she was staying on voluntarily, he could do nothing.

What to do next I did not know. Then I thought of the doctor. He had told me to be sure to come to him if I were in trouble. I found him in, and told him all about it. He was greatly astonished, and full of sympathy for me. He urged me to go to a friend of his, that was in a position to advise me. I promised to go. After I had left the doctor I felt that I could not go to a stranger and tell him my story.

It would be too humiliating. The only other way was the police-office, so I went there. I hated to go, but I had to think of others besides myself just then. The Inspector said they would bring a cab and take her away.

I hurried home to tell the others. My mother was now wild with drink, which had the effect of calming my grandmother. In about ten minutes we heard the noise of the cab. The Inspector came into the room first, to see if we would charge her. They knew her very well. My brother said yes, to take her away.

The Inspector and another policeman went to the kitchen and told her she was to go with them. She became like a fiend, and began to curse and scream. She struggled and used dreadful language.

They quickly took her away.

My grandmother came into the room, her face

very white, but quite her old self again. The evil mood had left her altogether. She spoke in a quiet, subdued voice.

And so it ended. I have had many an unhappy day in my life. That, I think, was the most dreadful of them all.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### OUR HOME BROKEN UP

Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,  
A burden more than I can bear,  
I set me down and sigh :  
O life ! thou art a galling load,  
Along a rough, a weary road,  
To wretches such as I !

BURNS.

MEG had been keeping company for some time with a young man. I did not care for him much. He was too fond of a dram.

She had not been keeping well of late. The long strain had told on her. She would have left the house and gone to work somewhere else, but every time she mentioned it Ann began to cry. Ann had a miserable time of it, but never complained. She had got so bad that she could only get about the house with a crutch. Sometimes, when she was suffering more than usual I have heard her wish that God would take her away. But generally she was cheery and bright, and took an interest in every little thing we told her.

It was a marvel to me how she could bear life at all. I think in her case I would have gone mad or committed suicide.

Meg's young man, Willie, came up to the house sometimes. My grandmother was pleasant enough to him, but when he was not there she said awful things of both him and Meg. It made me shiver to listen to her. Often she seemed to be possessed of a devil. Of course she was not always like that. At times she was as nice as could be.

Meg said that Willie wanted to get married, as he was tired of lodgings. I was glad to hear it, in a way. I wanted to see Meg settled, so that if anything happened to my grandmother Ann would not be homeless. I thought that if Willie were married it might steady him.

Meg told my grandmother when she was in a good mood. She promised to give them a bedroom for a small sum a week, until they could get some furniture gathered. That seemed all right, so the marriage was hurried on.

The evening arrived when it was to take place. We all got dressed. It was coming near the time when we were to be at the church, but there was no sign of Willie. His brother went in search of him.

We were getting very anxious. We thought he was drinking somewhere. Meg wondered if she should give him up then, rather than repent of it later on. Almost on the time he came up the stair. We noticed at once that he was half drunk. There was no use of saying anything. We just got into the cab, and drove off to the church.

He managed to articulate the answers, and they were bound up for better or worse. Poor Meg! I felt sorry for her.

It was an unhappy wedding day. About the middle of the night he got up raving like a madman. He wanted more drink, and as there was none in the house he went fair mad. What a struggle we had to induce him to go back to bed. Meg cried like to break her heart.

When he resumed his work things were not so bad.

One day Meg met the young man I used to be friendly with. He had a friend with him, and she asked them both down on the Monday evening. She wanted me down too. I was not caring at all to see them, but I promised to be there, to please her.

My grandmother happened to be in one of her bad moods that night. She stayed in the kitchen. Meg made some tea. About half-past eight my grandmother threw open the room door and told me angrily that it was time I was home. I said I could wait a little longer. She glared at me and went out. It worried me so much that in a short time I rose to go. The two young men rose also. They said, as they were going my way, they would accompany me. Meg got up to see us out. Just as we were passing the kitchen door my grandmother threw it open and looked at us. I was in front. The young men were immediately behind me. Suddenly she stepped forward and spat full in my face. I was terribly mortified at being insulted before strangers, and passed on without a word. The young men looked at each other, then at me, but said nothing. I felt so wretched that I scarcely heard a word they said on the way home. I was overwhelmed with shame.

Soon after my grandmother took a notion to sell

all the furniture. The things were not worth much, but they had made our home. She engaged a man to bring a cart and take them away to a second-hand shop. Everything went, with the exception of her bed, some dishes she needed, and a box for her clothes.

When I went down in the evening, Meg called me into her room. She was looking very ill. There was not a thing in the room. My grandmother had even had the grate taken out. Meg had had to put four bricks in the empty fireplace to build a fire on to make Willie's tea. The bed was gone, and she had spread some clothes in the corner where they were to sleep. Her eyes were swollen with crying. Ann was sitting on a box in a corner, crying too. What could I say that would help or alleviate such misery? I felt utterly sick at heart. The hopelessness of it all crushed me. I went into the kitchen. My grandmother was there. She glared at me, but did not speak. I returned to the room to Meg and Ann.

That night when I returned to Mrs. M——'s I could not sleep. It was bitterly cold, and the thought of them lying on the floor haunted me.

Next night I went down to see how they had got on. My grandmother, they told me, had gone away to stay with a woman she knew. They were very anxious about her. Ann was at the window, continually watching if she could see her passing.

Meg managed to get a grate, a bed, and a few other things that were necessary.

At the end of a fortnight my grandmother came

to the door, and asked Meg if she would let her come back. Meg said she could if she liked. She had told people awful things about us, but we tried not to care.

Next day she came with her things. She was very much softened, and her old kindly self again. Whether she regretted what she had done or not we never knew. She never mentioned it. She was very fond of Jack's children, and I think she was glad to get back to see them. Everything was quiet for a time, then a quarrel arose among them. I don't know what it was about. Some trifling thing, no doubt. The next thing was that they were all separated.

Meg hired a furnished room for my grandmother and Ann, and another for herself and Willie. My sister-in-law was left in the house alone with the children.

That was the breaking up of our home. After that Meg and my sister-in-law ceased to be on speaking terms.

Every time I went down I visited the three houses. Meg thought I was carrying news to my sister-in-law about them. My sister-in-law thought I went to her to get news to tell the others. I had to put up with a great deal from both of them. Between them they managed to make me miserable, but I kept to my purpose to try to keep friendship among them all. Sometimes I almost succeeded, when a chance word undid all my work, and the feud was as great as ever. I often wondered how long I would have courage to persevere.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### GRANNY AND THE CINEMA

The moments past, if thou art wise, retrieve,  
With pleasant memory of the bliss they gave,  
The present hours in present mirth employ,  
And bribe the future with the hopes of joy.

PRIOR.

AFTER the separation my grandmother became quiet and peaceable, except for an occasional flare out.

She had got very fond of going to the picture-house.

'Well,' she would say, looking from Meg to me, 'are ye's for the picters the night?'

'We were intending that,' Meg would answer.

'I would have gone, if I'd been ready,' she would remark, glancing questioningly at Meg.

'Hurry up, then, and put on your bonnet and dolman,' Meg would say. 'We'll wait for you.'

If Meg happened to mention in the morning that she was thinking of going to the pictures, my grandmother tidied herself up and put on her boots after dinner, to be in readiness if she were asked. It amused Ann greatly to watch her sly preparations.

To my grandmother they are not pictures, but reality. She is very deaf and speaks exceedingly loud. The remarks she passes on what she sees



keep the people who are sitting in her vicinity pretty lively.

Charlie Chaplin is first favourite with her. The 'Wee Man' she calls him.

'Is the "Wee Man" to be there the night?' she would ask.

'No,' Meg would answer, 'he's not to be to-night.'

'Is he no? ' she would say, in a disappointed voice. 'No, he'll be up about Glesca, I suppose. They'll no' stan' him enough drink about here. He's blin' every time I see him. It would fit him better to buy a pair o' trousers, instead o' drinkin' it.'

One night we took her to see 'Trilby.' Svengali, she was mortally afraid of.

'Don't look at hum,' she whispered warningly to Meg. 'If he catched your eye, ye're done for. It's the divil sure enough.'

It was a great puzzle to her where they kept all the horses and wild beasts.

'Ay,' she would say, in an awestruck voice, 'ye'll see what'll happen some night. They'll break out among the folk and make a scatterment.'

It filled her with wonder to see it raining in the pictures, and quite dry outside. One night a terrible snowstorm was shown, just before we came out.

'Isn't that terrible?' she said anxiously to Meg. 'We'll be soaked to the skin before we're home, an' we've no umbrell.'

When we got to the street, it happened to be a lovely, moonlight night.

She looked all round her, immensely astonished.

'A fine night,' she exclaimed, 'an' a perfect hurricane in there.'

She shook her head solemnly.

'It's the divil's work. Some glamour they throw over ye. I'll never go back.'

We knew quite well that the next time we would ask her she would be as eager as ever to go.

When she got home, she related to Ann all she had seen.

'But the folk are not there. It's only a picture,' said Ann with a laugh.

'A picter!' my grandmother cried scornfully. 'Maybe ye think I'm a fool. I've the po'er of my eyesight yet, thank God, though I am deaf, an' don't hear them speakin'. Picter indeed! No, faith, don't think ye'll take a rise out of me.'

She would sit up in bed in her red flannel jacket, her woollen mutch round her old, lined face, and argue with Ann for ever so long.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### FINIS

A deep mysterious sympathy doth bind  
The human heart to nature's beauties all ;  
We know not, guess not, of its force and kind,  
But what it is we know when ill doth fall  
Upon us, when our hearts are sear'd and riven,  
We'll seek the forest lands for peace and heaven.

SIR E. BRIDGES.

THE winter passed slowly. In March the doctor went away. I felt desolate. Now that my only real friend had gone, I realised how much he had been to me. I missed dreadfully the kindly words of sympathy and advice.

I had lots of so-called friends, but not one that I could trust.

I tried to bury myself in my books, but for once they had lost their charm for me. I wondered sadly if there were any one in the world who felt so much alone as I did.

The spring came, but it brought me little happiness.

In the beginning of the summer I went back to the *Laura*. I felt utterly indifferent as to where I was. The life and sparkle seemed to have gone out of everything. The days were very monotonous.

Our busy season came on. We had not such a bad

time of it, as the weather was fine. While I was there, war was declared. The men could speak of nothing else.

Early one Sunday Isa and I lay in bed, wondering if it were time to get up. We were alarmed by hearing heavy feet coming down the stair and English voices shouting for the captain. The captain left his room, and the noise of their feet died away in the direction of for'ard.

Wondering what it could be, Isa and I dressed ourselves quickly, and went along to find out. We learnt that they were Government officials, to take away our reserve men. We had two on board. One was a bachelor, and the other a married man.

They were very much startled, being just awakened out of their sleep. The married man pleaded for permission to go and see his wife and children. When told that he could not be allowed, he burst into tears. Poor fellow, he never got home. He was killed at the very beginning.

When I went home after finishing on the *Laura*, I found that my brother-in-law had grown queer. He could not work. Meg said he hardly ever slept at all, and would get up in the middle of the night and go out. She had sometimes to follow him, in case he might meet with an accident. She looked perfectly worn out. Little Anna was staying with her for company. One night I felt so sorry for her, I said I would stay the night.

She, Anna, and I slept in the kitchen bed. Willie was in the room.

We had been lying about half an hour, when I was

startled by seeing him standing at our bedside staring at us. In a minute he went away. It frightened me very much. Meg went into the room, and persuaded him to lie down, then came back beside us.

We were no sooner settled than he was at our bedside again, peering intently in. I was so terrified that I sat up in bed for the rest of the night. He kept going from the room to the kitchen all the time. Meg said that was how he always went on.

She turned up the gas, but he would not let it remain, but kept turning it out. Occasionally he would throw open the window, and shout out to some one he evidently imagined was there. I thought it would never come morning.

Some time after he was sent to the asylum. Meg brought Ann and my grandmother to stay with her. About three months later she got word that Willie had died suddenly.

Meg went out to work, and they managed to keep on the little house.

One day my grandmother had a return of her evil moods. She flew at Meg and Ann so savagely, that Meg had to run to the street for help. My grandmother brought the police in, and told them awful stories. They advised her to quieten down, and be thankful she was so well off. We felt the shame of it terribly, especially as we had been so good to her. My grandmother went off for three days, then she returned. They took her back as if nothing had happened.

I try to keep friendship among them all. Some-

times I manage it for a time. Then I find them at daggers drawn. It causes me a great deal of unhappiness. At times I am down in the depths. Sometimes, when I return to my little room, I wonder if I should give up the struggle.

I watch the stars for a while, then I wonder how I could take any notice of the cutting things that have been said to me.

They are mere empty words. I will not heed them.

Then it seems to me that among the stars, but somehow nearer, I see a sad, pale face, with wistful grey eyes. They smile encouragingly at me, and in the smile there is infinite tenderness and love. The pale lips seem to move, as if giving me messages of love for his dear ones left behind.

A gentle wind sighs in the trees, up in the wood. The leaves rustle with a queer, whispering sound, and I feel that I am not alone. The moon rises full and glorious from behind the wood, and my troubles slip from me, in my immense wonder at what is beyond.

The summer has come again, and with it a return of happiness.

I find more pleasure in my books than ever. Who could be unhappy for long, with nature round giving fresh life and hope?

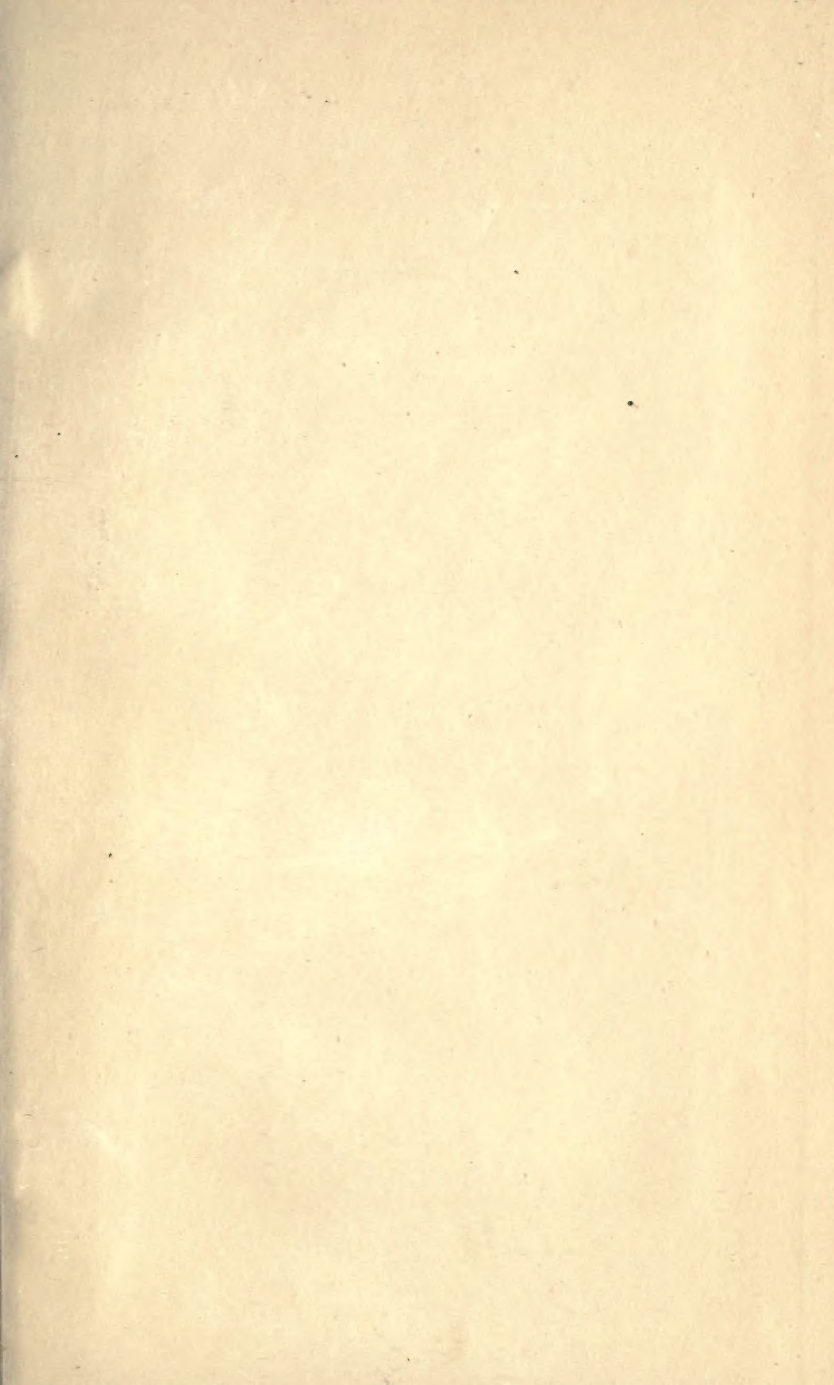
In the time when I felt most miserable, I have often wished I was one who could forget easily. Now it is different with me. I do not ever forget. Indeed, my happiness lies in remembrance. Life is full of interest, and the world is not such a big place

after all. I have the greatest gift that can be given to any one on earth—a love of nature.

I find my gold in the glory of a sunset, my jewels in the lovely flowers. The blue of the sky, as a background to the beautiful trees, is a delightful picture that never palls. I am awakened in the morning by the finest orchestra in the world—the joyous singing of the little birds. Who can call me poor ?









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