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PASSAGES
IN THE LIFE OF
MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND,
OF SUNNYSIDE.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

“ Give me my scallop shell of quiet,
My staff of peace to rest upon—
My scrip of joy—immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation—
My gown of glory, hope's true gage ;
And thus I take my pilgrimage—
While my soul, like a quiet Palmer,
Travelleth toward the land of Heaven—”

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PASSAGES

IN THE LIFE OF

MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND.

CHAPTER I.

ON the Tuesday after that, I got, to my great pleasure and satisfaction, safely home again to Sunnyside, not without much speaking, both on the part of Mrs. Elphinstone and Mr. Allan, about me coming back ; but that was a thing concerning which I was very loath to make any promises, seeing it was far from a pleasant thing to me, a

woman come to years, to live out of my own house.

“You must give me permission to visit you often, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan to me, as we were just coming in sight of Sunnyside. “You must let me rest from my Cruive End labours beneath your hospitable roof. By the bye, I was telling Jenny about my mighty purpose the last time I was down ; but Jenny is an obstinate sceptic. She won’t believe in the possibility of regenerating Cruive End.”

“Jenny !” said I. “Is’t possible, Mr. Allan, that you were speaking about the like of that to Jenny ?”

“Yes, to be sure,” said the light-hearted young man. “Don’t you think I show myself a very sensible person thereby, Miss Maitland ? Oh ! Jenny and I are excellent friends—quite intimate indeed. I shall

expect to have a place in her esteem by and bye, next to Mr. Claud, and Miss Grace and Miss Mary, though perhaps that is rather too much to look for just yet. Yes, Miss Maitland, I have the honour to be in Jenny's confidence, and have sundry childish incidents laid up in my memory wherewith to retaliate upon Miss Mary, the next time she scolds me."

"Scolds you, Mr. Allan?" said I, in wonder.

"Oh! well, not scolds altogether. Miss Mary is too dignified for that, but looks grave at my blunders. I believe she thinks me a perfect Goth. You must have skill in tutoring, Miss Maitland. Suppose you take me for a pupil? You have no idea how docile I shall be; and *I* have no doubt that you might turn me out one of the most pretty-behaved young gentlemen in the

country. What say you, Miss Maitland? When will you begin to teach me my alphabet of proprieties?"

"I am feared, Mr. Allan," said I, with a smile, "that Jenny would say you were aboon my fit."

"Jenny would be meddling with things aboon *her* fit, if she did," said Mr. Allan. "And here is Sunnyside, Miss Maitland, and I suppose I must give you up. See here, Jenny," he went on, as he got out to help me down, "what will you give me for bringing back your mistress?"

"Deed, Sir, mony thanks," said Jenny, speaking as if she had known him all her days. "Eh, Miss Marget, but you're welcome hame. It's been a dowie house since ye gaed awa. No a living body nearhand it but mysel."

"You see Jenny makes no account of *my*

visits, Miss Maitland," said Mr. Allan, laughing, "and yet I'm sure I have been most assiduous."

"The young gentleman has been just bye-ordinar considerate, mem," said Jenny, as we went in. "I ne'er heard o' sae muckle kindness to the like o' me—ca'ing to tell me how Miss Grace was, and Miss Mary. And speaking o' that, Miss Marget, the mistress ca'ed in hersel yesterday, to say she had forgotten to tell you on Sabbath that she was gaun to send Miss Mary down in the middle of the week, to bide a day or twa."

"My sister is very kind, Jenny," said I, signing to her to be quiet, for I saw Mr. Allan's face was kindling. "And now, Mr. Allan, you'll sit down and take a glass of wine, before you go back to Lilliesleaf."

“I am going to Cruive End,” said Mr. Allan, starting, for he had not noticed at first that I was speaking to him; “and I will not be long of making my appearance again, Miss Maitland. I must be off to my work now.” And with that, he bade me goodbye, and went merrily away.

“Na,” said Jenny to herself, in a quiet way, as if she did not care for me hearing: “I’ll be your caution, young gentleman, ye’ll no be lang o’ finding your way back again, seeing ye hae heard what ye hae heard.”

“What is that you are saying, Jenny?” said I.

“Only how thoughtfu’ it was o’ the young Laird to be bringing aye a word about yoursel and Miss Grace, (doubtless whiles Miss Mary also, but that was in the bygaun) to a poor body like me; but for a’ that, Miss

Marget, I have been wearying sore to hear richt about Miss Grace, and how the dear bairn was winning on."

I knew that Jenny (in her degree) cared mostly as much for my bairn as I did myself, so I told her much of the substance of the letters; but I thought not it was needful to let her know all the kind of feeling that was in them, except just that Grace still liked Sunnyside better than the house in Edinburgh, for all so grand as it was; whereat Jenny was greatly pleased. So after I had some further converse with Jenny about the things of the house, I just sat down, and began to write a letter to Grace, seeing I had not answered the last one which I got at Lilliesleaf.—

" My dear bairn,

" I have got the letter you wrote to me,

with the history of your mother ; and truly though it is indeed a most sorrowful story, it is yet a satisfaction to me that you have heard about her. Maybe her first griefs, poor young thing, had in a manner broken her spirit, and so it might not be so much the doing of your father ; and maybe also it was *that* he was feared for you hearing, in case of it setting your heart against him ; and that would show a right repentant spirit, which is, next to a pure spirit, the best thing that folk can have. But without dispute, Grace, it is a most woeful and sad story ; and oh, my dear bairn ! take warning by it, and at no hand bind yourself to any stranger, until you are well satisfied that he is like yourself. Doubtless there are other sore tribulations, but the sorest of them all is *that*. I am doubtful you will be wondering, and maybe smiling at

this. But mind, Grace, I would far rather lie down in Pasturelands kirkyard the morn, than hear of either Mary or you entering upon such a wierd as fell to the lot of your poor, young, heart-broken mother.

“ And furthermore, Grace, my dear, let not your mother’s wrongs, sore though they were, change your demeanour in the place where you are now dwelling. It would not right her, and it would but put yourself in new troubles—without saying, as I might doubtless do, that it is a duty to forgive, and that your father may have grieved for it sore sinsyne, being but a young and a thoughtless man then. And keep up a strong spirit, aye like a good bairn, and be ever mindful of Him who brings light out of darkness.

“ So far as you have gone, and truly, Grace, I am not the one to lightlie what

is pain to you, it is but outer tribulations that have come upon you yet ; and your own mind is in a manner free, and your own friends would spend their whole strength to pleasure you. But oh, Grace ! I could tell you of troubles, of sore weights laid upon a young spirit in a single night, and never taken off—of woeful struggles—the heart contending against the judgment, and the judgment against the heart, till the poor frail habitation they dwelt in was like to be riven in twain.

“ It is a sore thing to have fightings without and fears within, but it is sorer still, Grace, my dear bairn, to have both the fightings and the fears gathered up in the same bit little space, and it all quivering and throbbing with pain day and night, seeking rest and finding none. I did not think even to have spoken of the like of

these things to you, if it had not been in a small way to comfort you. But bring you a stout heart to your stey brae, my own bairn, and you will win over it. Truly I have known as young things as you, to whom folk could not have said that.

“ And, as for ourselves, we are just settled down in our old way again. I am home to Sunnyside, as you will see by the top of my letter; and blythe I was this morning to sit down in my own chair, by my own fireside again, although I am missing, sorer than ever, my bird that they have caged away from me. Mary is coming to see me, some time this week, and is going to stay a-while, the which you will wonder much to hear me say I am almost sorry about; but as I know you will be discreet, and no mention it to Mary, I will tell you the reason.

“ Mr. Allan Elphinstone, I am feared, is inclined to think more about Mary than he has any occasion to do ; and seeing it was mentioned before him, that Mary was coming, I am feared *he* will be at Sunnyside too. And our Mary, poor bairn, is an innocent thing, and has seen few like Mr. Allan, (as indeed you could not see many in any place like him), for he is a lad both of a pleasant countenance, and a most loveable and kindly nature ; and I well know that Mrs. Elphinstone thinks in her own mind, that Mary Maitland, of Pasturelands Manse, is no right match for Allan Elphinstone of Lilliesleaf ; as indeed, putting our own bit remainder of carnal pride away, it is true that she is not, in the wealth of this world ; and among them I am like to have but little comfort for a while, unless Mr. Allan takes a notion of one of the ladies at the

Castle (they are expected here every day), as his mother wants him to do ; only lads like him are no aye good bairns in that particular. But any way, I wish he was fairly out of our Mary's road, for I have aye a terror in such a matter as this—of an innocent young thing (and in especial one of own bairns) getting a sore heart.

“ I have just been hearing from Jenny, that Christian Lightfoot is going to be married upon James Laidlaw, the carter, whom you will mind. He was one of your first friends in Burrowstoun, Grace, and a leal one he is to this day. And the evil spirit of a bairn, Willie, Christian's brother, has gone to be prentice with John Smiddy, the blacksmith, no so much to learn the trade, as just to keep him out of

mischief; though, so far as I can see, there's no much likelihood of that coming to pass.

“I put in these things because I think you will like to keep Burrowstoun in your mind, and the things that happen in it. Also, Mr. Allan has got a plan in his head for the bettering of Cruive End, which, as you will remember, has much need of being improved; only it's my fear that he is going to begin at the wrong end.

“And now, my dear bairn, keep a blythe heart. I have a confidence within me in Him that setteth the poor in families, that he will not let me bide desolate long. Be you aye getting all the learning you can, seeing you have a good opportunity the now, and write to me, like a good bairn, everything that comes into your head. And the Almighty

bless you, and have you in His keeping for evermore.

“ MARGARET MAITLAND.”

“ P.S. If you should meet the gentleman called Monteith, be careful of noting what he says, and tell me what like he is, and what you think of him. I knew one once that bore that name.

M. M.”

So having sent away that letter, I began to look over my house quietly, and by myself, as it was right I should do, having been a while away; and truly my heart swelled within me, when I went into my Grace's empty room, and saw the bits of books lying, some of them just as they did when she was there, and minded her saying that she would get them if she ever came home again. And

also in my work-table, in the parlour, there was a seam lying half-done, that she had been sewing just before she went away. I had not the heart to meddle with it, but just let it lie as her own hands had folded it, thinking, that maybe, after all, the Lord, who brought her to my household first to be my bairn, would bring her back again ; and much meditation I had concerning her, as was but natural, seeing I had never missed her so greatly before.

So, partly with these thoughts in my mind, and partly with doing bits of things that were needful to be done in the house, the afternoon slipped away, and after I had got my solitary cup of tea, I went ben into the kitchen to speak a word to Jenny about something I wanted her to do. And at the kitchen fireside, when I went in, there was sitting an old woman from Burrowstoun,

whose name was Jean Wylie—a woman I had no manner of liking for, seeing that her whole work was speaking about her neighbours, praising them to themselves, and mis-calling them to other folk. And truly I had no sooner crossed the door than she began making a work about me, as if it was a matter of thankfulness to *her*, that I had come safe home again. And then she had to ask for Grace.

“I thank you, Jean,” said I, “Grace is well so far as I have heard.”

“And come into a great fortune, as I hear, Miss Maitland,” said Jean, “and living in as grand a house as there is in a’ E’mbro’. And they say *its* ane grand place to dwell in, wi’ wale o’ a’thing that onybody could desire; and whenever ane minister onygate through the haille country begins to stand up, head and shouthers aboon a’ the people, in the way o’

doctrine, or learning, or the like, they say he's straightway taken there, even as the Spirit took Philip and laid him down at the place ca'ed Azotus. But ye hae dwelt there yourself, Miss Maitland, and, doubtless, ye maun ken better than a pair body like me."

"It is a very fine town to live in, Edinburgh, Jean," said I; "there is no dispute of that."

"I hae often wondered within myself, Miss Maitland," said Jean, "that the minister, Mr. Maitland, should have been laid to rest in ane wee place like Pasturelands sae lang, and him weel kent as ane mighty in the Scriptures; but I ne'er saw the like o' you, Miss Maitland, for ye're as ill at a body for gieing honour where honour is due in your ain family, as if it was an ill word; but they say the Leddy o' Lelliesleaf is sair worn in the body, and withered and auld like.

Eh ! Losh ! and it looks nae a week since I mind o' Miss Shuzan of Lochlee ane young thing, and the auld lady like an atomy in the heavy widow's claes. It maun be trouble, Miss Maitland, for it canna be sae muckle age ; for there's yoursel, but a young leddy yet."

" Whisht, Jean," said I, for I was angry at the woman for thinking to please me with such a falset. "I have not called myself young this fifteen years, and truly, if I had been given to the like of these vanities, the sight of Mrs. Elphinstone being weak and ill, poor lady, might have cured me of it for a while."

" Deed and that's true," said Jean, shaking her head. " It will make an odds, that weary time, baith on gentle and simple. I'm an auld withered body mysel, but I'll no say but what I'm yaul yet, in a measure,

and can tak my bit meat hearty, the which is a matter of thankfulness ; but trouble is waur than years, Miss Maitland, and the Leddy o' Lilliesleaf, folk say, has kent plenty o' that. An ill man's a sair handfu', and I hae heard—"

"Jean," said I, "it is not fit that we should be speaking slanders of the dead. Truly we might have plenty of our own to think about, without meddling with our neighbours' ill-doings. Jenny, I want you.'

"Oh! Miss Maitland!" said Jean, in a great hurry, as if she was feared I would get away, "there's an unco story getting up at Cruive End, about something the young Laird's gotten into his head. Poor folk's business maun gie way to gentles pleasure ; but the hail toun's in a stir about it, and I thought maybe you would

gie me a notion o' what it's gaun to be."

"What do the folk say, Jean?" said I.

"Deed ye ken, Miss Maitland, there's aye a hantle lees gaun, and ane would need wisdom to part the wee pickle wheat frae the stourie chaff, even as it is written in the very Scriptur itsel; but they say the young gentleman's gaun to file his bonnie white hands ripeing out the mouldy corners and redding up the chalmers, or waur than that, pu'ing down the bits o' biggings about the lugs o' the pair sackless bodies that aught them; but I think mysel that nae young gentleman o' guid bluid and gentle havins, like the Laird, wi' the hail estate o' Lilliesleaf and Lochlee to tak' his pleasure on, would have the heart to play himsel in sic a manner as that, letting in the

cauld wind and the open daylight into the auld wives' neuks, just because they were nae sae weel redd up as they micht hae been; but Sandy Clavers, the auld tailor, says they do the like in Ireland every day, and that it's to get the folk off the land; but I say, Miss Maitland, that the young Laird suld mind that the folk o' Cruive End are kindly tenants, and no ungodly Irishers."

"Mr. Allan will wrong no man, Jean," said I, "be you sure of that; and what he will do in Cruive End, will be well and rightly done, for you know yourself it's an ill place."

"Weel, to hear the like o' that!" said Jean, holding up her hands. "When a'budy kens I had said sae, and upheld sae, when there wasna ane in the toun durst venture on sic a word but mysel! for

I aye said to mysel, 'Aweel, and if the wild Irishes *div* hear o't and be wraithful, as the manner o' them is, how can they meddle wi' me, that am but a lone woman; biding quiet in the bit cobble o' a theekit habitation that was my granny's before me?' Sae I aye spoke out my mind, Miss Maitland, and testified that Cruive End was ane shame and ane disgrace to be seen in a Christian land; and to think that the young Laird should have taken it up!—Weel, weel! but it's no my pairt to be puffed up."

But truly it is little use writing this down here, seeing it could be of small consequence to anybody what Jean Wylie, of Burrowstoun, thought of Mr. Allan's plan; but I had began to write it down before I thought of that, for Jean Wylie being a great speaker, and no without a

kind of cleverness in her way, was more mixed up with everything in our quiet place than folk in a bigger town would think possible for an old and poor woman. But that is no way to the purpose.

So, in our ordinary quiet manner, another day or two slipped by, and on the Friday, Mary came from the Manse, and truly I was blythe to see her, though I still had a measure of dread concerning Mr. Allan. And the first thing Mary asked for was Grace's letter, which I had mentioned to her upon the Sabbath day before, when I was at Pasturelands' Kirk, though I had forgotten to take it over with me, to let them see it. Mary was greatly moved, as it was natural a young thing should be, at the story of Grace's poor mother, and more than ever anxious, as it seemed, to get Grace home, for the

two had been such close friends, almost more than even sisters commonly are.

“Aunt,” said Mary to me, “I have found out a way to get Grace home. When she is twenty-one—and that will only be three years—her father cannot make her stay in Edinburgh; and then she can come home to Sunnyside. No, but you need not smile, for that is the law.”

“Ay, Mary,” said I. “I knew not that you were any way learned in the law before. Was it Willie Elder that told you that?”

“Willie Elder is at college just now, you know,” said Mary. “It was Mr. Elphinstone that told me, aunt.”

“And when did you see Mr. Elphinstone, Mary,” said I, in an alarmed manner.

The bairn looked up in an innocent way

to my face. "Was there anything wrong in speaking to Mr. Elphinstone, aunt?" said she. "I met him on Wednesday, at Sedgie Brae, and so he walked up to the Manse with me, because he wanted to consult my father about something he is going to do at Cruive End; and we began to talk of Grace, and he told me that—but, aunt, was there anything wrong in it, that you look at me so?"

"No, Mary," said I, being feared to turn her thoughts to such a thing, though there was already a flush upon her face, but that was with me looking at her, "by no means, my dear; wherefore should there be anything wrong in it?"

"Well, aunt," said Mary, giving her head a shake, as if it was to throw off the bit shamefacedness that had come upon her, though the red was still upon her

cheek, "if Grace cannot get away before, we are sure of her then, and three years is not so long a time after all."

"If we are all spared, Mary," said I.

"Yes, aunt, I mean that," said the bairn. "The Earl and his family arrived at the Castle the day you left Lilliesleaf, Mr. Elphinstone told me, and there is to be some very great party at Lilliesleaf. But you would hear of that."

"Did Mr. Allan tell you about it, Mary?" said I.

"No, aunt," said Mary, "it was Janet Elder that told me. The Elders have not been invited, nor the Blythes, nor us, and my aunt is not pleased, for she says there were Elders in the old Place at Bourtree, before a stone of the Castle was laid, and I am sure no one would compare Adam Blythe, of the Meadows, to Lord

Burrowstown, or Lady Julia to Janet Elder, only they have titles, that is all."

"Well, Mary, my dear, never heed it," said I, "neither Adam Blythe, nor Janet Elder, nor you, would like to be in a company with these folk, and be looked down upon. But did Mr. Allan no say anything about the ladies at the Castle?"

"Not much," said Mary, with a kind of smile, "only he asked me if I knew them, and said old Lady Mary was a great bore—which was not right certainly—but then I did not know her, aunt, so I could not say anything, and she has *not* a pleasant face."

"And if Mr. Allan was going to the Castle, and telling Lady Julia that *your* aunt was a great bore, would you be pleased with that, Mary," said I. "Maybe the young man may think the same of me as

he does of Lady Mary. Lady Mary has written a book."

"Aunt!" said Mary, in an offended-like way, "I thought you knew Mr. Elphinstone better—that is, I mean—oh! there he is at the gate."

And truly it was him opening the outer gate.

"Did you tell him when you were coming down, Mary?" said I.

"Yes, aunt," said Mary, speaking low; "but he did not say he was coming to Sunnyside," and with that she gave me a kind of strange wondering look, and a colour came on her whole face like fire. The bairn had found it out!

I would have given Sunnyside, at that moment, to anybody that would have kept that young man from my door; for how did I know what might come to pass, and my

heart began to tremble for the peacefulness of my innocent bairn.

So Mr. Allan came in and sat down, and we got into converse.

“I have just come from Cruive End, Miss Maitland,” he said. “I am not sure, by the bye, that that piece of information is likely to make you better pleased with my intrusion; but as I am fairly in, and Jenny is too much my friend to be a party to turning me out, I may venture to tell you. But such a din as I have awakened in that odorous suburb of Burrowstoun, Babel, I am sure, was nothing to it.”

“And what have you done, Mr. Allan?” said I. “I could hardly think you had time to do much yet.”

“Only overhauling,” said Mr. Allan, in his cheerful way; “suggesting here and there that there might be a greater distinction

made between the little pigs, biped, and quadruped, to the advantage of both ; or that yon sacred doorway dubs might be dispensed with. The people have got some stories of Irish clearings among them, left, I suppose, with lots of other rubbish, by the Irish harvest-men, reapers, shearers, or whatever they may please to call themselves ; and the mind of Cruive End is actually possessed with the idea that I am going to pull down their cottages, and do no more—leaving them houseless. Now, ladies, I have a proposal to make to you. If you will walk down to Cruive End with me, you shall hear Allan Elphinstone's maiden speech. I must say something to them. There was a knot of rascals yonder, looking thunder at me ; and really I am exceedingly reluctant that my first public appearance should be

made only to them. Ah! Miss Maitland, why that gentle shaking of your head? Remember the Cruive End scheme originated with you."

"You are very kind, Mr. Allan," said I, "and I would like in an uncommon manner to hear your speech; but it would not be right. I am only an humble gentlewoman, and Mary is but a bairn; and truly, I think it would be daft like to see us with a young gentleman like you at such a time."

Mr. Allan's countenance grew vexed like, but yet he gave a bit smile when I said that. He was looking at Mary, and no at me; but the bairn kept her eyes steadfast on her seam, and never said a word. And then he began:

"Miss Maitland, you don't consider, the people of Cruive End know your benevolence—

Oh! I did not expect *you* would acknowledge that ; but Miss Mary, I hope, will be so candid as to admit it ; and if you were with me, you see, they would be satisfied that I had no barbarous intentions. You really will not, Miss Maitland? That is too bad! I did not think you could have been so cruel—and my maiden speech too!”

“And are you not going to pull down the houses, Mr. Elphinstone?” said Mary.

“Yes,” said Mr. Allan, “but not now. My mother was planning a village for me ; but that everlasting Lady Mary heard of it, and so it is shipwrecked. They want to have Swiss cottages! If you would only help me with my plan, Miss Mary, we might make a decent thing of it yet. Will you let me bring down my mother’s sketch to-morrow?”

“I cannot draw,” said Mary, quietly, “and I have seen far too little to be of any use; but, just now, you are not going into the people’s houses, Mr. Elphinstone? They say charitable people do that, and lecture them if they are not clean. Now, perhaps, that is right—I don’t know; but—their houses are their own as well as ours—I do not feel comfortable about it.”

“I do not feel comfortable about it either, Miss Mary,” said Mr. Allan. “I am glad we agree in that, at least. I do *not* feel at liberty to pry into the domestic concerns of these people, even though I wish to do them good. So I propose that we refer our difficulty to my most wise and excellent counsellor at your right hand, to whom the honour of originating the scheme belongs, and not to me.”

“Indeed, Mr. Allan,” said I, “that has aye been a difficulty with me too. I am not one of the folk who could go into a cot-house, and preach to the mistress of it—maybe a distressed woman toiling among a big small family—about having bright plates on her shelf, and scoured things hanging on her wall, like what are in the houses that bairns have for toys. And my thought, Mr. Allan, concerning Cruive End, was, that you might do something to get them to turn to honest work, (for idleset seldom heeds about being clean), and chiefly that you might endeavour to bring the Word to bear upon that benighted and dark place, the which is an effectual cleanser of both hearts and houses, and never fails to work a change—that was my thought of it.”

Mr. Allan’s face grew grave at that, and

then he came up to me, and held out his hand.

“I will,” he said, “I promise you, Miss Maitland, I will use the highest means, and perhaps—perhaps, as my mother’s old maid says, ‘get some of the blessings in the by-going.’ And then Mr. Allan went on, getting into his blyther tone again, and turning to Mary, “There is one quite legitimate thing, Miss Mary, which is to be my first step. I intend to build a village—not after Lady Mary’s plan, but a plain, substantial Scotch village, with good, comfortable, airy little houses, which my worshipful tenants at Cruive End will do me the honour to inhabit when they are finished, in lieu of these miserable huts. Does that please you, Miss Mary?”

Mary smiled, and said, “Yes.”

And the young man went on, "Will you lay the foundation stone, Miss Maitland? I don't know any one so fit. We shall give the inhabitants of Cruive End a *fête*, and have a regular masonic ceremony. Greater pomps, I am sure, than are within our reach have dignified erections greatly less useful. Miss Maitland, shall I go order my silver trowel? Will you lay the foundation stone of regenerated Cruive End?"

"Whisht, Mr. Allan," said I, with a smile; "it's no right to laugh so at a harmless old wife like me. No, no! but there's the young ladies at the Castle. There is no saying but what one of them would lay the stone with her own hand, for the sake of the ploy and of the young Laird of Lilliesleaf."

Mr. Allan started, and turned round upon his heel, muttering to himself, angry like,

“ If new Cruive End is to begin under the auspices of the Castle, or the young ladies of the Castle, Miss Maitland, it shall have for its regenerator some other person than Allan Elphinstone.”

CHAPTER II.

I HAVE aye had a liking for youthful folk, and youthful folk for me, I know not well wherefore; and Mr. Allan Elphinstone was a lad of an uncommon pleasant nature; but, for all that, I would have given much, just to have been able to keep him out of my house—but truly that was what I could not do. And to think of him setting so light by the Castle, and the ladies his mother made so great a work about. Nevertheless, that is not the im-

mediate thing I have to speak about, seeing I have begun upon a new sheet of paper, for upon that Friday there came a letter from Grace, which I will just put in.—

“ My dear Aunt,

“ I am glad that I can think of you again as at Sunnyside. The grim setting of your dark old Lilliesleaf did not become your picture, in my mind, half so well as the bright frame of our own pleasant home. And have you Mary with you again? It would almost be better not to tell me, for I grow envious. The air here carries evil things in it, aunt; you had better send for me to Sunnyside before I am altogether corrupted.

“ I was about to say, that I had made my *entrée* into Edinburgh society yesterday; it would, perhaps, be more correct to say, had got a glimpse of it; as I infer, from

various things my aunt has said, that the indulgence is not to be repeated.

“I think I told you that hitherto I have only been with Mrs. Lennox and her family when they had no visitors, and on all occasions when strangers were with them, have been “allowed” to remain in my own room. Yesterday I was honoured to form one of a large party, and (far more important) to see Mr. Monteith.

“I do not deny being a little fluttered while I sat in a dark corner of Mrs. Lennox’s drawing-room, and saw her guests arriving; for I had no idea why she had brought me there. There were a great many strangers, some fine ladies, and fine gentlemen, and some very cultivated and intellectual looking people—but I was introduced to none. I even saw one or two girls, who had discovered me in my corner

casting compassionating glances, as if they thought me the hapless governess or companion, doomed to sit and see what she could not share in. But at last I was roused by hearing *the* name—Monteith. And, after a while, my aunt came up to my corner and introduced me to him.

“ He is a little man, neat, and almost *finical*, but also, as it seemed to me, very gentlemanly, and with a pleasant face. It hardly needed your admonition to make me observe him closely ; but my attention was still more particular in consequence of it. My interest was very powerfully awakened, too, by the sudden change in my aunt’s demeanour. A stranger, like Mr. Monteith, who had never seen Mrs. Lennox and me together before, would have thought me absolutely a favourite. Do you know, aunt, I was greived at that, although I have

never pretended to like Mrs. Lennox ; it is so painful, so humiliating to see a person like her stooping to deception.

“ But that has not anything to do with Mr. Monteith. He seems a man of some sarcastic humour, not very tolerant of other people’s foibles, and privileged to give expression to his intolerance rather broadly ; but with a benevolence about him, nevertheless, which made him speak to me in the most kind, almost fatherly, manner, when in spite of all my aunt’s manœuvres, and ill-concealed displeasure, I found myself seated at table by his side.

“ There would seem to be, in some way or other, an odd sort of connexion between this old gentleman and myself, which made our conversation very awkward. A something which he imagines me to comprehend

fully ; and the consequence was, that after asking me questions of all kinds, as if there was a perfectly confidential understanding between us, and perceiving my hesitation and awkwardness, he himself began to look puzzled and perplexed, and as if he did not know what to make of me. With all his kindness, dear aunt, I am very much afraid Mr. Monteith thought me a fool.

“ ‘ You are lately from the country, Miss Grace,’ he said, after various attempts at conversation had failed.

“ I, too anxious to catch some weighty word from him, which might elucidate my position, to talk myself, returned a confused ‘ Yes.’

“ ‘ And yet have not brought so much of the bloom with you, as we see sometimes,’

he continued, 'but you will get strong now I hope—they tell me you have been very delicate?'

"I was astonished, and could only stammer 'I don't know, Sir.'

"'You don't know, Miss Grace? Ah! I am afraid my question about the country has sent your thoughts back to some pleasanter scene than this. But we cannot let you be so great a heretic as to dislike Edinburgh.'

"Mrs. Lennox's eye seemed to be continually upon us, and she had managed that we should be seated very near the head of the table, so she now broke in,—

"'Grace is greatly better since she came to me, Mr. Monteith. We intend to carry her off to the continent by-and-bye. She is quite a little novice yet, I assure you.

We must let her see something of the world.'

“ ‘Humph!’ said Mr. Monteith, in a kind of half soliloquy. ‘I have no idea of girls being carried about to see the world. Better at home. But my little friend here must be acquainted with some sort of a world. Ha, Miss Grace, do you start now? We have all our peculiar fancies on the subject. Edinburgh is my world. I suppose I may say London is your aunt’s. Now let me hear what your’s is.’

“ ‘It is very different from this, Sir,’ I said: ‘there is evil in it, too, doubtless; but there is simplicity, and faith, and goodness—and wisdom, also. I do not know whether these things abound in this greater world or no.’

“ Mr. Monteith smiled.

“ ‘Not bad,’ he said. ‘Come, we are

going to be friends, after all. I thought it would be a strange thing if your mother's daughter could not put half-a-dozen sensible words together. Now whereabouts does this paradise lie?

"I mentioned 'Burrowstoun.'

"Mr. Monteith turned round upon me, uttered the monosyllable 'Ay?' in a startled tone, and then, compressing his lips, was silent a while.

"At length he said again, in the half soliloquy, which seems to be a peculiarity of his—'She's very like her mother.'

"'Did you know my mother, Sir?' I ventured to ask.

"'Did I know her mother! Why, my dear, if I had not known your mother, and known her well, too, what do you think could have tempted her to make me—'

"'Oh, Mr. Monteith!' interrupted my

cousin Harriet, who sat at his other hand; 'you have never asked us to come out and visit you. Mr. Bellendean has just been telling me how sweetly you have furnished Broadlee. I am sure I should have made Mamma go out to call, even without an invitation, if I had known. Frederic Bellendean says there is such a delightful place for a pic-nic party on your grounds. Now won't you ask us all to come.'

"'Can't promise, Miss Lennox,' said Mr. Monteith, drily. 'I should frighten you young ladies if I began to snarl through the wires of my cage, as is my custom sometimes.'

"'Oh, I assure you, I am not so easily frightened,' said Harriet; 'and Fred. Bellendean says it is quite a treat to see Broadlee. Such sweet things you have got about it, Fred says.'

“‘I’m a sweet subject altogether, certainly,’ said Mr. Monteith, with a severe smile. ‘I’ve no millinery, Miss Harriet, about Broadlee—not a bit—and I really do not know what there is in it that would interest either young Bellendean or you. But as I was saying, Miss Grace,’ for Harriet had already resumed her former conversation with her favourite, Fred. Bellendean, ‘we must be friends, you and I. Yes, I knew your mother. My father stood in something of the same relation to her that I do to—’

“‘Are you noticing the resemblance, Mr. Monteith,’ said my aunt: ‘it is quite impossible to avoid being struck with it. I could almost imagine the last twenty years a mere dream, and fancy that my brother’s wife was actually before me.’

“‘Better for her she is not, poor thing,’

said Mr. Monteith, hastily, and sinking his voice; 'but is it twenty years since poor Grace Hunter was delivered from her troubles?' Miss Grace Maitland, my dear, how old are you ?'

"I answered 'eighteen.'

"Mr. Frederic Bellendean looked up to us, and said flippantly, that 'it was a great shame to question a young lady upon so delicate a subject,' whereupon my cousin Harriet tittered.

"My friend, glancing bitterly upon the interrupter, muttered, 'A greater shame to give puppy dogs the gift of speech. And so you are eighteen, Miss Grace. Ay, and your mother has lain in the little churchyard at Westergate some sixteen years.'

"'Is that near Oakenshaw, Sir,' I asked.

"Mr. Monteith looked at me kindly. 'Oakenshaw,' he repeated. 'Child, you

have your mother's voice. Yes, she lies near the scene of her trials. Poor Grace ! But you have never seen Oakenshaw yet.'

" I said I had not.

" ' Well, lay your commands on me, Miss Grace : I am quite at your service. It is not too long a drive for you, I daresay, especially as you seem to have less apprehension about your health than your anxious friends,' and Mr. Monteith's eye fell inquisitively upon Mrs. Lennox. ' Let me see ; to-morrow and Saturday I am engaged ; let us say Monday. Will that suit you ? Let it be Monday, then.'

" ' What is that, Mr. Monteith ?' said my aunt. ' Are you plotting to run away with my niece ? Be careful, Grace, I assure you he is quite a lady killer, that gentleman beside you ; but did I not hear you speak of Oakenshaw ? We have been talking of

making a party to let Grace see her birth-place. Let us arrange it this evening—but now—'

"My aunt rose, and my conversation with my interesting new acquaintance was brought to a sudden conclusion. Nor did I see him again, for when the other ladies entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Lennox grasped my arm, and telling me she did not require my further presence, sent me upstairs to my own room.

"Will you think me very foolish, dear Aunt, if I confess that I was very much disappointed. Though I knew none of the people, they had yet kindly pleasant faces, many of them, and I have so much solitude now, that I grow very weary of it sometimes. I hear, however, that we are to go to Oaken-shaw, on Monday, and I suppose the excuse Mrs. Lennox would give to Mr. Monteith

for my nonappearance in the evening would be—my health.

“And now, Aunt, what do you think of my new friend? I forgot to say that he is about the same age as our father at Pasturelands, and looks well, too, though he has not got so fine a head as our father. He has something to do with me, I see, though what I cannot tell; he is favourably inclined towards me also, I think, and would be my friend. And lastly, Mrs. Lennox is afraid of him. These three points are very clear, and I wish exceedingly that I may be able to see him alone on Monday, that I may ask him what all this is to end in.

“He did not mention my father at all, (he was not at home then) and invariably called me Miss Grace; never, not even when he spoke to me first, employing the ‘Maitland.’ If Maitland was not our own name at home,

Aunt, the name of Sunnyside and Pasturelands, I should be greatly inclined to give it up and call myself Hunter.

“ My father returned to-day—he has been at the country residence of some of his friends—shooting, I believe. This morning, however, I have seen some angry looks and gestures, from which, it seems evident, that upon some point, Mrs. Lennox and he are not perfectly at one. And a few words from Harriet has made me think it probable that the cause is connected in some way with Mr. Monteith’s introduction to me, and the projected visit to Oakenshaw.

“ Harriet’s communications began with an exclamation of ‘ what a bore that old Monteith is,’ to which, as I did not agree with her, I made no answer. ‘ Conceive my uncle and mamma quarrelling about a stupid old man !’ was the next effusion of Harriet’s

wisdom. I asked if Mr. Monteith was not a friend of my father's.

“ ‘ A friend,’ exclaimed Harriet, ‘ why, you know—oh ! but to be sure you don't know, I had forgot,’ and my amiable cousin stopped to look at me, with a kind of contemptuous pity, and laughed.

“ ‘ They are just such good friends,’ she continued, when the mirth was expended ; ‘ that if Mr. Monteith should happen to enter the room at this moment, and saw Mr. Maitland, he would turn round coolly and walk down stairs again ; and my uncle returns the good feeling cordially. I would advise you, Miss Maitland, to carry out your intimacy with Mr. Monteith merely by way of showing how dutiful a daughter you are.’

“ I was again silent, and Harriet resumed.

“ ‘ But I was going to ask you, cousin, to do me a favour on Monday. Mamma, with her usual kindness, has fixed upon *me* to go down along with you to that dull place Oakenshaw, in Mr. Monteith’s old-fashioned carriage. Now I promised Fred. Bellendean to go with him. Do contrive to pull some one else in on Monday morning, and so let me off. Mamma wont be angry at you then, and perhaps before we get home she will have forgotten all about it. Do now, there’s a good creature ; but don’t, for the world, tell mamma.’

“ There are wheels within wheels, aunt, and Miss Harriet Lennox’s flirtation may, perhaps, have the good effect of giving me an opportunity for the conversation I do so greatly desire.

“ I enclose a note to Mary : of other things mentioned in your last letter I will speak

hereafter. Do you think it is possible that this Mr. Monteith is your friend? He did seem to know the name of Burrowstoun. I would be very much rejoiced if it was the same person, that I might be able to speak to him of you.

“ So there, aunt, I am done at present ; if I had any one but you to deal with, I am sure they would have tired of me long ago.

“ Your most affectionate,

“ GRACE MAITLAND.”

And truly there was also a note to Mary, the which I see that she, the foolish bairn, (though she's a douce woman now) has tacked to my sheet of paper just the moment that I put down my pen to put Grace's letter away among the rest, after I had written it all down here. I say, I see that Mary (for I

am staying with her just now) has tacked Grace's little note to my paper with a wafer, to save me the trouble of putting it in write, and this is it.—

“ My dear Mary,

“ Are you wondering that after my aunt's voluminous epistle I should still not 'scorn to add a note.' To tell the truth, I am becoming very much ashamed of writing so constantly about myself. Does my aunt think me very selfish? or is that the opinion in the Manse? I am very nervous on the subject, and feel myself blushing as sentence after sentence rises on my paper, all having for their burden that continual I—I; but then, Mary, what can I do? There is neither affection nor sympathy for me here, and though, perhaps, by and bye, the remembrance of poor Grace, even in your minds,

may grow dim, I have almost my only consolation in knowing, that at present I can look to my aunt and you all for both affection and sympathy.

“ It is very dreary and melancholy to be alone, Mary, more especially when one has the din and bustle of gay society ringing in one’s ears all day; and then what can I do but flee with all haste to Sunnyside—my only refuge?

“ Do you think I should not repine so much? lecture me then, and I shall receive it with all humility, but good my little sister, when you shall become a great lady one of these days, send for me to be your humble companion, and I will, (don’t tell my aunt), I will positively—run away.

“ And so, I suppose, I shall need, after the fashion of womankind, to put the one parti-

cular thing for which I write, if not in my postscript, at least at the very end of my note.

“ Jessie has found out the quarters of the Burrowstoun carrier, and is just about to go thither with a parcel for Sunnyside, with the contents of which (they are only a few little remembrances), I hope you will be pleased. The trifles for our acquaintance, the bride Christian, are such as Jessie thinks she would like herself, if she were in the same interesting circumstances; and the other little things, I hope my aunt and you will be pleased with for poor Grace’s sake. My clandestine walks with Jessie, for the purpose of purchasing them, are the most pleasant I have had since I left Sunnyside.

“ Neither my aunt nor you ever mention Claud. You forget that I, too, am a daughter

of the Manse. Tell me what he says in his letters, and how he is doing at College. I have never seen him again.

“ And so, sister Mary, farewell for this one day. Fail not to be aunt Margaret’s amanuensis, and send me a big letter. And do not let our father and mother in Pasturelands forget,

“ Your affectionate sister,

“ GRACE MAITLAND.”

So, it may be thought, we were a kind of curious, after we had read the letters, about what the things were that Grace had sent to us, especially Mary, for I myself was taken up with thinking about my bairn’s story.

There was something in the picture she gave of Mr. Monteith that started me, though I could not say there was much about it, like the blythe Harry Monteith I

knew in my young days. But years make a strange odds, and maybe one that had been sundered from me long would scarce have known the minister's daughter of Pasturelands, in the quiet eldern woman that had set up her lone tabernacle at Sunnyside. But, however, I settled in my mind to bid Grace at no hand speak about me to her new friend. Maybe it was not right, but I could not think of having my name mentioned to *him*—if it should be him. And if it was not, of course, he could know nothing of me.

But, truly I could not get a moment for right and quiet meditation, concerning Grace, all that night, seeing that Mary was aye wondering what could be in the parcel. And little settledness there was in the house (for Jenny was mostly as bad as her) until upon the Saturday afternoon, they got

it at last. And a big parcel it was, with a fine gown in it for Christian Lightfoot, and a tea-pot, glancing like silver, (I have never minded since to ask Grace whether it was plated, or only an imitation, but well it looked, I can say that), and with a real silver ball on the top to lift the lid by. And then there was a fine big printed Bible for Jenny, (Jenny had long been speaking about getting one, for she would not hear of putting on glasses). And there were two very little parcels, carefully put up in the inside of Christian's gown, and marked for Mary and me.

And what should be in mine but a pair of real golden glasses, the like of which I had never seen at Burrowstoun, except on Mr. Essence, the minister of Cosieland, that had been tutor to the Earl! But I had hardly time to wonder at my fine spectacles,

when Mary gave a cry, and behold, in her parcel, which in the inside was a little box all lined with velvet, there lay a bit little gold ring, and a bracelet, made as I saw in a moment of my dear bairn's own hair.

The very speech was taken from my niece Mary. She looked at them, and she looked at me, with the water standing in her eyes, and as if she knew not what to do.

“ Preserve me, Mary,” said I, for I was greatly astonished, “ where has the bairn gotten the siller ?”

And truly that word seemed to waken Mary, for then she put the ring upon her finger, and sat down at my foot, on Grace's stool, and laid the bracelet on my knee, that we might both look at it the better. And it had also a clasp of gold, with “ Mary Maitland,” engraven upon it, in letters so

small that I had to put on my grand glasses, before I could see them at all.

And proud Mary was when I had clasped it on her bit little white wrist, and the ring upon her finger. The bairn had never worn such things all her days before, and every now and then there would be a glance at her hand; for truly the innocent thing was but a mortal bairn after all, and no far past seventeen.

So Jenny and her (and Jenny was greatly uplifted about her Bible) went down to Saunders Lightfoot's that very night, with Grace's present, for Christian was to be married on the Monday. And truly, the bits of presents that we had all got were a comfort to me in my meditation, seeing Grace's aunt could not be so ill to her after all, when she had siller to buy all these dear things.

Doubtless, I did put in some notes into

Mary's little green purse, that Grace might have something in her hand, when she went into the strange house; but I think not it could buy so much gold. So when Mary came home from Burrowstoun, being very full about these bonniedies, as was but natural—for doubtless they were very bonnie to look upon, she began straightway to write to Grace, the which letter, being but short, I will put in.—

“ My dear Grace,

“ I wish you could only have seen the joyful uproar of my aunt's quiet parlour to-day when we opened your parcel. But now I do not know how to thank you; everything you have sent is so pretty and so delicately chosen, that my acknowledgments will only look clumsy beside them. But I can tell you this, Grace, that my aunt's old

spectacles 'did not need to be taken off and wiped half so often as these *braw* new ones do; and that my aunt has just been giving me a lecture for looking at my hand so much, and closed her last sentence with these ominous words, 'The vanities of this world!' But thank you, dear Grace, above all, for the bracelet, which is more than pretty, and which I shall wear always.

"For Christian Lightfoot and Jenny, what shall I say, but that they are above measure delighted and astonished that Miss Grace should be so mindful of the like of them. *We* don't wonder at that, Grace, for we know you better.

"But I wonder very much why you have always liked so well to laugh at me. It is very wicked, Grace, and mischievous, and puts things into people's heads. You know

very well I never shall be a great lady; but I have found out something that will serve our purpose quite as much. I thought myself once (it was when Adam Blythe of the Meadows came of age last month, and my father and my uncle James of Bourtree gave up their charge of him, and he got his affairs into his own hands), that when you were twenty-one you might choose for yourself, and come home to Sunnyside, if you liked. So I asked a person whom I thought likely to know, and he said I was right, and that your father could not keep you against your will *then*.

“What do you think of that? And it will be only three years. I daresay there will be a great change upon us all by the time you come home, Grace; for even the very little time you have been away, I think

I am not quite the same ; that is, I am older a great deal (at least I think so), and not so much a girl.

“ Oh ! my aunt has been looking over my shoulder, and I have just got a shake, and a question as to whether my extreme admiration of my ring is a proof of greater womanliness or no. What do *you* think, Grace ?

“ I am glad you like Mr. Monteith. I don't quite understand though how you can have lived in Edinburgh so long without liking either your aunt or your cousins. Mrs. Elphinstone, of Lilliesleaf, is the coldest lady I ever saw ; and yet I think people who know her must like even her. She seems to care a good deal for my aunt, and my father and mother ; but she does not like me. Is not that strange ? And it cannot be pride of her great station, or of her wealth, for you

know when they were young, she was very intimate with my aunt. So if she does not like me for my ownself, why then I have no reason to be angry. I like very well to make friends; but when people don't want to be pleased, I do not see, Grace, why one should make any particular exertions to please them.

“ But all that has nothing to do with your new friend. I am glad he is not young, and I hope he will turn out *somebody*, and bring you back to Sunnyside, that so these troubles may end with a ‘ lived happy and died happy,’ like one of Jenny’s fairy tales.

“ I thought I had said a great deal about Claud in the last letter I wrote; I know I intended to do so. My father met Dr. Inge at Rures not long ago, at Mr. Shepherd’s, and he said Claud was pleasing everybody in Edinburgh, and winning honours fast. Now,

my uncle James says, Dr. Inghie is not to be trusted always when he is speaking of students; but I don't think that can be the case, for what motive had he to praise Claud, unless Claud deserved it; and we know better than my uncle what Claud can do.

“Christian Lightfoot is to be married on Monday. I am going down myself with Jenny to see the wedding. I don't know how poor Christian will stand it, if old Dr. Driegh preaches at her for half an hour, as he did when his niece, Mary Vivey, was married to the great Glasgow merchant.

“Shall I send you a piece of Christian's dreaming-bread? I wonder who *you* will dream about, Grace? I have to leave a corner for my aunt, so good bye.

“MARY MAITLAND.”

And I put in this little word myself:—

“ At no hand, Grace, my dear bairn, say a word about me to your friend, Mr. Monteith; it is but an unlikely thing that he should be the one I once knew, though the name is the same, for you know there are many Monteiths, as there are many Maitlands, that are in no way sib to one another.

“ And now, Grace, my dear, thank you for your present of the golden glasses, the which, for all their preciousness, are a douce and comely article of necessity, which it is not misbecoming for me, being an eldern gentlewoman, to wear, and that is more than I could say of almost any other braw thing you could have sent me. You would have laughed, I doubt not, at the bit little remainder of vanity that was yet smouldering within me, if you had seen me standing before the glass, with them on, looking at myself, and very rich and goodly to see

they assuredly were, the like of them not being in Burrowstoun.

“So now, my bairn, mind what I have said about Mr. Monteith, and tell me what he says when you see him on Monday, and also what you think of the house at Oakenshaw. And aye be mindful of your duty, and look for counsel no just from the like of me, but from the Father of Light Himself, and may the brightness of His countenance be lifted up upon you at all times, my dear bairn.

“MARGARET MAITLAND.”

So Mary put up the letter, and we got it sent away, and the Sabbath passed in quietness, and, according to our humble endeavour, in a devout manner, as was becoming that good and pleasant day. And on the Monday forenoon, when Mary was putting

on a better gown in honour of Christian's wedding, there came a carriage to the door with Mrs. Elphinstone in it, and Mr. Allan riding on a horse at her side.

It was, without doubt, a very fine and sunshiny day to be a November day, but I wondered greatly at Mrs. Elphinstone, seeing she was so delicate in her health, venturing so far as Burrowstoun, with no other errand than to call on me, but I could see before long, by a look that she threw round upon Mr. Allan and Mary and me, that she had a jealous thought in her mind forbye, and that she had come to see with her own eyes what it was that brought her son to Sunnyside so often, and truly, I was in a manner vexed that she should have seen Mary, seeing it was no will of mine that the bairn should be in Mr. Allan's way.

So there was a constraint and a chill

feeling about us all, especially before Mr. Allan went away; but seeing the young man had some errand to do at Cruive End, (where they had begun to the new houses, and were working at them with mettle,) and having a perception also, doubtless, that he was the cause of his mother being so distant and cold, he had the discretion to go soon away, leaving Mrs Elphinstone till he came back.

So, after that, she began to speak more, and to tell me of the grand party that was to be the next day, and once or twice she said a word to Mary, in a kind of strange way, as folk do when they are experimenting upon things they know not the nature of.

“Do you know the young ladies at the Castle, Miss Mary?” she asked.

“I have seen them, madam,” said Mary, for Mary, as was natural, was not pleased that any one should deal with her so, having

aye her own bit pride, not that she was like Grace in that respect, for there was aye a kind of unconscious stateliness about Grace, as if bits of trifling things could never hurt the like of her; but Mary's pride—poor bairn! it was never carried to an ill degree with her own will, but we are all weak—was more of the kind to take fire at a slighting word or look.

“Lady Julia is a sweet girl,” said Mrs. Elphinstone, turning her eyes in a keen way on Mary. “My Allan and she promise to be great friends. We spent last evening at the Castle, and they were singing—really, my taste is somewhat fastidious in music, but I confess their united voices charmed me.”

Last evening! It was the Sabbath day, the time that the Maker of us all has hallowed to Himself.

Mrs. Elphinstone saw Mary's head lifted up quick and her eyes meet mine, and she said, with a smile :

“ I am afraid I offend these rigid Scottish prejudices of yours, Miss Maitland. Nay, even your niece's youthful forehead frowns righteous displeasure on me ; but surely, even by your own showing, the innocent enjoyment of light-hearted young people, like my Allan and Lady Julia, does no dishonour to the day.”

There was a vision came across my eyes as she said that, of my three dear bairns, Grace, and Claud, and Mary, all bending their heads over my father's big Bible, and communing joyfully at my fireside, of what was written there. Claud, with his fine head and high brow, growing up in his strength, and Grace, with her stately bearing, and her eyes like floods, and Mary, with her

sunny face and her gold hair, rejoicing in the good and holy Sabbath day, not with the joy of songs and vain laughing, but with the thanksgiving of full, still hearts.

“No, Mrs. Elphinstone,” said I, “it is a pleasant sight to man, and becomes all days well; but oh! the young things know little of gladness that can find it in no other way but *that*, upon the evening of the holy Sabbath day!”

CHAPTER III.

It has ever been a wonder to me how folk could, without need or reason, take up an evil thought in their minds of other folk that have never minted ill on them, in especial of an innocent and winsome young thing like my niece, Mary, whom it was just a pleasure (in spite of her bit little impatient ways now and then) to see going about the house.

But it is little use wondering; Mrs. Elphinstone, it was clear, had taken up a

jealous notion of us all. The unwise woman ! as if that was not the very way to put things into the bairn's head.

The next Sabbath after that was the Sacrament at Pasturelands, and I had promised to go up early upon the Fast Day, to take Mary home, and to hear the sermon. So Robbie came with the gig on Thursday morning, and, on the road up, Mary and me had much converse, seeing the boy Robbie sat on the little back seat, packed up among various other parcels—for Mary had to carry many necessities up with her—it being a season when there are aye guests and strangers about a minister's house. And truly the bairn's spirit was hurt at Mrs. Elphinstone's cold manner, as I could clearly see, but she never said a word about Mr. Allan.

So when we got to the Manse, Mary, my

sister, showed to me a letter from Claud, saying that he had met with Grace, and had also seen her father, which meeting had made him both blythe and vexed, for the father looked but an ill man, and had drawn the bairn angrily away, and would not let her speak to Claud, which troubled my spirit, seeing it was aye another trial of Grace's patience and strength.

But by that time, it was the hour for going to the Kirk, so we had other things to take up our minds. A great gathering of folk there was also, which it was just a pleasure to see, and truly the young man, Mr. Shepherd, of Rures, handled the Word to edification, and seemed to have the gift of speaking a word in season, well. I glanced up at the Lilliesleaf pew just before the sermon began, and who should be

sitting there but him that had troubled my meditations so much—even Mr. Allan Elphinstone himself!—him that had been in the Castle on the Sabbath night, singing ungodly songs with Lady Julia, yet was here sitting among the plain folk of Pasturelands on the Fast Day (which, being a solemnity appointed only by the Kirk in preparation for the Occasion, and no a day set apart like the Sabbath, by the Head of the Kirk, there would be far less sin in breaking) as reverent, it seemed, as any there.

He was a strange riddle to me, that young man: I could not read him. And after the church was out, he came to the Manse, and lingered so long that Mary, my sister, (not knowing my fears, nor Mrs. Elphinstone's jealousy), thought it behoved her to ask him to stay and dine, the

which, truly, the lad needed no second bidding to do.

Mr. Shepherd, of Rures, had, maybe, more learning than Mr. Allan, and he was as clever, and altogether he was a lad I liked, but someway or other, there was a charm wanting about him that Mr. Allan had, and I perceived that though the young minister, in a manner near as shame-faced as a girl's, was, every now and then, for making up to Mary, that a different look from what she answered him with was glinted over whiles to where Mr. Allan sat; the which put me again in fear and perturbation. So, in the evening, I departed again for Sunnyside, Robbie driving me.

It was an uncommon clear, frosty night, with the stars standing out in a cold and bright manner, like armies ranged upon the dark sky, and after I had spoken a word or

two to Robbie, anent his mother, and his auntie Bell, who had once been a servant at the Manse, besides asking for the little bairn Femie that was ill with the measles, we went the rest of the road in quietness, my spirit being filled with meditation.

It is a sore let and hindrance to higher thoughts to have the mind burdened with the care of bairns, in especial at that season when they are just between the tyning and the winning, and I marvel not the Apostle should say (being free of these cares himself) that they were better who did so abide, being saved from trouble in the flesh. Nevertheless, doubtless, there is also a measure of pleasantness in it, of the which I had experience when I sat down at my own fireside that night, and saw a letter from Grace lying on my table, the which I was not long of reading. So I will just put it in.—

“ My dear aunt,

“ I have something to tell to-day, and therefore am hardly so much afraid of wearying you as I am usually when I begin, not that it is anything of particular consequence, but an event of whatever kind is a relief to me, and to you also, doubtless, in so far as my letters are concerned, so I commence with the zest of a story-teller. I believe before all is done, I may match myself with any Scheherazade of them all.

“ In the first place, on the bright sunny Monday, which began secularly this current week ; we went to Oakenshaw—in Mr. Monteith’s old-fashioned carriage, with Mr. Monteith himself on my one hand, but alas ! my aunt on the other ; wherefore, of the conversation there is nothing worth reporting, save that my aunt’s interruptions

made various mysterious breaks in Mr. Monteith's observations, which excited my curiosity more and more, and left room for all manner of conjectures.

“A very curious aspect these same interruptions, often most hurriedly made, and without the slightest reference to what went before, gave our conversation—much like the elliptic lessons wherewith the little dark man, the moral trainer from Glasgow, electrified honest Reuben Reid and his wondering children, or rather I should say these elliptic lessons responded to (supposing the tawse defunct) by some such wicked wight as Willie Lightfoot.

“Oakenshaw itself is a long, irregular, dull house, lying low, but with pleasant woodland views from its windows, and clouds of bare branches gathering round it, which in sum-

mer, I doubt not, being garmented, will be beautiful. There is a water also singing close at hand, but my aunt's pretended care for my health permitted only a glance at it from the window.

“The house itself, in the interior, might look like home if it were inhabited, though certainly it is very desolate now; but I cannot tell you, aunt, with what solemn interest I entered one room, which the servant told me had been the one most occupied by my mother, where were two or three musical instruments, cased and covered with dust, and even some books, with my mother's name upon them.

“I had escaped my aunt for the moment, and so might have the one luxury of being alone where my mother's sad life was spent. The servant, who accompanied me, a ruddy

girl, encouraged I suppose by seeing me less unlike herself than my beautiful and haughty cousins, broke in upon my thoughts with a half whispered—

“‘Eh, Miss Maitland! and are you coming to your ain house at long and last?’

“I had not time to answer the question, when Mrs. Lennox made her appearance, and dragged me away.

“Aunt! I have not so entirely lost my old nature, as to have given up dreams, and bright dreams visit me sometimes. If ever, by some happy chance, this, my mother’s house, becomes mine—shall you not flit instanter, and shall not we, with our great wealth, cause construct some railway or canal to link our court to that hereditary Manse, which I fear no temptation could induce a Claud Maitland to leave? and brave

days follow, extending even to the 'lived happy and died happy' of Jenny's old romances, and our Mary's wish.

"And so I come to my second adventure.

"Yesterday, accompanied by Jessie, I went out (I am afraid I should say clandestinely) to walk, and suddenly remembering, as we passed through one street, that in it was the residence of our old friend, Mrs. Standright, I ventured to call on her. She welcomed me with much kindness, of course; and I was receiving, with very great interest, an account of various ecclesiastical matters, when I heard Claud's voice in the passage.

"He had come to see Mr. Standright on ecclesiastical business; but was not *very* sorry, I think, to let it stand awhile, for the sake of a long conversation about—what—I

do not exactly recollect. We had both of us so much to say ; and Mrs. Standright, not being like us perfectly acquainted with all the domestic arrangements of Sunnyside and the Manse, withdrew to her desk, and began signing, with all dispatch, a bundle of prettily-printed notes, convening some benevolent assemblage of ladies, and so left us to ourselves.

“ I got frightened at last, when I saw how long we had stayed, and, after receiving a very kind invitation to come again, departed, accompanied by Claud. It was *his* fault, aunt, I assure you, and not mine, if fault it was ; for Claud represented himself as feeling so dull sometimes in his solitary room, and I knew myself so utterly alone at all times, that we were both well enough pleased to walk together to the vicinity of my aunt’s house.

“ We were drawing near it, when I felt my shoulder grasped roughly, heard an angry exclamation, and turning round, saw my father. I cannot tell you how I felt. Ashamed and angry for Claud’s sake, and indignant at the look and manner with which my father addressed me.

“ ‘ How dare you,’ was his first burst, and then the storm went on. ‘ It is scandalous—I did not believe my sister, when she told me of these clandestine meetings. Do you know what you do, young lady? Were it not for other considerations, I should disown you from this moment.’

“ I am afraid I was very undutiful.

“ ‘ When you please, Sir,’ I said, ‘ that is a thing to which I can have no possible objections. Goodbye, brother Claud: tell my aunt, when you write, that she may possibly see me sooner than I could have hoped.’

“ Claud went away, and my father stood in apparent astonishment looking at me, and so I called Jessie and went on.

“ ‘ Girl!’ exclaimed my father, striding close up to us, and speaking with his teeth set, ‘ Beware how you trifle with me! What do you mean by that threat? Who is it that you dare speak of as a relative? Remember, you are not in a fool’s hands, but in *mine*! What do you mean?’

“ ‘ Simply what I said, Sir.’ answered I, ‘ You but this instant declared your intention of disowning me. In that case, I begged my friend to tell his aunt, at Sunnyside, the only mother I have ever known, that I might soon be with her again.’

“ My father smiled grimly.

“ ‘ So, that is all,’ he said. ‘ And are you such a romantic fool as to believe that anybody, who could help it, would burden

themselves with a penniless girl, with no expectations. Absurd! ridiculous! Why, even your mother was not such a fool as that.'

" 'I have heard my mother's history, Sir,' I said, as calmly as I could, 'with what feelings you may, perhaps, be able to imagine; and it would be well if *her* name was not mentioned between us.'

" My father tried to laugh, but nevertheless was startled.

" 'Half a dozen inches higher and you might have done for a tragedy queen,' he said with a sneer, 'for the shrew *Hermia* you might do as it is; and, failing these friends of yours in the country, there is a ready resource for you.'

" I was minded to try an experiment.

" 'Mr. Monteith,' I said.

" My father started, and turned to me

a face full of such concentrated malice and hatred that I shrank before it.

“‘Well,’ he said, fixing his eye on me, and evidently suppressing his passion with an effort, ‘What of him?’

“‘He, I am sure, would not refuse to protect me, for my mother’s sake.’

“We arrived at the door as I said that, and then we parted, but not till a threat, not loud but deep, had burst from my father, that I should repent it.

“You will think this very bad, aunt, both his part of it and mine, but I have grown accustomed to such things, and heed them less than I should. I do not see how the mere fact of his being my father, should call forth such deep devotion, such unparalleled tenderness, as one reads of sometimes. Perhaps, it is wrong; perhaps, affection and reverence on my part should

have been instinctive, and existed in entire independence of any qualities in him to draw them out. But putting away all considerations of his conduct to myself, Mrs. Gray's story rushes on my memory. My mother, dead in her youth, rises before me, and I find it impossible.

“And, by the bye, I quite forgot to propound to Claud my question in casuistry. —Whether poor Grace Maitland, having a home in Sunnyside, and no friends elsewhere in the wide world, might not be justifiable in running away? But a penniless girl, with no expectations! What emphasis my father put upon these words. And I would not like to be a burden to you either, aunt.

“Do you know Claud has wonderfully improved since he last left Pasturelands? He has, (like our Mary), grown older, more a

man than he used to be. But oh, aunt! take care of Mary; I have always had an ambition to ward all evil from *her*—and then she is so young—though I can perfectly sympathize with your friend, Mr. Allan, and think he has excellent taste.

“There is a great deal of bustle going on in the house, servants hurrying to and fro, and great evident commotion. What it may portend, I know not; but I have exhausted my peaceful hour, and must go and array myself for the delightful company down stairs.

“Dear aunt,

“Your affectionate,

“GRACE MAITLAND.”

Truly it was a strange thing, that on me, a single woman, there should come more charge of bairns than many a mother

of a family is trysted with ; for besides Grace, that had no friend of her own to counsel her, there were the concerns of the bairn Mary coming, like a ravelled thread, through my hands, and the minister, and Mary, my sister, knowing not that there was so much as a single knot upon it. But truly for all that, it was a pleasure to have the like of Grace looking aye to us as her nearest friends, seeing she was a most pleasant and well-conditioned bairn ; besides being gifted in her own spirit, in a manner past the common.

So the days wore on, and it's no to be thought that there could be much that strange folk would care about hearing of, in the lives of two quiet eldern women like me and Jenny, my maid ; but on the Saturday morning after that, there came another letter from Grace.

A short one it was, written on a bit small sheet of paper, and wonderful blurred and uneven written, as if the bairn had been sore perturbed. And it was to tell me that my Grace was just going to be taken away to London with her aunt, and her aunt's family. There were but two or three words saying that, and saying that she was feared her speech to her father about Mr. Monteith was the cause of it, as she had heard her cousins say that it was not the right time for dwelling in London, and also that she was troubled in her own spirit, and that was all.

Truly I, also, was troubled to read that letter, seeing it was like as if the Ruler of all things was aye drawing my bairn further and further away from me, and likewise a fear came over me, within myself, that maybe I had been setting her too high in

my own heart, and so tempting Him that should aye reign there ; and in every way I was sore grieved and distressed concerning the matter.

So Jenny, my maid, wondering doubtless that, when I had read the letter, I did not come ben to tell her about Grace, as was my wont, made an errand into the room to put on some coals, though the fire was in no need of them. Whereupon I said to her :

“Jenny, it behoves both you and me to be greatly exercised in our own spirits concerning Grace, seeing she is now travelling away to that great and wicked Babylon, the City of London—out from her own land and her own people—woes me ! my bairn.”

At which Jenny made a great cry and

lamentation, which was but natural, for though folk accustomed to journeying may think little of that, it is different with the like of her, landward bred, and aye biding at home, and even with myself, though I was more acquaint with the ways of the world.

“And eh! Miss Marget,” said Jenny, to me, “can ane gang to London, or ony sic farawa place, without needing to sail upon the sea? for it’s an awfu’ thing that muckle water.”

“Grace does not say, Jenny,” said I, “in what manner their travel was to be; but, seeing her friends have wealth, and will not heed for the cheapness, I think they are like to go by the landward road. The bairn will be on the way even now; and truly it’s my desire that they may win

into London this night, for fear she should be drawn in to breaking the Sabbath day."

"In perils by the land, and in perils by the sea," said Jenny, in a meditating way, "the Almighty be round about her to keep her frae ill! but it's an awfu' thing to trust ane's sel on sic a deceitfu' element as the water, and to hae the muckle, unchancy waves rowing below ane's very feet. And ane may be thinking a' the time—an the boat were but to whomle there wad be an end o't!"

So the Sabbath came, a time of peace and quietness, as it should aye be, though I am feared my mind was still perturbed more than was right, and so I was hindered from getting the good I should have done from the very preaching of the word itself.

Dr. Driegh, of Burrowstoun, had never

had a name for enticing words of man's wisdom, neither, it grieves me to say, had his ministry been much attended with the demonstration of the Spirit, or with power, for he was a man of a cold nature, forbye being a Moderate. And truly, the morning diet which the Doctor ever took himself was fusionless in an uncommon manner, and (I am feared) made many folk think the service of their Maker a weariness. But on that particular Sabbath, I can scarce say I got much more from Mr. Wallace himself, the helper, who was a discreet man, in the prime of his days, sore held down by reason of wanting interest, and so compelled to abide in Burrowstoun, where he had but a hard time of it with Dr. Driegh, and a small stipend.

But for all that, the Sabbath past, as all days pass, whether they are pleasant or

troubled, and upon the Tuesday after, I had a visit from Mr. Allan Elphinstone. But I mind not that there was anything of a particular nature in our converse, past the one thing, that I was more perplexed with him than I had ever been before, for it seemed to me that the lad was just hanging in a sore swither between good and evil, one while giving his mind to his right and serious duty, and another fleeing away on the wide wings of that enticing spirit of world's pleasure. No that I would cast out with the innocent pleasantness of a young and light heart ; far from that, truly I have been blamed by strict folk for being too much the other way, and indulging the bairns, but, woe's me, for the joyfulness that must aye have strangers partaking in it, and that lies in vain songs, and dancing and gay company !

But Mr. Allan was just a mixture, in his converse, and, as it seemed, in his mind; whiles minding, that he was a man with a high weird upon him, and whiles thinking only of getting through his time with mirth and vain laughing, as if he had no other chief end. He had been, he told me, at *all* the preachings, and spoke of them in a reverent and right manner, and straightway, in the same breath, of how he had been at the Castle, night after night, foremost in the ploys they held there, and out sporting all day with Lord Burrowstoun and his wild friends, and divers other things, maybe no evendown ill in themselves, but leading him upon the road, and the road is aye swift to descend. Truly he was a strange lad, for in the midst of all that, he was ever trying to wile me into speaking about the family at the Manse, and in especial Mary, and once

mostly startled me, by bursting out into a praise of *home* ; and saying, with a mournful look, that the folk he was among knew little of *that*.

So the week past in a quiet way, and on Friday (for that was the market-day in Burrowstoun) the two Marys, my sister and my niece, came down to lay in some things that were wanting at the Manse—for it is common to let the Occasion be past before the women folk of a minister's household take up the things that are aye from time to time needed in a family, of sewing and the like, (I say that, because I know that Mary, my sister, took a whole piece of linen shirting with her, the best that was in James Selvage's shop) ; for, as I have before said, there is ever more to do at that solemn season with strangers being in the house, and other things.

I needed not to tell them of the news from Grace, for Mary put a letter into my hand whenever she came in, the which seemed to me to have been written before my bairn heard the news of her departure, for that was just mentioned in a bit postscript at the end.

So as this will be the last letter of Grace's that I will put in for a while, I think I may just write it all down.

“ My dear Mary,

“ I am more than ordinarily languid and depressed to-day ; therefore, according to the primitive formula of our friend Reuben Reid, I take up my pen to write you a few lines—forewarning you that the pen is of a melancholic nature; and that the few lines may expand themselves into as many pages before I finish.

“An indifferent compliment, you will think, I pay you, in dedicating to you my especial dark hours ; but we are not strangers, Mary, and our correspondence is something more, I fancy, than an exchange of compliments ; and you don't know what a satisfaction it is to get the troublous thoughts out, and perchance to bring in healthier in their stead : a miracle which the air of Pasturelands still lingering about your last letters will accomplish, if anything can.

“For I am growing nervous, Mary—I, who six months ago, would have laughed at the very idea. I am alarmed by a sound, troubled sometimes whole days by a dreamy presentiment ; feel myself getting wildly gay now and then ; oftener utterly depressed, and, worst of all, angry and irritable, without the shadow of a cause.

“Is it not strange? And discontented, Mary, repining—impious in these strange black moods of mine, as if all the world beside was happy, and I only miserable beyond my desert, for the demon, like all others, is a lying demon, and would have me invest myself with all the sentimental graces of suffering, and luxuriate therein. Do you remember that terrible scene in the Pilgrim’s Progress, where Christian is so sorely assailed in the valley of the Shadow of Death—sorest of all by the blasphemies whispered in his ear by his spiritual enemies, and which he fears are the product of his own mind. I am growing to a better understanding of that now.

“And so the cloud is wearing away. Where was I, Mary, ere I began this disquisition?—About to write you a few lines.

“ Well, I find I have nothing to tell, and so betake myself to answer your questions. What do I do?—(by the bye, that is by no means elegantly expressed: you should have said, ‘how do you employ yourself?’) What do I read? What do I think about? I shall take them in their regular order.

“In the first place, what do I do—wondrous little, sister Mary, to be a creature endowed with certain capabilities and made more for use than ornament, the only employment tolerated here being better adapted to creatures made for ornament and not for use. Netting of purses, embroidery, resplendent in all the colours of the rainbow, silken and woollen; the only restriction to one’s taste and ingenuity in the manufacture thereof being, that it shall be absolutely of no service to any mortal.

“ In these, if it so pleased me, I might

consume, day after day, but unhappily it does *not* please me, and so in answer to your first question, I am compelled reluctantly to admit (tell it not in Sunnyside, dear Mary, lest my aunt be utterly shocked) that I—read novels!

“Furthermore, that the novels are sad rubbish, many of them, fashionable, flippant, insipid, chronicles often of some circle of great people, whose country seats lie near each other; who duly go to town for the season, and duly return when the season is over; intersperse which with one or two fallings in love, one or two disappointments, gossiping and scandal without measure, and a few moral essays broken into bits, and scattered here and there through the three volumes, and you have them in their full proportions before you.

“Moreover, many of these books are written by women, yet are they often per-

factly unwomanly—especially when they become what Claud would call subjective, and profess to reveal the inmost hearts of these sorely tried love-sick heroines of theirs. I can imagine how you would in your own words ‘think shame’ to speak to me, as the young ladies in these books speak to their friends. I will tell you one story of this vehement kind.

“There are two young ladies—a model girl, one—the other a high-spirited, beautiful, uncontrollable person of the Die Vernon class; they are friends, but, unawares, both devoted to the same fortunate gentleman. After various adventures on both sides, the climax comes by which they discover their rivalry, and thereupon follows a fight. The model girl, whose attachment is returned, is content to give him up and be broken-hearted,

the vehement girl, whose attachment is not returned, holds by him fast, and the unhappy lover, engaged to both, vibrates painfully between the two; the dénouement, however, is accomplished by a device not of the newest. The model girl saves her rival's life, the heart of the beautiful uncontrollable melts, and the curtain falls on her vehement dancing at the wedding-ball.

“What think you of it? Yet that is one of the best of all; and there are floods of smaller romancers, who tell the same story - not so well. And these trials they call the discipline—the battle of life.

“Do you think very embroidery would be greatly more profitable than this unhealthy occupation? aha, Mary! but you do not know what I have done; with my own hands, seated by the fire-side, in my own room, I

have made, in spite of Jessie's indignant protestations, two morning caps for my old friend, Mrs. Gray; the borders thereof being trimmed with lace, and the whole sewed with such care and painstaking as would call down plaudits on my head from Miss Janet Selvage herself.

“ And as to what I read, Mary, in the sense in which we at Sunnyside understood reading, the earnest affection with which we used to travel over the well-known brown volumes on the study shelves, or in my aunt's old oaken bookcase, the process has become extinct for me, and I answer this your second question, as I answered your first—I read novels!

“ And ‘what do I think about?’ I dare not begin to tell you, lest I should never end—only it is by no means good to be left to converse uninterruptedly with one's

own thoughts day after day, and breeds melancholy and all manner of evils.

“By the bye, I have picked up an uncouth German book and old dictionary, and have found the greatest possible relief in working at that—but that should have come under my first head. Beg our father to send me a Hebrew Lexicon, sister Mary, and see if I am not more learned when I return to Sunnyside than Claud himself.

“See how my dark cloud has dispersed into the air! But, for all that, I think of home sadly enough sometimes, as of a place I shall never see again—and *yearn* for it. Something as holy Samuel Rutherford did of old, I fancy, when he thought the swallows, that built their nests in the eaves of the old Kirk at Anwoth, were blessed birds.

“I am summoned suddenly to my

aunt's presence, so fare you well, dear sister Mary.

“GRACE MAITLAND.”

“P.S. I have heard alarming news. We are to leave Edinburgh immediately for London—for what reason I know not.”

So we began, the two Marys and me, to have converse respecting Grace; and Mary, my sister, said to me, that it was an unwise and ill-thing of these folk in Edinburgh, to let Grace be brought up so, when her life was to be so different.

“For now,” said Mary, my sister, “she feels the separation far more bitterly than she would have done if they had taken her away a child, or even if she had been a more mature woman.”

“But, mother,” said Mary, “when she

is a mature woman, as you say, she may come home." And Mary gave a sad look at me, as if, for all so confident as she spoke, she wanted me to persuade her that it would be so.

"It's my hope, she will, Mary" said I, "or something may cast up long before that—there is no saying. But oh, bairn! be you canny of putting in *your* hand into this tangled web of worldly doings—it ever brings ill."

The bairn turned round to the windows without saying a word, and Mary, my sister, looked at me with a smile.

"You need hardly fear that, for a while yet, Margaret," she said, "Poor Mary's small share of the Manse economics can scarcely be called worldly doings. Oh! I see you are thinking of the Manse of Rures—no, no, there is plenty of time for that."

To think that Mary, my sister, and her the bairn's mother, and a woman of discrimination, should have been so easy deceived! Truly the Manse of Rures, as I could well perceive, had just as little buik in the thoughts of the bairn Mary, as it had in mine.

The next Monday after that, Mr. Allan was down again with the carriage, and would make me go up to Lilliesleaf, whether I liked or no. So seeing his mother was even more delicate than common (which, doubtless, was caused by living in a gay manner and keeping hours that did not befit an eldern woman) and was expecting me, I went, and little satisfaction I had either in the young man or his mother, for my spirit was stirred within me for very grief to see *him* entering the same road in which his father had lost both riches and good fame; and him a lad of

so pleasant and kindly a nature, and with indignation at *her*, that could lay plans to draw her one son out of the right way. Doubtless, she did it, in a kind of affection, and with a thought that a godly and serious life was no for a gentleman like him ; the misguided woman ! but, for all that, he had been led away in a measure by her wish and her company, she was yet aye bringing in a kind of sneering word about him being so often at the Manse. Truly, it was no wish of mine that he should be so, but if the lad knew himself better there, than among the vain folk at the castle, doubtless he was right.

Also, I mind, that I went down to Cruive End, that week, to see what was doing ; and there I saw many men labouring with all their might at the new houses.

“ It’s a grand thing to hae a man like the

Laird in the countryside,” said James Laidlaw, the carter, to me. “They say, Miss Maitland, that his father threw siller about in a wild way among beggars and flunkie cattle, and its aye ‘ come licht, gang licht’ wi’ the like o’ them—but there’s yon strong callant emptying the cart, and yon others working at the foundation—the haill o’ them wad hae been hinging about the doorcheek idle, if the Laird hadna started this work, but now an they could but get schulin’ and be wiled to the kirk, ye may mak’ men o’ them yet.”

CHAPTER IV.

It is not my purpose at this time to go slow over every day, or every week, of that season of my pilgrimage, seeing it is mostly the letters of my bairn Grace, or the things that came to pass concerning Mary and the family at the Manse, that will make what I write of any interest to strange folk, who maybe never heard of Sunnyside all their days, nor even of Burrowstoun itself. So I will just glance in a light way over what befell us in that wintertime.

I aye continued to get word from Grace, the which was mostly concerning her own thoughts and desires, seeing that Mrs. Lennox let her see no strangers, and so the most of the bairn's time was spent in her own room, which was far from a healthful manner of life for a young thing. And truly, it was a matter of pain to me to notice the way she spoke of her cousins and their gayness; for it was not in a kindly humour, as it would have been when she was in Sunnyside; but rather had a bitter cast, as if her spirit was troubled and perturbed within her; and yet she aye tried to hide it both from herself and me, with a laugh that was not natural.

Besides that it was not, if I mind right, over two or three weeks from their departure, till they were away again out of this country, and on to the Continent, where they abode

in a city of France, because, as Grace told me in her letter, it was not what Mrs. Lennox called 'the season' in London; and being fashionable and high folk, they could not bide in it then. I maybe am not saying it right, which would be no wonder, seeing that I know not the manner of London, which is a faraway place, and also that the life of folk of that kind, except so far as it is written in books, is likewise a matter of ignorance to me; but if any person should read this, that knows better, they must just put it right in their own minds.

But as I was saying, Grace was in the country of France, and I have often thought that the letters she sent to me, the time they were journeying about in that foreign place, would be as good to read as many a book of travels I have seen in print, if the bairn

would but look over them again, and sort them in their right places ; but she has other things to take her up.

I had fewer letters the time she abode there, no that there was any failing on the part of my Grace, but being so far away, and going about from one town to another, I did not wonder at it ; besides that, I had a suspicion she was delicate of me having the heavy post to pay, seeing that folk in these days scarce know what dear letters are.

And as for Mr. Allan, of Lilliesleaf, it was a grief to me that I could say no more of him than that he was in an ill way ; whiles, doubtless, having still a perception that he was not made for the one purpose of playing himself, but aye led away again—Lilliesleaf full of all vanities, and shining with light, as I heard, till all the hours of the night, and the mother in it, the weak,

unwell woman, that was shortening her own days, and leading her one son into vanity and sin.

Now it may be thought that this is but the narrow notion of a lone gentlewoman, living all her days in a way of quietness; but, though it seems not to me that there is much pleasantness in the like of these assemblies, yet I would see no ill in them at a time, for young things, especially them that have that station in this world, and are so misfortunate as to have no sensible work to do. I mind well myself, finding an enjoyment in a Hallowe'en or New Year's ploy, in my young days, but to think of taking up every night, and losing folk's own home and fireside for the like of that!

It is a sore thing to think of, and, in my eyes, there is but an ill foundation for

the life that is built upon such a youth. In especial I was grieved for Mr. Allan's sake, for whatever he did, it was a marvel to me how my heart clung to that young man, even as if he had been one of our own bairns. He was still carrying on the works at Cruive End, and did it in such a brisk way, and had so many men working, that some of the houses were to be ready by the New Year, which was just a wonder in the countryside, seeing that it wanted a good while of three months since they were begun. But they had the advantage of wonderful mild and open weather, with little either of rain or frost, and the masons, for a marvel, (for the common word is, that of all artificers, those whose gift is for building houses are the slowest), hurried the work, and were done with their part soon.

“ So on New Year’s Day, which fell upon a Tuesday that year, Mr. Allan was to give the folk a grand entertainment, the which he called a *fête*, and all the countryside was astir about it. So, as I have written down before, the time went by in a most quiet manner, with little change or commotion among us.

Once or twice I was invited up to Lilliesleaf, and Claud and his family were asked too, at an odd time, just as if, being her minister, (I should say the minister of her parish, for, poor woman ! she did not trouble the Kirk much), Mrs. Elphinstone could not help showing him a measure of attention, the which, being visible to the minister and to Mary, my sister, made them aye decline going, unless they were so circumstanced that they bid to do it in mere civility. But, for all that, Mr. Allan kept aye

making an errand to the Manse as often as he could, and wrought on the father and the mother, whatever he might do upon the bairn, Mary, so that they could not help regarding him with a kindness, although they looked upon Mrs. Elphinstone with dubiousity, as a woman of a jealous and uncertain mind.

And so the old year went out, and seeing that I had been much exercised in my own mind on the night that bairns call Hogmenay, concerning the work, and the backslidings of the past year, and also concerning the bairns, the care of whom a good Providence had laid to my hand, I was not up so early the next day as is my custom on a New Year's morning.

And truly I marvelled to be wakened in my bed about nine o'clock in the morning by Jenny, my maid ; the first thing I saw when

I opened my eyes being her, standing with a burning candle in her hand, and the gray morning coming in dim at the window.

“Preserve me, Jenny,” said I, “what is the matter?”

“Naething, mem,” said Jenny with a laugh, “only there’s ane waiting doun the stair to be your first fit.”

“Waiting for *me*, Jenny?” said I, “and who can that be?”

“Oh, deed it’s easy kenning,” said Jenny with another laugh: “it’s the Dominie frae Seggie Burn, Miss Marget, Maister Reuben. An he’s come in ance errand to be your first fit.”

“My first fit!” I said to Jenny, “in the darkening of a New Year’s morning, woman. Jenny, is the body daft?”

“Na, Miss Marget,” said Jenny, “naething past the common that I can see, but

doubtless, he's wearying sitting his lane in the parlour, will I tell him you're coming down," —and Jenny set up a laugh again, till I grew feared for the body hearing her.

"Whisht, Jenny," said I, though I could not but laugh myself in a quieter way; "the Dominie will hear you. And see to the candle, there is a thief upon it, and ye will grease the carpet. Ance errand to be my first fit! Truly, the body's brain must be turned, but haste ye, Jenny, and make the breakfast; the maister will have need of it after his travel."

"Will I pit down the shortbread, Miss Marget?" said Jenny, "but, waes me, there's nae bairns to heed about it now; but I'll no say it's a'thegither ance errand either, for the maister has the play himsel, and maybe he's gaun to Cruive End."

"Never heed, Jenny," said I; "but since

he is here, do you see about the breakfast.”
—So Jenny went away.

I could not but smile within myself, when I came into my parlour in the gray of the New Year's morning, and found the body, Reuben Reid, sitting at my fire-side in his best black suit, the which I mind of him getting new when I was a halfin, no far past the years of Mary, my niece, for he was a most careful body.

He had been licensed by the Kirk as a preacher of the Gospel, in his young days, but being in no manner gifted in respect of preaching, had never been called by any people. Also being but a poor man's son, he never had interest enough to get a presentation, and, therefore was, (as I have seen it called, no long since by one that has just a bye-ordinary gift in the way of writing books and papers) wind-bound in a school:

the which means, (in my comprehension) comparing a man to a boat, that he had not strength enough, nor sails enough, to carry him on over the wild sea, or down great waters, but was just blown by the low land breeze to shelter in the crook of a quiet burn, and by reason of the hurry and troubling of the bigger streams, could not win out again. Also he was an inoffensive body, and had a manner of lifting up his hands and crying : “Eh, me !” when he was surprised, that made folk laugh at him.

“There’s changes in the world, Miss Marget,” said the body to me, that morning, when I went into the room, “since the last time I was your first fit. Ye’ll no mind ? Eh me ! but I had aye mysel a most uncommon memory ; and there’s a nick in my stick to mind that New Year by.—The very

Sabbath before was the last time I exercised my gifts in a pulpit ; and ye'll allow that *that* was a mark no to be sune forgotten."

"Indeed, no, Mr. Reuben," said I ; "but since then, you have been exercising your gifts for the behoof of the parish, maybe in a more effectual way, for bairns' hearts are more eath to take a right impression than the hearts of grown up hardened folk."

"And that's true, Miss Marget," said the Maister, "only there's a whene dour wee whigs in yon schule at Pasturelands, that heed the tawse nae mair than I would heed them mysel. There is one bairn—Tam is the name of him—that'll tak' the pawmies without a word, and be ower the lugs in mischief again before I have weel laid them down. It's a sore thing, Miss Marget, to be trysted with the charge of bairns."

“And so it is, Mr. Reuben,” said I.

“I laugh whiles to myself,” said Reuben, “at the way the wee vexations take their pawmies, for ye can have a perception of the bairn’s nature, mair mostly in that way than in any other. There are some of a fearful nature, that will draw back the hand when the tawse comes down, in an unwise coward spirit, seeing they maun bear the pain some time, whether they will or no. And there are some that hold their arm bold out, to get it ower at once; and there are some, mair especial the women bairns (for ye are ever a pawkie sect, Miss Marget) that will look me fair in the e’en, as if they thought their bit shining faces would stop my hand. There is one lassie wean—puir wee wifie, she has had á sore time of it with the measles—Femie Telfer, wha will glint at me with her

blue e'en and her smile, till I can scarce think to bring down the tawse. It's aye a light pawmie Femie gets, for a' that she's as tricky as a young foal."

Jenny was just bringing in the breakfast at that time, for seeing the Maister had had a far walk, I thought it was best to get it before the exercise.

"Eh me! Miss Marget," said the Dominie holding up his hands, "but I hae fallen upon a land of plenty; but I mind langsyne that Jenny had aye a bye-ordinary talent for breakfasts, when I came first to the parish in your father's days. Eh me! but there are sore changes sinsyne."

Jenny was setting down the shortbread as he said that, by the place where Grace used to sit, (no that shortbread is commonly set upon a breakfast-table, except just on the

New Year morning, for the bairns), and as she did it, she caught the glint of my eye.

“Bless the dear bairn!” burst out Jenny. “If ane could but ken that there was some kindly body about her to gie her her New Year’s piece!” and the water came into Jenny’s eyes, and she hurried away out of the room.

“Will you ask the blessing, Mr. Reuben?” said I; and the Maister did it, and began to his breakfast in a hearty way.

“It would be the young lady, Miss Grace, that Jenny meant?” said the Dominie; “(that’s a braw ham, Miss Marget). She was a discreet young lady, that. I mind of her bringing me out a bundle of slate-pencil once with her, when she came to the Manse, that lasted me a month. It’s a sore trial that slate-pencil, Miss Marget—no mortal knows how an instructor of youth is

trysted, if it be not himsel; for there is aye a wee voice crying out to me every now and then, 'Maister, I have lost my slate-pencil,' or 'Maister, I have broken my slate-pencil,' and aye there has a new bit to be gotten. Plague on them, that I should say so! the which is one of my errands into the town this day, being the first of the New Year, to lay in a stock, for they are aye mair destructionful than common after they have had the play—the little Tories!"

"Whisht, Mr. Reuben," said I "the poor bairns can but deserve one of the ill-names you have called them. Whigs and Tories, both, the little things scarce can be."

"Deed can they, Miss Marget," said the maister, "for I gie them the one cognomen, you see, in respect of a natural disposition in a bairn's mind—videlicet—*dourness!* which I uphold to be Whiggery,

such like as it was langsyne : no an ill quality in the main, but at no hand adapted for a bairn in a schule. And for the other form of nomenclature, it's a thing that will stretch over *all* the weans, in respect that they are, every one of them, wild hempies, the very plague of a decent man's life. I know not, but what Radical would be the best name of a' ; for the class called Tories are mostly bien bodies that meddle with no man, if folk would but let them be. Ane falls out of the right meaning of such words, Miss Marget, dwelling in a lone and quiet abode like Pasturelands, and I see whiles, by an odd paper, that comes our length, that they are but little used now, in the very world itsel. But *I* mind when there was wark enough made about them."

" Take another egg, Mr. Reuben," said I,

“you have had a long walk this morning.”

“They tell me,” said the Dominic, doing as I bade him, “that there is to be a grand ploy this day somewhere about Burrowstoun, the which has for its author, that discreet lad, Mr. Elphinstone, of Lilliesleaf. Ye’ll ken, Miss Marget?”

“Yes, Mr. Reuben,” said I, “Mr. Allan is going to give the folk a ploy, on the occasion of finishing some new houses. There is one which is to be a school, if he’s spared till it’s finished, and he has got it (the roof is upon it, and the windows in already) redd up in an uncommon manner, and dressed with green things, as the fashion is, at this time of the year, in England and other foreign countries, and set with long tables and forms; and there the poor folk of Cruive End are to have a grand dinner and

dancing at night. Also there are to be what they call games in the forepart of the day; but the nature of them (seeing the ice on the water is thin and broken, and would not suffice for the play of curling), I know not."

"Eh, me!" cried out the Dommie, "I'll hae to bide and see that mysel. But think ye the young Laird is no like to gang ower the tow, as his father did before him? They tell me, Miss Marget, that there's muckle ongaun between Lilliesleaf and the Castle, and it's weel kent that the Earl's family, in spite of their high degree, are just living, as p'tir folk say, from hand to mouth. And it's ill halting when the race is down the brae, as I tell the bairns often. It's my hope the Laird will come to no skaith, Miss Marget, for he's a discreet lad."

“He is a most pleasant young man, Mr. Reuben,” said I.

“There was a party of the wild young gentry down at me the very day before the bairns got the ploy,” said the Maister. “There was my Lord himsel, the young one, and Lilliesleaf, and Leddy Julia, and a wheen mair. I was never ca’ed a proud body, Miss Marget, ye ken that, but the very spirit was moved within me, at the light laughing, jeering ways of them—before the bairns, too—and me a licentiate of the Kirk!”

“Will you return thanks, Mr. Reuben?” said I, for by that time he was done with his breakfast.

So, no long after that, the body went into the town to do his own errands, and I, as was my wont, sat down by the fire-

side, and took my seam, and fell into a meditation concerning the new year that was beginning, and concerning the bairns.

It might be between ten and eleven o'clock in the day, when Jenny came ben to redd up the room, and said she to me—

“ It's but a dowie New Year's day, Miss Marget. Are ye no gaun yourself to see the ploy ?”

“ I know not, Jenny,” said I. “ It is uncommon cold, and I see not what pleasure it would be to me, to stand outbye and look at men playing themselves. Mr. Allan should have minded that this is no a right season for the like of that.”

“ But they say in the toun,” said Jenny, “ at least it was that ill wean, Willy Lightfoot, tell't me (he came up e'now for his Hogmenay piece, that he missed yestreen, because he couldna get on his shoon for

chilblains), that the ice has firmed grand through the nicht, and there is to be a great curling. I think, mem, if ye hae nae particular objections, that ye *suld* gang—it's heartsoner than aye biding in the house."

"Put on your big cloak, Jenny," said I, "and go down yourself to the ploy. I am not caring for going out to-day."

"Eh, Miss Marget!" cried out Jenny, "are you no gaun up to Bourtree? nor to the Manse? nor naegate?—and it New Year Day!"

"Maybe some of the family will be down from the Manse, Jenny," said I, "and I may go up with them: but you can go to the ploy, for all that."

"No a fit," said Jenny, as she went away; "ane can see bairns playing a' the days of the year, Miss Marget, and sure am I they're far bonnier than men. Na, na,

I wad rather see the weans, Willie Light-foot and Davie Selvage, and that wee hempie, Jess Dinwuddie dance a threesome reel—and grand they can do it!”

So I was sitting quiet at my seam, and, as I have before said, meditating about the bairns, poor things, and about the new space of time that was opening before us; and taking no heed of outer noises—the like of folk, or carriages on the road—when suddenly, though I had before a kind of vision of the door opening, I heard a cry behind me,—

“A happy new year, aunt.”

And straightway the arms of the bairn Mary were about my neck, and her bit pleasant face shining over my shoulder; and before I could say a word, somebody had gotten hold of my hand on the other side. And, lo! when I looked, it was Claud, my

nephew, who, according to my thought, was at that time busy with his studies in the city of Edinburgh.

“Will you not speak to me, aunt?” he said, with a laugh, for he saw I was astonished.

“Bless me, Claud, laddie,” said I, when I had recovered myself, “who would have thought of seeing you at Sunnyside the now!”

“You must mind I am in my last year now, aunt,” said Claud, “and am getting a reasonable share of freedom. And, you know, we grown up schoolboys have Christmas holidays, as well as our younger brethren, and enjoy the play to the full as well, I can assure you.”

“And look at him, aunt,” said Mary; “look at our Claud. Did not Grace say true?”

I thought there was a shade came over

the face of my nephew Claud, as Mary said that, and I took hold of him, and drew him nearer the window, for it was a dull gray day, to look at him right.

“And so she did, Mary,” said I. “Wait a moment till I get on my glasses. Laddie! laddie! is this you—it’s just Claud Maitland over again.”

“And who should it be else, aunt?” said Claud, laughing, and red up to the brow with me looking at him (for in spite of the boldness that is natural to a stirring youth, he was ever a lad of a shame-faced nature). “Who could have thought you would have forgotten me so entirely in three short months, as to need such a recognition as that?”

“You were ever like your father, Claud,” said I; “but, truly, this day I can scarce think that it is not his very self. And

Grace was right, Mary ; Claud has the right look of a man now."

The young man's face flushed deep, but I could see he was far from ill-pleased, though he pretended a kind of mirthful anger.

"Grace had little to write about, I think, aunt," he said, "when it pleased her to comment on my looks. And Grace was not wont to be complimentary on that score."

"We are going to Cruive End, aunt," said Mary, "to see what they are doing there: and then you are going up with us to Bourtree. I will run up stairs and get your cloak and bonnet."

"But, Mary, bairn," said I, "if I *must* go to Bourtree, I will need to put on my best black silk flowered gown."

"We can put it in the gig, aunt," said

Mary. "I will carry it on my knee: but we have not time to wait long now," and so she ran up the stair for my things.

"And, aunt," said Claud to me, "where have you got these splendid spectacles?"

I saw well, by the look he had, that the pawkie callant knew full well where I had gotten my golden glasses, and just wanted in a bye way to bring in a mention of Grace, though wherefore he should not have spoken of her just at once, I know not: it is not easy always understanding the ways of bairns. So said I,—

"You may say splendid, Claud. They were a present to me from our dear bairn, Grace. But you will know better about her than we do."

"No," said Claud, in a quick way; "Grace never wrote to me, aunt—never

except one very short note. And Mary, I find, has many letters: and she tells me you hear often. Poor Grace!"

"Ay, Claud!" said I. "Truly letters are a great comfort, but they are no like sight and speech; and you have seen Grace later than us."

"Very unsatisfactory, the times I saw her were," said Claud, in a sorrowful voice. "I wonder Grace stays with these people."

"Whisht Claud," said I, "they are her natural kin and guardians, the bairn must."

"I don't see that, aunt," said Claud, hotly. "It was *their* choice to break these natural ties when Grace was a child. I don't see why she *must* submit to their tyranny. *We* are her kindred." And truly, the face of the young man Claud, my nephew, grew red again. "You have no idea how unlike her

they are, aunt ; but certainly I am not an unprejudiced judge—they were so very rude to me.”

“ My poor bairn !” said I.

“ Is that Grace, aunt ?” said Mary, coming into the room, with her arms full of garments for me. “ Has Claud been telling you how grave and stately Grace looks now ? But for all that, do not call her poor. I was dreaming about her only last night—a grand dream !”

Claud gave a bit glint up with his eye, maybe as if he had been dreaming about Grace last night, too, but only he did not say.

“ And when did you come home, Claud ?” said I, when Mary, was tying on my cloak.

“ Just last night, aunt,” said Claud, “ when they were all sitting comfortably at

the Manse fireside, without a thought of my journey through frost and wind. See how Donald snuffs the air, like a true Highlandman. Come, aunt, lest we be too late for the festivities at Cruive End." (Donald, I should have said before, was the name of the pony.)

So we went away, the two, Claud and Mary, happing me with cloaks and plaids, so that not a breath of cold could get to me. "Sunnyside does not look as it used to look," said Claud, as we went down the road to Cruive End.

"Wanting Grace?" said I. "Truly, Claud, it is a sore want; and Sunnyside is but a lone habitation now; but I am feared it is like to be worse before it can be better."

Claud looked at me in an inquiring way.

“Grace is away, Claud, and so are you ; and Mary, doubtless, will be going also in her season. She is not like to bide always at the Manse.”

Claud laughed.

“Oho, aunt !” he cried ; “ is Willie Elder’s nonsense about James Shepherd of Rures so well founded as all that ? Surely not. Mary laughs at it as frankly as I do. No, no ! it is not worth looking grave about.”

“Whisht, Claud,” said I ; “ the bairn will hear you.” Which she did not (being sitting in the little back seat, with my flowered black silk gown in a parcel on her knee), because at the moment she was leaning back to say a word to James Laidlaw and Christian his wife, who were walking upon the road. Truly, it is my fear that if she had heard, Mary would have understood me better than Claud.

It would be about twelve o'clock in the day when we got to the water-side, and the ice was throng with a band of curlers; and I will not say but what it was pleasant to see them fleeing along the frozen water, and to hear the sound of the stones, and the blythe voices in the air, for the whole town was out. And then, when the game was lost and won (I mind not whether it was Burrowstoun or Pasturelands that won it, but Jenny knows), we went on to Cruive End itself.

The new houses (the folk were not to flit into them till the next day) had fires lighted in their rooms, and forms, whereupon folk might sit and look out at the rest of the plays. At the house that was to be the school, the which stood apart from the rest, there were fine cushioned chairs about the windows, and carriages standing at the door.

All this time we had never seen Mr. Allan, at least, we had not spoken to him, seeing he was upon the other side of the water, but now he came riding up upon his gray horse with a plaid about him, and his face shining with the brisk cold air, and the pleasure he had in the sight of so many blythe-looking folk. I knew not which to say looked best for young men, him or Claud, my nephew, for you might have sought far, or you got two like them. But truly, Claud had more the look of one that had been sent into this world for a purpose, and had an honourable and weighty work upon his hands ; whereas, Mr. Allan, as was clear, had yet no right road shaped out for him.

But blythe he was to meet with Claud, and in the middle of all the folk, whether we would or no, nothing would please Mr.

Allan, but he bid to ride close by the gig, giving all his converse to us—and then he wanted Mary and me to go into the school-house, where the cushioned seats were round the window. We were just passing the house at the time, and when I looked up, I saw Mrs. Elphinstone and the ladies from the Castle.

Mrs. Elphinstone started when she saw me, and rose up off her seat, and held out her hand, as if she wanted me to come up, and then, when she looked again and saw Mary, she sat down in a quick way, and just gave a bow.

“Stop your pony, Mr. Maitland, and let us get the ladies out,” said Mr. Allan. “Miss Mary, I assure you, you will be much more comfortable in the school, and then the dinner, *my* dinner, you must give me your opinion of the decorations.”

“ We have no time,” said Mary, in her bit proud way, (for the bairn, I am vexed to say again, had not yet got the better of the impatient spark that was within her): “ we have an engagement this evening. There is not the slightest occasion, Mr. Elphinstone— Claud will drive to the road-side and we can wait there.”

Claud looked round to me, lifting up his eyebrows in an astonished manner ; nevertheless, he did the bairn’s bidding and said nothing, seeing Mr. Allan still abode at our side, and truly, I was vexed to see the nods and beckonings that came to him from the school-house window, and him never stirring from his place, but entering throug into converse with Claud, with aye a word to Mary in the byegoing, and also to me.

The games were “ putting the stone,” and

others of a like nature, which may be well enough for the halfin lads about a town, taking up, at their own hand on a summer night; but are but daft-like things for men of discreet and sober years that should know better. I read no long since in a paper of such like plays being exhibited in the city of London, as if they were the common and ordinary diversions of our sober and douce country. Now I know not what may be the customs of the far and wild highlands, but I know that folk in our countryside would be in no manner pleased to have it said, that it was their use and fashion to play themselves in any such bairnly way, and truly, the men at Cruive End had a look as if they thought shame of being set to play there for the pleasure of idle folk, when they should have

been working at their own lawful avocation, or resting themselves at their own firesides ; aye excepting the dyvours and ne'er-doweels, whose delight is in divers kinds of idleness.

But truly it is a great fault in the rich and the great of this earth to think that poor folk are like bairns, and can be pleased in such a senseless way. No that Mr. Allan (for, to say he was brought up in a foreign country, he had wonderful right notions) had such a thought as that, but only the vain and lightheaded that were about him.

So a while after the plays began, there was a noise of horses upon the road, and down there came three or four young gentlemen, riding at a great rate, with their flunkies behind them, and causing the folk

who were standing in the way, to flee hither and thither, in fear. They did not notice Mr. Allan, who was upon his horse, beside us, but just swept by, scattering the poor folk on every side, till they came to the school window, and there they abode a while, capering upon their horses, and holding some kind of gay converse with the ladies that were within.

It seemed to me that Mrs. Elphinstone had told the young Lord, (for he was one of them), where Mr. Allan was, for very soon he drew out from among the rest, and came up to us, crying out :

“ Elphinstone ! I say, Elphinstone ! ”

And Mr. Allan turned round his horse in an ill-pleased way, to speak to him, not wanting, as I thought, to let him come near to us.

“That is Lord Burrowstoun, is it not?” said Claud. “Were these girls at the window, his sisters, Mary? And who was the old lady?”

“That was Mr. Allan’s mother, Claud,” said I.

“Her son seems a fine fellow,” said Claud, “but that lordship there, is a cub, surely. I wonder if he imagined himself dispersing a riotous meeting. The old Earl, if I remember rightly, is a very different looking person.”

“The Earl is a mild man, Claud,” said I, “and no able for the sore charge of bringing up a motherless family—so the bairns, you see, have gotten the upper hand of him.”

As I said that, Lord Burrowstoun capered his horse back to the school, and Mr.

Allan, with an offended and angry look, the like of which I had never seen on his pleasant face before, turned round to us again, the which I was grieved for; for doubtless it was his duty to please his mother. So another while passed, and I was just going to mind the bairns that it was time we were away, when a servant-man came up from the school and spoke to Mr. Allan, and Mr. Allan in a stern way pointed him to me, and said his errand was to me.

So the man put his hand to his hat and said :

“ Mrs. Elphinstone’s compliments, and she had sent him to see if the ladies would not come down.”

I heard Mr. Allan speaking low to Mary, when the man said that to me, and

Mary pulled me by the cloak, as if she was feared for me yielding to go, and said she :

“ It is time we were home already, aunt : we have delayed here too long. Claud, we can drive round by the Woodlands, and that will not disturb the people. My mother will be wearying—let us go.”

And so we did—but no till I had seen Mr. Allan give Mary a look that had a kind of strange complaint in it ; and Mary turn about her head quick, with her cheeks flushed deep. I mind also looking over my shoulder, as we stopped at the Woodlands' toll, which is just within sight of Cruive End, and there was Mr. Allan, just turning slowly from the place where we had left him, and moving his horse, cannily here and there, no to disturb the folk, but aye keeping away from the

place where his mother and Lord Burrowstoun and Lady Julia was.

“Aunt,” said Claud to me, when we were driving on the Pasturelands road, “when did Mary begin to make your decisions for you.”

“I, Claud!” said Mary, “I never decide for my aunt—only, to be sure—but, aunt, I did not mean to be forward—only people cannot help—”

“What is it that people cannot help?” said Claud, laughing, though I could see he marvelled. “If I were young Lilliesleaf, I would have nothing to do with you, Mary. How rudely she spoke to him, aunt.”

“Mr. Elphinstone *has* nothing to do with me;” said Mary, very low. “And, it is not fair to speak to me so, Claud: I was not rude to any one.”

“Whisht, bairns!” said I; “you must gree. It would be an ill thing if you were to be together but one week of a whole winter, and to cast out in the time. But truly, Mrs. Elphinstone is a mistaken woman, and maybe this day was lifted up in her heart; and even I myself was stirred up to anger, let alone Mary, though the bairn is doubtless of an over impatient spirit; but her and me will have our own cracks about that. But, Claud, you have never told me how your cousin, William Elder, is coming on with his classes. They tell me he is a lad of talent.”

“I can testify that he is a lad of mischief,” said Claud.

And so we continued on the road to the Manse, having converse concerning the youth William Elder, who was breeding to be an advocate, and also of various other matters

in a particular way connected with the family, and which stranger folk would not heed about hearing.

So we got to the Manse, and there I dressed myself in my gown, and Mary put on hers (the silk one, of the changing colour), and we went to Bourtree. There was room for her and me in the back seat of the gig, sitting close, and the minister and Mary, my sister, were before us, and Claud rode by our side upon a brown pony, that belonged to Simon Murray, the farmer, at the Blackcleugh, for Simon was ever blythe to oblige any body at the Manse, and the brown pony knew Claud as well as if he had been its master's son.

And when we got to Bourtree, there was, just as in ordinary seasons, a blythe party of friends, old and young, mostly connected either by blood or marriage, (and both the

Elders and the Blythes, though the Blythes, you may say, are no friends to me, being only connected with our family through their aunt, Mrs. Elder, of Bourtree, aye call me 'aunt' also, even like our own bairns), and having been acquaint all their days.

So it was a pleasant night, though doubtless I also felt like Janet Elder when she said, "Oh! aunt Margaret, how we miss Grace!"

If I am no far mistaken, there were more folk missed Grace, that night, than either her or me.

CHAPTER V.

FOR the first week of the year, I abode at the Manse, seeing they were aye anxious to cheer me, and thought (as was doubtless true) that I could not but be lonely and dull, dwelling in my lane in Sunnyside, at that season of the year. Upon the Wednesday, my nephew Claud went back to his studies in Edinburgh, and the next day being Thursday, it chanced that the minister, my brother, was preaching in a neighbouring

parish, and was not to be home till late.

So we were sitting in the Manse parlour, in the darkening, the two Marys and me, having converse on divers matters by the fireside, before we got lights into the room. And just at that season, Mr. Allan Elphinstone came to the door, and of necessity behoved to be asked in, seeing it was Mary, my sister, he asked for, and not the minister; besides that, he was aye making errands back and forward, and had, in a manner, got the freedom of the house. So he just came in, and sat down beside us, looking blythe of the opportunity, for I have aye thought, (and so, also, in my judgment, thought Mr. Allan) that there is a measure of kindness among folk sitting in converse, in the gloaming, by the pleasant light of the fire, which is wanting at other times of the day.

So a while after, Betty came ben with lights and with the tray for the tea.

“Have you dined, Mr. Elphinstone,” said Mary, my sister, “or may we offer you a cup of tea?”

“I was about to ask for one,” said Mr. Allan. “I think I have an especial claim on your benevolence to-night, Mrs. Maitland, being fresh from Cruive End, and greatly in need of the most homelike of all refreshments.”

“Dear me, Mr. Allan!” said I, “but the Manse is far out of the road from Cruive End to Lilliesleaf?”

Mr. Allan gave a kind of laugh, and turned red in the face.

“So it is, Miss Maitland: but you would not, surely, withhold my cup of tea for that reason.”

“At no hand, Mr. Allan,” said I, “only your mother will be wearying.”

Mr. Allan laughed again.

“Mrs. Maitland,” he said, “Miss Mary’s hand is stayed, I perceive. I beg you will take my part, and persuade Miss Maitland that there are greater sins than passing the gate of Lilliesleaf to enter that of the Manse, especially when one has something to communicate.”

“About Cruive End, Mr. Allan?” said I.

“I shall not tell you about whom, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan, taking a letter out of his pocket, “till you have endeavoured to recognise the individual mentioned in this letter; and then you will tell me whether my friend is a good portrait-painter or not. Miss Mary, may I beg your particular attention?”

So with that, Mr. Allan opened the letter

and glanced over it, and then began to read, never heeding the tea that was standing, turning cold, before him.—

“ And now, having made you aware of the progressing education of my son and heir, (the letter began that way, at least the bit that Mr. Allan read of it, and us sitting listening all the time, with perplexed faces), I have to tell you of an acquaintance we have made—a very interesting person, whom I mention here, not simply because she is interesting, but for local reasons, which you shall hear in due time.

“ We were walking a day or two since, Helen and I, at an hour not fashionable for loungers, amusing ourselves with Harry’s exuberance of sport, and wishing ourselves at home, when we met a Miss — :” (‘ The name is of no importance,’ said Mr. Allan, glancing

up with a smile), "with whom Helen had some previous acquaintance.

"She had with her a dark vision of a girl, to whom we were not introduced, very simply dressed, with neither fashion nor beauty to attract notice, yet, nevertheless, with an indefinable something about her, which compelled involuntary interest and respect—not apparently from her fashionable young lady relative, who seemed to think my bow to the unobtrusive incognita, about whose lip a smile of amused observation was hovering, perfectly superfluous and uncalled for. They passed, however, and we made no acquaintance with the dark ladye then.

"This morning, tempted by clear skies, and a most wild and uncontrollable boy (I believe there never was a little Hercules of four twelvemonths, like mine), we rambled

out again—when suddenly, in the vicinity of a very humble house, maintaining a somewhat inarticulate conversation with a simple looking *yung-frau*, we fell upon our unknown.”

I saw Mary make a motion with her hands, as if she was going to clap them, and her face got a blythe look, but she did not speak, though Mr. Allan glanced off his letter at her for a moment.—

“The *yung-frau* was voluble, deep apparently in some interesting subject—the hand of our youthful countrywoman was on the sunburnt head of a sturdy little Saxon Harnschen, while we stood looking on.

“At length, in answering some question of her companion’s, the stranger stumbled on an English word, for which I ventured to suggest the German synonyme. My

reward was a sudden turn of the unknown's head, with such a flush of bright intelligence as illuminated the dark face in an instant, 'making a sunshine in a shady place.' "

" Bless me, Mr. Allan," said I, " wherefore did you not tell me it was my dear bairn, Grace?"

Mr. Allan went on with his reading, smiling to himself.

" Her name, she told us, was Maitland, and Helen and she were friends immediately. Now do you ask me, Elphinstone, the purpose of this, my particular narrative of our acquaintance making? For your express benefit, man, was the acquaintance made, for is not the darke ladye a neighbour of your own?"

" By education and upbringing, at least, to use her own words, friends of her own name she has residing in your near neigh-

bourhood, of whom she speaks with the most enthusiastic affection; speaks, moreover, with so classic and pure a Scottish accent, that one can scarcely believe, while listening to her, that one is under the shadow of a Serene Highness, the sceptre of whose sovereign authority extends over possessions a few acres larger than those of Lilliesleaf.

“ Our dark ladye is here with an aunt, for whom she seems to entertain no very particular veneration, though she carefully avoided mentioning her disrespectfully, or indeed mentioning her at all. I chanced to express my wonder that we had never met her in this place, where people live so much in public; but the simple ‘It is my aunt’s desire,’ forbade all questioning.

“ I advise you to come back to Ger-

many, Elphinstone, and see if you cannot—”

“ Oh,” said Mr. Allan, stopping in a hurry, “ that is all, I daresay, of any interest. The rest refers to other matters. And what do you think of my friend as a painter of portraits, Miss Mary ?”

“ I knew at once that it was Grace,” said Mary, looking more pleasant like at Mr. Allan, than I had seen her for a while, “ but any one could draw Grace, Mr. Elphinstone—it is so easy to see—there are so few like our Grace !”

“ The dear bairn !” said I, “ I had a glimmering of it myself, Mary, whenever Mr. Allan began, only I aye thought the gentleman was writing from England, till he came to the bit about foreign things—but, truly I think not that Grace is so dark ;

though maybe she has gotten brown with the sun."

"The Germans are fair, flaxen people, I think," said Mary, my sister; "that may account for it; for Grace was not so very dark at home. Is your friend a Scotsman, Mr. Elphinstone? he seems to have liked our Grace's pleasant tongue."

"A Scotsman—yes!" said Mr. Allan, "half, at least. He is a fine fellow, with a very nice wife, and is in Germany, for I really don't know what reason—either their health or their income, I suppose, required nursing. He says, in a postscript, that they are compelled to give up thoughts of improving their acquaintance with your ward, Miss Maitland, as they have letters requiring their presence in England, so they had merely a glance of Miss Grace—but

little as it is, I thought it would interest you.”

So we had much more converse, both concerning Grace, and concerning other things, and bye-ordinary blythe, and well-pleased, Mr. Allan looked, sitting in the midst of us there, with the tea on the table, and like as if he was just one of ourselves.

So a while after that, he said: “I am emboldened to make another trial of your patience. I have a manuscript in my pocket, Miss Mary, which I would very fain read to you, if I might have permission. Miss Maitland has got to work again, I see. May I be permitted to read this?”

“Is it a letter, Mr. Elphinstone?” said Mary.

“Oh no! not a letter,” said Mr. Allan; “it is—a poem.”

“A poem, Mr. Allan!” said I. “And did you write it yourself?”

“By no means, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan, laughing. “There is no saying what I might have done in that way, if you had not smothered my aspirations in the bud. It is not my own. Its author is a youthful friend of mine, of whom more hereafter; but I should like to read his production to you before I tell you of himself. Have I your permission, Mrs. Maitland?”

“We shall be very glad to hear it, Mr. Elphinstone,” said Mary, my sister.

So Mr. Allan began to read, and seeing (though truly I do not pretend in any manner to be a judge) that it entered into my spirit, even like some old dream of my own, I will write it down here. There may be some that it will be a history to, as it was to

me; and for folk that have never had the like imaginings, nor met with the like tribulations, truly they may just pass it by.

HOPE.

A HISTORY.

The sun shone upon a fair fortress, strong in its defences, and beautiful to look upon. Wall rose within wall, like the terraced side of some luxurious Eastern mountain, and a strong citadel, crowned by the sunbeams, rose invincible in the midst.

Dark with the hosts of a beleaguering army were the sunny slopes around the fortress. Everywhere across the light fell heavy shadows. The earth, that could not

choose but bring forth flowers, sighed continually for her children as they died beneath rude feet. The distant tramp of armed men proclaimed new foemen ever on their way ; and the fair fortress had but one defender.

Calm within the outer wall of the stronghold, she stood unarmed and alone. The hostile trumpet rang fiercely without, but the song of the solitary voice rose unbroken within. A light was upon her head ; it was the steadfast sunlight of the summer day. Her white garments rustled ; it was a breath of gentle wind, as soft as ever rustled summer leaves by the side of quiet waters. She looked abroad upon the gathering hosts. She heard the distant tramp of armed men, and she smiled—for her name was Hope.

The outer wall of the stronghold was builded of stone, rich with rare carvings; and lo! upon one was graven, "When the eye saw her, then it blessed her!" And another bore the blessing of him who was ready to perish, and every stone had its device of good report, and gentle sympathy, and universal love. And the law of kindness bound them into one steadfast battlement, strong to look upon as the rocks, or the mountains that are from everlasting.

The air was loud with the clamour of the foemen. The earth was darkened as with the shadow, and echoed as with the rushing of many wings. The host pressed upon the wall. They stormed it, but made no breach: they scaled it, but could not reach the summit; and Hope stood

calm within its shadow, and lifted up her voice, and sung—

“ Like clouds upon the sky—

Lo ! peace and strife,

As days are born and die,

Float on thy breath, oh life !

Thou buildest with wise art,

Things kind and gentle all,

And at the weakest point, the warmest heart

Strengthens thy wall.

And so we keep out strife,

By thy glad kindnesses, oh life !”

But a captain of the host drew near, and with him an instrument fashioned in the darkness of the land of evil, and they mined the earth below the wall.

The foundations were moved, and the battlements shook, as with a passing wind. Again—and yet again—and the rare carvings

began to crumble from the stone, and the bonds of the law of kindness loosened, and the wall trembled: yet Hope looked on with a look of wonder and smiled, for she wist that it was but some passing fantasy, and all would stand firm again.

The copestone tottered—the wall was rent. There was a breach in the east, towards the sunrising, and she stood with the smile stayed upon her lip, and marvelled. The foe pressed upon the breach, the broken bulwarks crumbled beneath the heavy footsteps, but Hope glided within the inner wall, and the strong gate closed upon her in proud security. For the smile of wonder was still upon her lip, and her heart was not dismayed.

And fairer to look upon was that inner wall, circling her round about with a tightened girdle, and the stones were stones

of price, graven with the names of brethren and of sisters—sweet gush of music that the shout and the trumpet could not silence—and Hope looked abroad from her safe refuge, and gazed wonderingly on the crumbling ruins that had fallen below.

Wherefore did they fall? These carven stones, bound by the strong links of the law of kindness—wherefore were they loosed? wherefore did they fall? And Hope began to lift her eyes to the clear heavens and to ask—wherefore? But there came no answer from the sky!

Suddenly, a mighty cloud covered the bosom of the heavens. The world grew still and trembled, because it could not choose but listen to the stern rebuking voice of the spirit of the storm. Heavy, amid the silence, the tears of awed and voiceless nature rang upon terraced walls

and pavement. With a blue and ghastly radiance, the lightning began to shimmer in the stones of price, and the thunder pealed its ponderous trumpet over broken battlement and besieging army, till the ruined walls sunk further down, and the carvings crumbled from each remaining stone.

Yet was not Hope afraid. The rain fell heavily around, but only cast its gentlest spray upon her head, and lay there, twined among her tresses, like errant gems or dew-drops. And her white raiment was not sullied in a fold, for she stood within the shelter of the radiant wall, that girdled her with its zone of love.

The wild light blazed around, but she only read the clearer, the name of here a sister, and there a brother, graven on the stones of price. And she looked upward unto the troubled heavens, and abroad upon

the enemy, and listened to the distant march of a thousand foemen more, and she smiled, for wherefore should she fear?

“Ye puny warriors,” said the chief of the besieging army to the bands that stormed the wall, “here is no work for you. Call hither mine heir.”

And lo! a dark shadow passed over the breach, and the armies bowed their heads before him, and did him reverence, for he was the son of their king, and the name of him was Death.

“Heir of mine inheritance,” said the chieftain of the foe, “behold a wall which before Malice and Doubt and Falsehood, brave captains though they be, stands invulnerable. Thou and I have power upon the earth. Shall we be foiled?” and the dark shadow answered “No.”

The cloud rolled from the heavens, and

passed away unto the tops of distant mountains, where it lingered, muttering wrath, and looking on from afar. The sunshine fell again like a rich garment on the radiant fortress wall. And Hope looked abroad upon the bands of armed men and saw them gather in reluctant ranks, as though like the storm to pass away. And when she held her breath to listen, the march of the coming foemen had ceased. And her heart grew glad within her, and her rejoicing burst forth into song.—

“ Ah, Peace !

Sister of mine,

The loudest storm must cease

Where thy sweet glances shine.

Calm grows the affrighted air,

So rare an art is thine,

At lifting of thine eyelids fair,

Sister of mine !”

But the dark shadow stood without the wall and the sunshine quailed before him.

“ 'Tis told that bells of silver ring,
In eastern lands on maidens feet ;
So tread the streamlets in gay spring,
So is thy footfall sweet.
Let thy calm lilies shine,
So shall these discords cease,
Sister of mine,
Sweet Peace !”

Leaning upon the radiant battlement, with its graving of dear names, stood Hope in her thanksgiving. Without fluttered the still shadow, with one misty arm raised, and one fearful finger pointing to a stone—a precious stone, a stone of all its neighbours most rarely graven, and flashing in the sunshine with the purest lustre. It loosens—it shakes. It has fallen, and through the

vacant place, Hope looks upon the dark shadow face to face, and her song is stilled, and her smile is gone.

The finger pointed again in the breathless silence, and another fell, and yet another, and Hope threw her fair arms over those that remained, clinging to them in her agony, but they fell.

Again, again ! The stern shadow compassed the wall, and in the silence you heard but the breaking of the stones of price. And yet a little while, and Hope will be a captive, with a broken heart ; only there is yet another wall, and her spirit in its grief is still strong ; for the shadow has power upon earth, but not all power.

So Hope planted her footstep sadly on an inner threshold, and again the gates closed behind her, and she was safe once more.

But there rises no song now, and there shines no smile. Wistfully, and with tearful eyes, she gazed on the broken battlements below, longing only to gather the fragments; yearning over the dust whither they have fallen, yet able to reach none; listening not now to the trumpet that cheered on these thickening ranks, nor to the march of distant foemen; for she leaned upon the highest wall, and there was but the citadel behind.

The wall was of gold, rich as the last sunbeams that linger in the west, and graven upon it were olden stories, that told how heart hath clung to heart, the wide world over; how amid multitudes thronging like the forest leaves, one hath ever chosen one. And from the fervid lays of the Orient, and the treasured lore of the thoughtful North, had been gathered most moving histories, to

give a voice of power to the rich gold of the lettered wall. And its voice *was* powerful—exceeding low—exceeding sweet. And it entered the mourner's heart.

The sun set in the Western Sea, the lamps were lit in the watch-towers of Heaven. The foemen descended from the wall, and gathered on the field, the vassals to rest, the chiefs to counsel. And Hope stood alone in the night, leaning upon her golden battlement, and gazing wistful up into the starred and solemn sky.

The gates of the citadel behind were open, and forth from the doorway issued a breeze, fresh as a truant from the wide sea, and breathing of old ocean still. It moved her garments lightly, as though to draw her within the surer shelter, and on its fresh breath came a voice saying :

“ Ah, Hope, sweet Hope ! turn thee to the stronghold, so shalt thou keep this defence also.”

But the light of a fair star was tracing out a plaintive story, graven on the lettered wall, and Hope did not listen to the voice.

But she leaned upon her wall of gold, and communed with the solemn stars, and looked abroad upon the earth in its rustling robes of silence, and in the sickness of her heart, she murmured :

“ Though all forsake me, yet will not thou.”

And lo ! from the depths of her memory came a voice :

“ Where thou goest, I will go ; and where thou dwellest, I will dwell ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

And the smile came again upon her lip,

only it was no more a smile of gladness, but it was a smile of faith.

The stately Night passed on, sweeping her rich garments over the highest hills. The air grew grave and solemn with the deep, still breath of midnight, and Hope stood in the silence, the slow hours dwelling with her till they grew friends—a life-time in a night.

And lo ! into her heart there came a still joy, stealing upon her sorrow as the moon-beams steal upon the sea ; a joy that was half grief, and yet was joy ; a gladness that brooked no words, no songs, no rejoicing, but rather spoke in tears, full and deep, and silent as the night.

The morning broke, and Hope still leaned upon her golden wall ; and without, in the dim twilight, the chief of the beleaguering army approached, in cover of the mists, with the dark shadow by his side.

“Son,” said the chieftain, “shall this work be thine also?”

But the shadow answered, “No. Hitherto can I come, but no further. Lord and Father, the work is thine !”

So they compassed the wall, and Hope leaned upon her strong battlement, and read in the faint morning light a history of steadfast faith and love that could not die, and her heart grew strong within her.

Far below, the crumbled stones of the lowest wall lay in ignoble dust, and she heeded them not ; but midway on the ascent lay fragments of the stones of price, sparkling still with as pure lustre as when their radiant wall encircled her ; and upon the fragments lay the clear dew of morning, the baptismal sprinkling of the young day.

The heart of Hope yearned over the precious stones, whereon these beloved names

lingered still, broken yet not destroyed, but she might not reach them, nor could they shelter her ever more. And the yearning of her heart flowed forth in trustfulness, and she leaned only the more upon her golden wall.

The sun rose high, the young day passed swiftly onward to its prime. The earth moved uneasily, fevered beneath the hot glance of these fervid sunbeams, and Hope drew her veil over her fair head and laid her hand upon the battlement.

The gold burned like a wall of fire, and Hope withdrew her hand. Surely it was but the noon sunbeams, and it would be cool anon.

So she turned to read a history, a grave legend of the North, wherein was recorded a firm and constant faithfulness, which neither

grief nor joy could turn away, and which overcame all things. And lo ! upon the hot forehead of the wall trickled golden drops, blotting the words she sought to read, and through her heart ran a thrill of fear, yet she said :

“It is but the hot sun of noon,” and laboured to smile, but she knew not that there were flames blazing without the wall, in which she had put her trust.

For the chief of the foemen and his dark bands are there piling up faggots close by the wall—and the flames are rising fiercely, and the hot sun shines, and the golden battlement is sinking between the twain.

“Who will dare for me the crossing of this wall ?” said the chieftain. “Who will keep the door of yonder citadel, that she may not escape into the stronghold ?”

And lo! there stood by his side a shrivelled child, with a gray and aged face, and said :

“ Here am I.”

And they who stood about called him—
Despair.

“ Thou hatest her with a deadly hatred,” said the chieftain. “ Yea, but such as she have a talisman, whereby they know *us* : thou shalt abide thy time ; but bring me hither yonder captive girl. She may do my errand well.”

So they brought to him a weeping maiden, clothed in long raiment, the colour of sadness, and ever as she came she drooped her head, and wrung her hands and sighed, “ Ah, me !” and might do nothing more.

And so had she come into captivity, for when they pursued her, she did but sigh, and

weep and bemoan herself, and could not flee.

And so they lifted her over the hot wall which ran down now a stream of molten gold, and bade her that she should sit at the door of the citadel, and stay the entrance of Hope, for they wist that Hope also in her extremity would tarry with her to mourn and weep, and would thus be taken in their toils.

Within the circle of the sinking wall stood Hope. Her white garments gathered round her—her light foot pressing painfully on the hot pavement. The sun will be down anon, perchance then shall this be stayed. But the soul of Hope is sick within her, and she can smile no more. Ah ! these pleasant histories of truth and love, and marvellous constancy :—are there

none true ? for, lo ! how, they are melting with the wall.

Lower, lower, a molten stream of gold, with all its fair histories effaced, and only change and falsehood floating in its red waves—and the weeping maiden has stolen to the door of the citadel, and sits bemoaning herself, and sighing “ Ah, me ! ” but Hope heedeth her not.

The breeze floats out from the cool citadel, fanning her forehead, drawing in her white garments, and upon it comes again the voice, saying ; “ Turn thee to the stronghold, thou prisoner, Hope ! So shalt thou have rest ! ”

But the voice is to her ear but as some passing note of music, and she knoweth not the words.

She will not weep—nay, but she will be proud. And yet again she weeps, and the

tears boil upon the burning wall—and whither shall she flee? For almost the foe-man could mount now, it hath sunk so far, and it was her last trust. Perchance, if she could but wait till eventide, the havoc might be stayed. If only the soft dews and the cool night could breathe upon the wall.

Molten, sinking, a little space and it will be level with the pavement. A mist came upon the eyes of Hope, but she knew that she must flee, and she went forward groping with her arms, because her eyes were dim, and murmuring,

“ Oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away, and be at rest.” But she thought not that rest was at hand.

“ Ah, Hope! sweet Hope, turn thee to the stronghold.”

The voice would not cease, and the breeze drew her garments in, and her groping hand touched the lintel of the doorway, low and straight.

“Tarry, ah, lady! and weep with me,” said the sighing maiden, “for I am very sad.”

But Hope might not weep. And the voice besought, and the breeze drew her nearer, and her hot hand lingered gratefully on the cold and firm stone, and *she entered in.*

Straightway the strong breeze closed the heavy door with a ringing note of triumph; and a shout rang through the air. But it was the shout of baffled foemen, for they had gained the terraced pavement, as Hope crossed the threshold of the stronghold, and again she was beyond their reach.

The walls of the citadel were of cold grey stone, graven with no pleasant histories, and from the door-way, even to the domed roof there wound a stair, heavy and dark, and strong; and through the window in the high roof, you might see a glimpse of blue sky, far up and distant; but nothing more. And Hope sat upon the lowest step, and laid her aching head upon her hands, and was still awhile, for her heart was full of pain.

Only there had entered into her soul one Mighty Name—a Name with which the air within that citadel was fragrant, breathing it with a deep love that was too full for speech—the name of One who hath been shadowed through all early times, and remembered in all late: of Him who was King of Righteousness first, and then of Peace, like the royal priest of old

Arabia. The sum of all glory and all might, and all tenderness, was in that Name, and it entered into the soul of Hope.

And straightway she arose, and began to ascend the heavy winding stair. Slow and painfully, for her frame was weak, and her heart weary. And there was one arrow-slit in the wall, from whence she looked abroad, and saw the foemen thronging about the citadel; the stern chieftain, and the dark shadow, who was the heir of his kingdom; and Hope hastened to mount higher. Nevertheless, her heart abode in quietness, for the name of that Mighty One was a strong tower, and she was safe.

So she laboured on: slowly, painfully, one by one, yet she mounted higher. And the sky, far above, grew nearer, and looked

down peacefully with its steadfast blue eye, through its white veil of clouds. And Hope pressed onward, and her heart grew still within her, like a hushed child.

The evening came—the night—placid and quiet as night ever fell, and in the silence of its mid hour, Hope reached the summit of the stair—so high that she could hear no longer the stir of the armed hosts below ; so high that stars looked down into her pale and meditative face, as with the eyes of friends, and the hours passed in a solemn march, not sorrowful, and yet not full of dreams, like the hours of yester-night.

The morning rose, softly, and with gentle tears, hiding her sun behind a pleasant cloud, and Hope opened the domed roof-window to look forth upon the foemen. The summer wind played softly on her ; the

summer raindrops fell on her head like blessings. She looked abroad, and behold! the dark armies had faded from the earth like mists, and there only shone, below, the broken fragments of the stones of price, gemmed with the peaceful dew: for Hope had escaped into the stronghold, and the army of her enemies had fled, before the naming of the Mighty Name.

So, when Mr. Allan was done, we got into converse concerning the thing he read to us, my sister Mary thinking it was, in a manner, dim and misty, and did not tell its own story so clear as it might have done. For truly, Mary, my sister, has lived a most quiet and pleasant life, (and I know not any mortal that deserves better the good gifts she has gotten,) and has little acquaintance

with the secret tribulations that make folk quick to discern a parable like that.

But I think not it was so with the bairn Mary, any more than with myself, though where the innocent thing had learned any measure of experience in such matters, I know not, but bairns have ever pleasure in imaginings.

So, Mr. Allan had just told us how he fell in with the young man that wrote it, who was dwelling in one of the houses at Cruive End, with ill health and scant providing, when the minister, my brother, came in, which turned our converse upon other things, and no long after, Mr. Allan went home to Lilliesleaf, seeing that it was wearing far on in the night.

CHAPTER VI.

I DID not go back to Sunnyside till the Monday after that, but when Robbie was driving me home, early on the Monday morning, and we had just passed the Woodlands' toll, and were coming in sight of Burrowstoun, I heard the sound of a horse's feet, coming quick behind; whereupon, I looked back, and saw it was Mr. Allan. So he came up to us, and rode at the side of the gig for the rest of the way. "Miss Maitland," said Mr. Allan to me, "I am

going to bring Dunbar to see you to-day."

"And who is Dunbar, Mr. Allan?" said I.

"Did I not tell you his name before?" said Mr. Allan. "He is my youthful poet, Miss Maitland, and is so very melancholy and sensitive, poor lad, that I want to bring him under the healing influence of your kindness. I fancy I am too rough for him, and he has no friends. He might grow healthful in such a kindly atmosphere as yours; but at present his shrinking susceptibility creates innumerable pains for him. Poor Dunbar!"

"And what is he, Mr. Allan?" said I.

"He has been a student, Miss Maitland," said Mr. Allan, "with no very definite aim, I dare say; for his father was living then, and he had some prospects

of independence. But the father died, and left his son with nothing but his education, and a sensitive poetic mind—a dangerous inheritance for a poor tutor. So Patrick, after trying one or two situations of that kind, and feeling intensely mortifications that might have been nothing to a less delicate spirit, wandered here by some chance, and in one of the desponding fits, to which his temperament is liable, took a mean lodging at Cruive End. I suppose it was suitable enough to his finances, poor fellow! And then he caught a fever, from which he is now only very slowly recovering. I think we must have him sent abroad for health, and Hope's sake."

"I marvel, Mr. Allan," said I, "that you never said a word about him before. Truly I would have been blythe to have ministered

to the poor lad in some way, for illness in a strange place is a sore thing. I mind when Claud, my nephew, had that trouble in Edinburgh, how bye-ordinary kind Mrs. Standright was; which was the greater wonder, seeing she had no bairns of her own."

Mr. Allan looked at me, with a kindly smile upon his face.

"You are laughing, Mr. Allan," said I, "at me speaking about bairns, that am but a single gentlewoman myself. But you must mind how Claud and Mary have been aye about me, and my Grace growing up at my very hand, which makes a great odds. Forbye that Mrs. Standright is a person taken up with matters that I could make little hand of. But I doubt not it will be your purpose, Mr. Allan, to put the young man in some way of doing?"

“I have heard it often said, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan, “that a man with a mind like Dunbar’s, should be saved from the cares of our ordinary life, and enabled to follow his own literary bent in ease; pecuniary ease, I mean. Now, if I were trying to manage that for him, what would you say?”

“That you were doing a most inconsiderate thing, Mr. Allan,” said I. “Truly, so far as I can comprehend of that gift, it is aye the strongest when it is fighting its own fight, and ever dwines and grows faint when it is made of, like a petted bairn. But let the lad have a healthful labour, Mr. Allan, and the spirit will wax strong within him.”

“I am glad you agree so exactly with himself,” said Mr. Allan with a smile. “If I were sharing Lilliesleaf with him, I believe

he would repudiate it as a charity. So you see there is sterling stuff in my susceptible and delicate poet, Miss Maitland. He feels that there is something in him which can not only dream, but work. I am afraid his health would suffer were he remaining in Scotland, and I know no profession that would suit him. So I have been, after his own fashion, dreaming out a vocation for him."

"It is like your kind heart," said I; "and what was it, Mr. Allan?"

"I don't know if it is at all practicable," said Mr. Allan; "but what says Jenny's proverb, Miss Maitland?—'there is nae trust like trial.' I think if I could get Dunbar attached to some scientific or literary exploration (there is no lack of them) to discover unknown pyramids or buried cities, where he should be entirely absorbed with

something worth being enthusiastic about, why, then I think there would be no fear of him."

"To go to far countries?" said I. "Truly, it must be a most dreary thing, Mr. Allan, to have to journey so far away from folk's own home and kindred; but then he has a youthful spirit, doubtless—and will he be pleased himself?"

"Poor Dunbar," said Mr. Allan, "has neither home nor kindred to leave, Miss Maitland, and it is his own desire to go abroad. His health, too, absolutely requires it. I wrote to a friend in London a few days ago about my idea, and will likely have an answer from him to-day."

"And you must have been thinking about this a long time, Mr. Allan," said I. "I marvel that I never heard tell of it before."

“ It is not more than a month since I met with Dunbar,” said Mr. Allan, “ and with all his shyness and reserve, it does not take months or years to make one thoroughly acquainted with him ; there is much in that magic temperament of his—and it is less than half that time since I discovered his poetic tendencies, that is to say, since I discovered ‘ Hope.’ It came into my hands accidentally, and against his will. But that is only a first flight. He must do greater things.”

“ But think you he will be able to stand the travel, Mr. Allan ?” said I, “ seeing he is a weak lad.”

“ I have no fear of him,” said Mr. Allan with a kindly spark in his eye. “ His Hope would grow heartsick if we left her in her watch-tower, but let us send her abroad to

bring truth out of the monuments and traditions of an old world, and she will (I use your own words, Miss Maitland) grow strong by her very labour. No fear of him. Only I must beg your assistance to soothe and protect him to-day. I was so unfortunate as to mention him to my mother's friends at the Castle, and they have formed a plan which would wound him, I fear, if he heard it, almost beyond my power of healing; so I want to put him into your hands for defence."

"I will be most blythe, Mr. Allan," said I; "only, a woman of years like me, is no great company for a young man. If you had but brought him to the Manse."

"No, no," said Mr. Allan, in a hasty way, and then he stopped, and gave me a shame-faced look, and laughed; "that poetic temperament of his has a fascination about it—

and—well, I don't feel especially called upon to stand in my own light."

And with that, Mr. Allan looked down, and began to sort the bridle of his horse, though there was nothing wrong about it, that I could see.

"I have an engagement with Burrows-tuon, and some of his friends," said Mr. Allan, a while after that, "an hour or two hence; but in the meantime I shall bring Dunbar to Sunnyside, Miss Maitland."

So, at that moment we came near to the house where the post office was, and Mr. Allan parted from me, seeing he expected letters, and in especial, one from the gentleman he had written to in London concerning the lad Dunbar. And Robbie drove me over to Sunnyside.

So, maybe in about half an hour after that, when Robbie was just setting away

again, having gotten a piece, Mr. Allan came in with the young man, who was but a mere lad, of an uncommon slight make, and little past twenty years old, as I could see, besides being very white and weak like, by reason of his trouble.

He had a shy manner about him, and spoke but little, but I think I scarce ever heard so pleasant a voice. Truly it was like some old and sad music, that had a history in it, and moved my spirit within me. And it was just a pleasure to see the kindly way of Mr. Allan, and how he was aye endeavouring to cheer and gladden the heart of the young man that a good Providence had thrown upon his hand.

I think not he could have had a manner of more respect, if he had been introducing the Earl to me, instead of Mr. Dunbar.

And was not that kindness truly twice blessed, seeing it was both healing the spirit of the lone lad, and bringing out the gifts that he himself had been gifted withal !

“It is my hope you will soon get your strength again, Mr. Dunbar,” said I, “in especial as the spring season of the year will be coming in soon, and Burrowstoun has a bye-ordinary name for a wholesome and healthful place.”

“No fear of him,” said Mr. Allan, in a kindly way. “My friend writes me from London, Miss Maitland, that an expedition, such as I mentioned, starts in the beginning of March, and I shall write to the leader of it to-night. So we must have our friend strong, in case he should make up his mind to go with them.”

The lad looked from him to me, with the

water gathering in his eyes, and as if he wanted to say something, but all he could get out was : “ Mr. Elphinstone has been so very kind !”

And, with that, his voice seemed to fail.

“ This little Burrowstoun of ours will be proud some day,” said Mr. Allan, in his blythe manner, aye striving to keep up the spirits of the lad, “ of having sheltered the great author, before he became great. Do you not think so, Miss Maitland ?”

The lad blushed in a shame-faced manner, and shook his head.

“ I expect him to distinguish us all,” said Mr. Allan. “ For my own part, Dunbar, I don’t think I will be content with less than a dedication.”

There was a sudden flush came upon the young man’s face ; no like what might be brought merely by that mirthful kindness

of Mr. Allan's, but a look that kythed of such a purpose, as was like to make glad a young spirit that might be able sometime to do that in truth, that was but spoken of in the way of a jest. Truly, though I am but a quiet woman myself, and have had little troke with the world, I felt the thought of the young man, Dunbar, at that moment, as if it had been my own, and knew how he bid to exult over the power that the Almighty had put into his spirit, whereby he might hold up to all men the name of the friend that had helped him in his sore and sorrowful need.

It chanced at that time that Jenny came to tell me that somebody wanted me at the outer gate, which turned out to be Beenie Lightfoot, the youngest of Saunders the postman's family, come to seek some bits of linen from me, seeing the evil spirit, her

brother Willie, had gotten a sore cut upon his brow.

So I sought out some, and went to the gate to give them to the bairn, and just at that moment Lord Burrowstoun, and some more gentlemen came riding up, having been told by some person about Cruive End that Mr. Allan was at Sunnyside. So Mr. Allan came out to them the time I was standing at the gate, speaking to Beenie, and he asked me to keep the young man, Dunbar, with me for a while, the which I promised to do, and so he went away. It was some hunting ploy or other that they had in hand that day: I mind not what, but they had grooms and dogs with them.

“I can’t make out, Elphinstone,” I heard the young Lord say, as they turned round

the corner of the hedge, "what keeps you continually dangling about that old lady."

"Was it a meeting for prayer, Elphinstone?" said another lad, with an affected-like voice. "I saw a black coat at the window; I hope there was an outpouring of—"

"Don't risk your reputation as a wit, Martindale," said Mr. Allan, in an angry way, "by meddling with things you don't comprehend."

"So!" cried out the young man, with a laugh; "I have hit Saint Allan."

And for a good while longer I could hear the laughing of them, as they went upon their way.

So I returned into the house and got into converse with the young man Mr. Dunbar, and full he was, as might have been expected, with praise of Mr. Allan.

So I inquired at him what part of the country he came from, and about his friends, seeing I could not but think, for all Mr. Allan said, that he bid to have some who were of kin to him.

But the poor lad became much troubled at that, and said to me that he had no kindred in the world. His mother had died when he was a bairn, and all his days he had known no friend but his father, who bid to have been a man of a strange mind, seeing he had brought up his son in a way of mere idleset, though he had no heritage to leave him, but just strength to work for his daily bread.

So, said I: "And what are you thinking, Mr. Dunbar, of turning your hand to?"

"Anything—I do not care what," said the young man, in an eager way. "It is a miserable thing, Miss Maitland, to live

in a family as I have done, and be the object of all the ill humour and meanness that dares not venture to expend itself on any other; to be always in the way—always intruding like a melancholy ghost on the household, in whose happiness one can have no share. It is a very bitter lot.”

“And that is true, Mr. Dunbar,” said I.

“But I do not care what it is,” said the lad, speaking very quick, “I should be ashamed now to think that I could not subdue these or any other feelings; but it is so hard—so very hard, Miss Maitland, to feel one’s life wearing away in the mere struggle for daily bread.”

So, at that, I could not help but smile. “Truly,” said I, “I see not that you have lost much time yet; and though the world is, without doubt, an ill world, it is just wonderful how a kind Providence brings aye

help and deliverance—and there never was a mortal yet, that did any great thing, but had a sore fight to begin with.”

So the young man’s face kindled into a light with that, and he said to me :

“ I heard Mr. Elphinstone mention to you, Miss Maitland, what he intended me to do.”

“ Yes,” said I, “ Mr. Allan was speaking to me ; but are you no feared for the travel, Mr. Dunbar, and you in no manner strong in your health ?”

The lad raised himself up (for he had a way of stooping that could not but be ill for his chest) with his face shining,

“ I do not fear anything,” he said, “ which would give Mr. Elphinstone the satisfaction of finding that his kindness has not been thrown away.”

“Truly,” said I, “Mr. Allan has a most open heart.”

“It is not only in what is usually called kindness,” said the young man, with a flush upon his face; “it is not merely because he provided for me, Miss Maitland—because he promises to enable me in future to provide for myself—but because he drew away the darkness that was closing around me; because he ministered to the mind diseased—it is for that I have to thank Mr. Elphinstone—that I did not die like Chatterton,—that I may live, perhaps, to tell the world what nobleness lives in its quiet corners—I have to thank him for it all.”

Truly, it works in a most strange manner the light that the Almighty puts, here and there, in such a vessel as that lad Dunbar. To look upon the two with the outward eye,

Mr. Allan was a gentleman gifted with much riches and lands, and this was but a poor lad, with an inheritance of puitith, and toil, and tribulation.

But for all that (although he was a lad shy in demeanour, and in no manner of a boastful spirit), there was a sure feeling within him, that his name would win high, and live long, in the remembrance of the world, when Mr. Allan's should have past away. And therefore was there blytheness and exultation within his spirit, in the thought of bringing honour on the one man, that had been a friend to him.

It is not like that I should mind all that was spoken in our converse that day, but it seemed to me that the heart of the lad was opened towards me, so that he told me his tribulations, in the which I comforted him as I could. Also he telled me how well Mr.

Allan's plan pleased him, seeing he had aye had a yearning after the far countries of the East, since he was a bairn, which, in a manner, reconciled me to him going, for I have ever had a great ill-will at folk being sent out of their own country, unless it be their own desire and wish.

So the time wore on, and he had been maybe, two hours in Sunnyside, when being at the window, I saw an open carriage come up to the gate, with a lady driving it, and when I looked again, I saw it was the young lady that had been sitting next to Mrs. Elphinstone at Cruive End, on the New Year's day, which was Lady Julia, though what she could be wanting at Sunnyside I knew not. Also next to her in the carriage was an old gentlewoman wearing spectacles, who was, doubtless, Lady Mary, the Earl's sister, that had written a book.

And in very little time they were in, Lady Mary behaving in a discreet enough manner, but her niece demeaning herself more like a daft body than any other thing.

So, after they had in a manner introduced themselves to me, (though truly, both of them were more like coming into a house of their own, of the which I was the keeper, than intruding without any word of invitation into my peaceable dwelling) they fell upon the lad Dunbar, and straightway began, in especial Lady Julia, to tell him that Mr. Allan had showed them some of his poetry, and how much they thought of it. At which the lad behoved to be pleased, being an innocent callant and thinking not but what other folk were as truthful and æfauld as himself. Also, I saw that the swellings o' a natural pride came upon him, that the gift

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which he had, should be so soon acknowledged by folk great in this earth.

Nevertheless, I was feared within myself, (minding what Mr. Allan had said about me taking care of the lad, and seeing also that the ladies had come to seek him, and no me), lest some affront should be put upon him, seeing he was a young man of so delicate a spirit.

“Do you write songs, Mr. Dunbar?” said Lady Julia, “for I am anxious to have some new songs. There are none in English worth one’s singing.”

“Because there has been no great lyric poet,” madam,” said the lad in a modest way, “and there are but few men who can wed poetry to music. I do not think—”

“Oh! do you compose also?” said Lady Julia. “Delightful! How fortunate that Mr.

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Elphinstone should have discovered you just now. You will write a song for me, Mr. Dunbar? and compose it?—Now do—I shall be so much obliged!”

“We are about to have a rather large party of visitors,” said Lady Mary to me, in a condescending way, “and Julia wishes our foreign friends to hear a little English music. She has set her heart on having it original. Something in the ballad style, Allan Elphinstone suggests, does he not, Julia? He says, we English should never attempt elaborate music.”

“Allan Elphinstone is no authority!” said Lady Julia, in a manner which it would have grieved me sore to see in any of our bairns. “Do you compose, or write first, Mr. Dunbar? Oh! here is an instrument in the room, and I should so like to hear you begin.”

And, with that, the young lady flew across my parlour, and threw open the old piano, upon which I had been used to play tunes to pleasure the bairns. So she sat down at it, and began to play one of those senseless skreighs, which, so far as I can judge, have neither end nor beginning. And Lady Mary sitting quietly, looking at her all the time, without even a word of reproof, or so much as a look, as if she thought shame of a bairn of her upbringing, behaving so ill in a strange house.

The young man, Dunbar, was sitting all the time with a look of wonderment; but when Lady Julia rose up from the piano, he took heart to say,

“ I know nothing of music, madam. Your Ladyship” (truly, the poor lad was as little used with ladyships as I was myself) “ has misunderstood me.”

Lady Julia pouted with her lip, as if she was ill-pleased.

“Mr. Elphinstone told you so, my love,” said Lady Mary; “but Mr. Dunbar, I have no doubt, will be so good as oblige you with a copy of verses, and you can have them set to music.”

Lady Julia kept the ill-natured look a while, and then she said,

“Well, if Mr. Dunbar does not compose, of course we must be content; but could you not try?”

“My dear,” said Lady Mary, “you forget how little time we have, and you have not yet made your request to Mr. Dunbar. Our young people are arranging tableaux, Miss Maitland, and they are anxious to have Mr. Dunbar’s assistance.”

“Oh! you know, Mr. Dunbar,” said Lady Julia, “there was a poet of your name long

ago, and we are to have a scene at court in his time. Burrowstoun is to be King James, and we are all to take characters of the time. Now I want you to be the poet, and make your appearance before the court, and sing a beautiful ballad of your own composing. It would be delightful, and make it so interesting—especially as your name is Dunbar.”

The young man's face flushed deep, but it seemed as if he could not say a word.

“King James is to be on the throne, you know,” said Lady Julia, “and all of us in our court dresses round him, and the Baron and the Count, in the Spanish and French costume of the time, as ambassadors. And then you are to enter in a picturesque minstrel's dress, with a lute, and sing. Won't it be delightful? And you must

come to the castle, and advise with us about the dresses. I have managed all the arrangements myself."

The lad's face grew so red, that I was feared for some ill happening to him, and I saw him shake, but he did not say a word.

"And as for the lute," said Lady Julia, "you would only need to strike a chord now and then to accompany yourself. I could teach you myself all that you would need, only it is graceful to have an instrument; and you shall have an elegant dress. I saw a minstrel's costume in a book of plates, which was charming."

"Dear me, Mr. Dunbar," said I, being troubled about the lad, "I am feared you are ill!"

I had put my hand upon his shoulder, and felt that he was shaking. The poor lad!

the delicate, shrinking, nature of him, how was it to bear the like of that?

“Madam,” he got out after a while, looking to Lady Mary, “does Mr. Elphinstone know of this?”

“Oh! yes, he knows,” said Lady Julia, in a rude way, “but he would not speak of it to you, though I asked him. Allan Elphinstone has such odd ideas! He thought you wouldn’t like it. But never mind, he will look so foolish when he sees you come in, in your minstrel’s dress! And you must not say a word about it, just to astonish him.”

“Lady Julia loves to tease poor young Elphinstone,” said Lady Mary. “But I assure you, you will lose nothing in his estimation, Mr. Dunbar, by obliging Lady Julia.”

The young lady gave her head a cast, as

if she did not want to have anything said of Mr. Allan ; but truly my heart was grieved within me for the poor sensitive lad, that was trembling with his hurt and wounded spirit, for having such a thing evened to him. Without doubt, there was a great odds between what they wanted him to do, and the thoughts that had been filling his mind so little a space before: him, that was dreaming of a great work, which the Lord had given him might to do—to waste the good gift, and dishonour himself, ministering to the vain pleasure of an idle and ungodly generation.

The poor lad knew not what to do, so I took it into my own hands.

“Mr. Dunbar is but a young lad, Lady Mary,” said I, (for I could not bow myself to have any troke with the discourteous bairn,) “and I see, likes not to speak freely at this

moment what is in his mind. It may have been his upbringing, or it may be the nature of his own spirit, but I know by the look of him, that it is not his will to do this thing : wherefore it is my petition, that your ladyship should not bid him ; for it is far from the use or wont of our douce country for folk to make a spectacle of themselves."

The two ladies stared at me, and Lady Mary laughed at my ignorance, as it seemed.

"My good friend," she said, "you altogether misunderstand the matter. I fancy it can be very little degradation to Mr. Dunbar to take part in a spectacle, as you call it (and the name is not amiss), in which Lord Burrowstoun and Lady Julia join."

Truly, I was near telling her, that for one spirit like the distressed lad that was sitting beside me, there might be a hundred vain and useless bairns like unto Lord Burrows-

toun and Lady Julia born into this world. Nevertheless, I put constraint upon myself, and Mr. Dunbar put in his own word.

“I am grieved, madam, that what you ask of me, is what I cannot do. Any other service I would most gladly perform for any friend of Mr. Elphinstone’s, but this I cannot. I am ill in health, and broken in spirit, and your Ladyship may think how great would be the mockery, if *I* professed to be able to contribute to the amusement of others.”

I marvel that the heart of the lady, having had the charge of bairns, did not yearn, like mine, over the poor lad, standing his lane in a coldrife world, and speaking, with but twenty years over his head, of a broken spirit.

So, very soon after that, they went away, Lady Julia saying something about ingra-

titude, after Mr. Allan being so kind, which hurt the poor young man so much, that I could hardly get him comforted. But I told him that Mr. Allan was far liker to be ill-pleased at the ladies than at him, and that I doubted not it was because they were coming that Mr. Allan had brought him to Sunnyside, which made him easier in his mind.

Also I kepted him a good while beside me, and would not let him away till the darkening, and by that time he was in better heart, and full of blythe thoughts concerning what he would be able to work when the first fight was over, and the ground clear. And truly it was most pleasant to me to hear the visions of the young spirit, that was aye aiming at some great thing.

So Mr. Allan, when he heard of it, was

even as I thought, very ill about the visit his mother's friends had made to me, and came to say how grieved he was, for it was by reason of knowing their purpose that he had brought the young man Dunbar, to me, thinking they would never follow him to Sunnyside ; but, without doubt, idle folk will do many things when their hearts are set on a vain purpose. And I have heard that Mr. Allan was so ill-pleased that he would scarce go to the Castle when the great party was there, and would have no hand in the play-acting.

Truly I marvel that folk are not feared of tempting the Giver to take away from them the life that they put to such futil uses. I read a book no long since, where the story was little but a string of such like things. Grown up folk making themselves like the figures in pictures, and

playing at guesses, as bairns will do by the fire on a winter night, which filled me with wonder within myself, that poorer and wiser folk should see such unseemly guisarding and no lift up a voice, nor put forth a hand to restrain it.

So, seeing the history of the young man Dunbar, is in no manner connected with the rest of what I am writing, I may just tell it all at this place.

Mr. Allan, by means of writing to divers folk, got him a most suitable occupation, being to go away to eastern countries, and even into Judea itself, inquiring into ancient things, both in matters of science and of history, the like of finding out the ruins of the old cities, the proud and great Babylon, and other such, to which he departed in the month of March after that, having been just like a passing wayfarer, storm-sted for

a season in the midst of us. He departed also with a hopeful heart, which it was a pleasure to me to see.

I got him introduced to the minister; my brother, before he went away, and Claud was in a bye-ordinary manner pleased with him; but he was never at the Manse, for it seemed to me that Mr. Allan did not desire that. But it was the thought of us all that the lad would soon make his gift known to the world—which, I am most blythe to say, has come to pass—for though he has been but few years away, the spirit of wisdom has come upon him, even in the very hills and wilderness where Israel was led by the pillar and by the flame. And I think not but what God has spoken to the lad, in the solitary and wild places of that far country, maybe in a clearer and more perfect manner than if he had been dwelling by quiet waters

and sitting under the peaceable shelter of his own roof-tree.

Also he has published a book, with many pictures, telling about the marvels of that old and wonderful land, which has gotten him great fame and honour in the world. And so, in every way, it has been a joy of heart to Mr. Allan, that, by a good Providence, he fell in with the lone and desolate lad, lying in his fever in the cot-house at Cruive End.

CHAPTER VII.

It chanced that Mr. Allan came up to Sunnyside one day, about a week, I think, after the lad, Dunbar, had departed upon his long journey. And he brought a book with him to let me see it, the which he had taken from Mr. Dunbar as a kind of keepsake. It was a book of poetry, though truly I mind not at this moment who it was written by, only it was by one much thought of, in the world. But the thing that Mr. Allan brought it to me for, was some verses

that had been written upon a leaf by Patrick himself, poor man, the time he was wrestling in the midst of his tribulations, before he met with Mr. Allan. And truly they were of a sad kind for so young a lad :

“ In fair array they stand,

 These years of the brief past ;

On this, on that, I lay my hand,

 Marshalled in memory’s quiet land,

 For evermore to last.

Here I wept, long and sore, and there awhile

 Forgot my sorrows in a smile ;

And there flowed childhood’s thoughtful stream
 along,

 And here, swifter and strong,

Life struggled into care, and wakened unto song.

Press not upon mine eyes—

 Ye years of future might !

As, when the blindman’s eyelids rise,

The eternal hills, the steadfast skies,

 Press on his unused sight.

A phantom host of dim and shrouded fears,
Only mine own by these familiar tears.
Pressing around me, lo ! they crowd, they crowd—
Speaking no word aloud,
But dark indefinite ills, murmuring behind their
cloud.

Ah, me ! this weight of gloom,
My heart grows sick and fails.
Dark is the shadow of yon tomb—
Yet from its swift and sudden doom,
Less the lorn spirit quails.
Time's inarticulate muttering in mine ears,
The unknown griefs of these dumb years ;
And clouds of dim, veiled faces round me lower,
As if in pride of power.
Each would the sufferer see, before its proper hour.

Let them come one by one,
Lest hope within me die ;
In every race some goal is won,
On every day riseth a sun,
However dark the sky.

Press not upon me thus, ye phantom years!
Perchance, I shall be done with tears,
Before your robes shine 'neath this mortal sun,
Come one by one!
So, side by side, and calm, shall our dim course be
run."

"I like not to see such sadness of heart in any mortal, Mr. Allan," said I, "and in especial it grieves folk in such a young callant as the lad Patrick Dunbar, but doubtless so deep a spirit is like to be more moved either in gladness or sorrow than common folk. And it is a pleasure to think that the years have a sunnier look to him now, and will, maybe, bring honour and riches, as well as being filled with a grand labour, the which of itself is a great blessing."

"They are very melancholy," said Mr. Allan, taking the book back again. "Patrick must have been sadly broken in spirit, before

I met him first. But now I hope he will have no such occasion. Poverty at least is warded off and its attendant evils."

"I have read things in a manner like that in books of verse often," said I; "but it was mostly foolish bairns making tribulations, where none had fallen to their lot. Lamenting and pining, if you were to believe themselves; and all the time the Bountiful Hand sending down its blessings upon them. Woes me! as if it was a grand thing to be in grief; but that, to my eyes, has a true look, and without doubt the lad was tried sore. Truly I have thought myself in like manner of the years that might be coming, and trembled at them; but it is just wonderful how the spirit is aye strengthened for whatsoever may be its lot."

Mr. Allan sat and turned over the book in his hand, and looked not as if he were

caring for converse. "And yet," he said after a while, as if he was just speaking out loud the end of his own thought,

"And yet—Dunbar would not change places with me."

"I am thinking you would like worse to change places with him, Mr. Allan," said I, "but it is a daftlike thing to say that. Doubtless, we are all best fitted for our own work, though whiles we have a temptation to think that we could do our neighbours better."

So Mr. Allan gave a smile at that, and shook his head. And it looked to me as if the lamentation of the friendless lad, that, whatever weakness he might have secret to himself, was aye endeavouring, in the midst of his distress and poverty, to maintain a right walk and conversation, and to use his gift for the glory of the Giver, as will be

seen in that writing of his, which as I have before said was read to us in the Manse, had stirred Mr. Allan's spirit to think of his own ways, and doubtless he was troubled to see himself so girded about with temptations.

So when we had again sat quiet for a good time, I said to him. "You will doubtless have heard tell of the wedding, Mr. Allan?"

Mr. Allan started, and gave a feared look at me. "The wedding, Miss Maitland?"

"I am no meaning yours, Mr. Allan," said I, in a blyther manner, "seeing I know not when it is like to be; but of Mr. Forrest's of Woodlands, who is to be married the day after the morn."

"Mr. Forrest's?" said Mr. Allan. "Oh, yes! I have heard of that. I had some business with him the other day, but found it

impossible to get admittance. I suppose he is too bashful to show himself in his present interesting condition, though he is not a very youthful bridegroom. Do you know anything of the bride, Miss Maitland?"

"He is a man in his prime, Mr. Allan," said I, "and has ever been a most good and sensible lad; and I think not the bride is a bairn either, but come to discreet years, as was right and suitable. But she is a stranger to me, only I have heard Mrs. Standright speaking about her, and also that wild boy, William Elder."

Mr. Allan laughed. "I heard William Elder wickedly reporting what some Edinburgh lady had said of her a few days since. 'Miss Cassilis has experience.' Is not that a delicate way of intimating these discreet years you speak of, Miss Maitland."

"Truly, I know not, Mr. Allan," said I,

“ though without doubt years *should* bring a measure of wisdom—but I have seen commonly that folk in that middle age, do often foolisher things than bairns, especially in the way of marrying.”

Mr. Allan smiled in his blythe way, but looked to me, as he had done all the morning, to be in a kind of meditative disposition, and did not say anything.

“ No that I am minting any blame on Mr. Forrest,” said I, “ for doubtless it is the wisest thing he could do ; nor on Miss Casilis either, seeing I have heard that she has no near kindred but her brother, and he is going to be married upon a young wife, which doubtless would be far from pleasant to a gentlewoman come to years, that has aye been used to guiding the house herself. So I think this marriage is a most sensible thing.”

“ I hope it does not take so much to satisfy you in ordinary cases, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan.

“ Mary was telling me,” said I, “ that the young folk were only to be a week from home. And then there will be a great festivity, to the which they have invited me, and also the family from the Manse ;—but, doubtless, you have heard about it, Mr. Allan ?”

“ And you are going, I hope, Miss Maitland ?” said Mr. Allan, looking up quick. “ It is decidedly your duty to welcome the bride.”

“ And she will be a near neighbour,” said I, “ the which will be pleasant, if she turns out a discreet gentlewoman, as I doubt not she will. And truly, I know no man to be a douce man, winning into years, that deserves a good wife better than Mr. Forrest of Woodlands.”

So in the end of the next week, the young folk* returned to their house, and I went up to Woodlands, the Manse gig having been sent for me, to be at the great party, and welcome Mrs. Forrest home.

Mr. Forrest was no so much younger than me, but what I minded well of him being a kind of boy-companion to Claud, when we were in our youth—though, by reason of being a lone man, and having no family rising about him, there doubtless looked, at this time, a good difference between his age and the minister's. It was said in the countryside once, that in his young days, he was uncommonly fond about Helen Elder, the youngest of the Bourtree family, but Helen

* A term applied in Scotland to all newly married couples, without reference to their age.

being troth-plighted, when she was a mere bairn, and soon married, it is clear he could never have any thought of succeeding with her—forbye that he was always a most staid and shy lad, and needed more observation than she was like to give him, before folk found out his truthful and upright nature.

Also, I mind myself, that when Helen, poor thing, died in Edinburgh, after George, her second bairn was born, Mr. Forrest had a sore illness, and folk said it was because of his secret sorrow, though he had not looked upon her for years. Doubtless to hear of a young thing, like her, taken suddenly out of a household, and from two bits of bairns, would make any heart sore; and for all so douce and sensible as Mr. Forrest looked, he had within him a most tender and easy moved spirit—though I have heard

foolish young folk often inclined to laugh at that, seeing he wore a brown wig, honest man, and snuffed much.

Nevertheless, I had noticed by divers signs, that the old affection was aye lying at the bottom of his heart; for when Mary my sister, had a little bairn, called by the name of Helen, (the which died when it was but six months old), I have seen Mr. Forrest take it in his arms in an unpurpose like way, for he was in no manner used with bairns, and look into its bits of blue e'en, as long as it would bide quiet—without saying a word. Likewise it was through Mr. Forrest, that George Sinclair got his commission in a great warship, when the callant was going daft to get to the sea. But for all that, I did not marvel at him being married, for doubtless a man winning into years, and dwelling his lane in

a big house, is a most dowie and solitary thing.

Also, Mr. Forrest was a great farmer, well-known through the country, and aye getting prizes for having fine beasts of divers kinds, and had done wonderful things with some of his farms, in the way of bringing grand crops off poor land, in the which work he employed many men, and so in every way was a blessing to the place, for being a most upright man, he was ever to be depended on.

So, when I got to Woodlands, I found all the family from the Manse there (for though it was five miles good from Woodlands to the Kirk of Pasturlands, Mr. Forrest aye went there, seeing he liked the ministrations of Claud, my brother) and the Elders and the Blythes, and many more. Also Mr. Allan was among them.

So I was introduced to the new Mrs. Forrest, who was a gentlewoman of tall stature, and a sensible countenance, and looked most suitable for her place, being neither very young, nor trying to look like it. So that her and me soon got acquaint, having many folk to speak about that we both knew, in especial Mrs. Standright, and others in Edinburgh. And Mrs. Forrest said to me, that she knew Claud my nephew (for her brother and her, as I had often heard, kept a most hospitable house, and liked the company of young folk, as I also do myself), and thought him an uncommon fine lad, and likely to be a good workman in the Kirk—at which I was doubtless pleased. And likewise that Mrs. Standright had spoken to her about Grace, whom she thought was a niece or a relation of mine, seeing the name was the same.

So I told her that Grace was indeed my dear bairn, but that there was no connexion in the way of blood or kindred; and Mrs. Forrest smiled, and said she to me :

“I have heard a good deal of the family she is residing with. Mrs. Lennox is her aunt, I think you said, Miss Maitland? There is a young friend of my brother’s who fancies himself very much in love with the youngest daughter; but between stern trustees, and a sterner mother, poor Bellendean is nearly despairing.”

“Bellendean!” said I; “I have surely noticed that name in the letters of my bairn.”

“Very probably,” said Mrs. Forrest, “my brother (for Mr. Cassilis was an Edinburgh writer, in great business, being of a good family himself, and having many connexions)

has the management of his affairs, and has got into his confidence—nay, I do not betray him in telling you, Miss Maitland—he has so many confidants that it is no secret. His estate is in the hand of trustees, and sadly encumbered, and Mrs. Lennox will not listen to him, though he says her daughter has lent him no unwilling ear. The poor lad thinks their sudden departure from Edinburgh is merely a scheme to carry the young lady out of his way.”

“And so it may be,” said I, “and have no manner of connection with the fortunes of my bairn.”

“Mrs. Lennox may be actuated by tender consideration for both the girls,” said Mrs. Forrest, smiling. “Frederic Bellendean gives her a sad character, and vows never to rest till he has delivered his Harriet, who,

however, by his description seems exceedingly well able to take care of herself."

"But if the lad is in true earnest, Mrs. Forrest," said I, "it is maybe no right to laugh at him."

"Perhaps not, Miss Maitland," said Mrs. Forrest, smiling again; "but he is a weak, frivolous lad, and these boy-and-girl attachments are slight matters. Nay, you look grave. I do not mean in all cases; but certainly in his."

Doubtless it might be so, and Mrs. Forrest was in a measure right. Only I doubt much if Woodlands himself would have said the like of that, or even if *she* thought it, in her own secret heart—for I have known folk mock at things that had wrought them sore tribulation. But, any way, that was not a matter for me to take up, so I said:

“Have you seen Grace, Mrs. Forrest?”

“No,” said Mrs. Forrest, “I am sorry that I never saw your young friend, Miss Maitland. I suppose I might have had a better chance of popularity with these pleasant young people from Pasturelands, had I brought them news of Miss Grace : but I have heard a great deal of her from Mrs. Standright and Mr. Claud. She seems to stand very high in your nephew’s opinion, Miss Maitland.”

And with that, Mrs. Forrest looked in my face, and smiled.

“Doubtless,” said I, “that is to be thought, Mrs. Forrest, seeing that they were brought up bairns together, and Claud has known little odds between Mary and her for the best part of his life ; besides that, it is a most natural thing to think much of

Grace, for she is truly a young thing of an uncommon nature.”

Mrs. Forrest smiled again, and said something about that being a dangerous kind of relationship, the which I was not very well pleased at, so I turned the converse to other things, and also other folk gathered round us, seeing that they all had a measure of curiosity, as was to be expected, about the new mistress of Woodlands.

I perceived also that Mr. Allan was keeping beside Mary, in a way that I did not desire, seeing folk are aye ready to remark any kything of kindness between two of their age, so I went myself close to them, and in my endeavour to draw some more of the young things, that were present, round about us, I saw a sparkle of mischief in the e'en of William Elder, and rose to

divert him from his purpose, which was to tease Reuben Reid, poor man, and lead him into saying daftlike things.

It chanced that Mr. Forrest, for some part of his young days, had been at the Pasturelands school; for Reuben, though he was a strange body, was just an uncommon good teacher of the old and dead tongues; so being, as I have said before, a man of a kindly spirit, Mr. Forrest had invited Reuben to Woodlands, on occasion of this great ploy, which was the cause of him being there. And truly, it was a divert to see the Maister sitting among the folk, and aye so anxious to show himself acquaint with the right way of behaving at a great party like that; and doubtless, he was much made of, seeing the young folk were aye gathering round him, and William Elder standing at his side, drawing him into converse.

So I took Mary by the arm, and led her away with me, pretending I wanted to speak to her mother ; and truly, I had a double reason, being both unwilling that Mr. Allan should be aye lingering so near her, and feared that her cousin William might in some way affront the Dominie, poor man !

“ It’s a blythe occasion this, Miss Marget,” said Reuben to me, as I came up ; at which, though it was a most simple observation, some haverels of bairns laughed, thinking, as I suppose, that it behoved them to laugh whenever he spoke, at which I was in no manner pleased, for the body was a decent body in his way, besides being a man of years.

“ Doubtless, it is Mr. Reuben,” said I, “ and it’s a pleasure to see so discreet and sensible a gentlewoman at the head of this house.”

“You see, Miss Marget,” said Reuben, leaning forward to me in a confidential way, “he was ever a lang-headed lad, James Forrest. I aye said it of him, and I’m no often mista’en, that he would take his time and make a guid choice when he was at it; and she has a grand presence. Truly, if she is as wise as she looks, James has made a good hand of it.”

“Mr. Reid,” said Willie Elder, “we, who are standing here, will all be trying similar speculations on our own account by and bye. Do let us have your views on the subject.”

And with that, there was much laughing among the bairns, and they gathered nearer, till Reuben—honest man! was made like one of the doctors of the old times, sitting upon a chair, speaking, and them all standing round him.

“Truly, Miss Marget,” said Reuben, to me, for I was in the midst of them myself, with Mary beside me, and Mr. Allan also was drawing near, “the young generation of this parish is creditable to look upon. There are some braw couples there, and though they tell me that young Bourtree *is* to be married upon an Irish lady by and bye, when he comes to years of discretion, doubtless it is right to give them the benefit of my lights. Ye see—”

“*I* marry an Irish lady!” cried out William Elder, in a discomfited manner: “that is a trick of somebody’s.” And with that he began to look round him wrathfully, to see who had put that in Reuben’s head.

“William is but a boy, Mr. Reuben,” said I, “and it will be time enough for him to be thinking of the like of these things

half-a-dozen years after this, if he's spared so long."

"Plenty time, Miss Marget," said Reuben, "that's just what I'm saying, when he comes to years of discretion, which will leave him much leisure to look about him. So you see—"

"But the Irish lady, Mr. Reid," said Marion Blythe. "Let us hear about her. Who is she?"

"Doubtless it would rejoice my heart to pleasure a young lady," said Reuben, in a pawky way, "but a secret's a secret, Miss Marion, and I would, at no hand, betray your cousin, young Bourtree; but, as I was saying, it is a most prudent and expedient thing for young folk, and for folk generally, in a single condition, to look well about them before they do anything in such a matter. Now we'll suppose that Mr. Forrest, honest

man, had been taken with the like of your own winsome young face, Miss Marion, I'm thinking his petition would have gotten but a cold welcome from you."

Marion Blythe, who was as wild in her way as her cousin Willie, threw up her hands at that, and ran in behind Marjory, her sister—who was a bairn of a staid disposition—laughing, and red in the face.

So, having in that manner quieted, for a time, the two of the young folk who were most inclined to plague him, Reuben went on, "Truly this marriage festivity, in that case, would have been like the grand ploy that the Laird of Lilliesleaf had at Cruive End on New Year's Day."

"And how so, Mr. Reid?" said our Mary.

"Because young Lilliesleaf, Miss Mary,"

said Reuben, "is trying to wed a new thing to an auld, the which is ever a fickle experiment. There's the minds and breeding of the folk of Cruive End—that's the auld bridegroom—and the new-fangled schuling and ploys, and nonsense—that's the young bride; and ye'll see they'll never 'gree; for, without doubt, it is just the same as what is condemned in the very Scripture itsel, under the similitude of putting a new clout upon an auld garment, the which is pair thrift—as I was saying in a philosophic manner this very morning, concerning a pair o' my ain—but that is no to the point. They tell me," said the Dominie, looking about in a horrified manner, "that when the big callants took their Rudiments to the schule, as was right on the first Monday morning, the new maister threw the good books in below his desk, and said he would learn them no Latin

in his schule, whereupon the boy, James Strive, that has set his mind upon being a doctor, had to come up and dwell with his old auntie at Pasturelands, for the sake of right learning. To think of that! The grand auld Latin tongue, that is the mother of our vernacular, and of all civilized languages upon the face of this earth!"

"But maybe he did not know it himself, Mr. Reuben," said I; "and, therefore, could not learn the bairns."

"And wha ever heard, Miss Marget," said Reuben, "of an instructor of youth, that did not ken the Latin tongue? Doubtless, Mr. Daighy, the teacher at Burrowstoun, is no great shakes of a scholar, but he aye gies the callants their rudiments. It is awfu' to think of! But truly, I know not what the world would be at, for it changes its ways and its fashions like a petted bairn."

But by that time, Mr. Allan put in his own word, and began to take the part of his new teacher at Cruive End, and the Maister and him got into an argument concerning the Latin tongue, in the which, according to my poor judgment, Reuben had the best of it. Only I judged it not needful to abide and listen, seeing Mr. Allan, when he said anything, was aye glancing to Mary, as if *she* was like to be greatly interested in an arguing like that.

And then the bairns, Janet Elder, and Marion, and Marjory Blythe, and our own Mary, got all round me in a corner, and began a converse about Grace, which, being all concerning matters which I have set down already, it is not worth while writing here.

CHAPTER VIII.

It has ever been a matter of remark to me, how swift the time passes after the turn of the year; for the cold of the spring time is but like a blae morning, whereas, before, it is like a long and weary night, when you feel that the darkness has had a good downsitting, and are mostly feared that it may so abide.

So it came to pass with us, that the rest of Claud's college course, which was but till the beginning of April, slipped cannily by. A gentleman, a friend of the Elders of Bour-

tree, had offered Claud the presentation to a parish in the east country, as Assistant and Successor to an old minister, who could not overtake all the labour himself, by reason of being frail: always, if it should be so ordained, as that the people would give my nephew, Claud, a right and harmonious call, for the gentleman that had the patronage was come of a good stock, and was one of those that have ever stood firm by the Kirk, and kept the side of right discipline and order, along with a Christian freedom.

So, as I was saying, this having been offered to Claud, it was judged best that there should be no delay in him getting through his trials for license, and so being ready, whenever his Master should call on him. So the first meeting of Presbytery,

which was upon the first Wednesday in April, Claud was begun with his trials.

It is not common for folk to attend the meetings of country Presbyteries, though they are open for them that like to go; therefore, I did not hear myself how Claud did, but both the minister, my brother, and Mr. Wallace, the helper at Burrowstoun, and even Dr. Dreigh himself, though I think not he had any great love for the family (being a sore Moderate), testified to me that he came through them in a most creditable way. So he was licensed in May, and, like his father before him, preached his first sermon in the Kirk of Pasturelands. I was up hearing him, and the kirk was uncommon full, seeing all the folk knew him, and liked him well. And truly, it was as good a sermon as needed to be, and was an

evidence to me that the God of our Fathers had a work for the lad in his day and generation.

In the meantime, Grace and her friends had come to London, and were dwelling there, the family living in a gay way, but still leaving Grace in her own solitary room, like a prisoner in the house; the which, though the bairn pined, being ever alone, she was yet in a manner pleased with also, seeing that by what she heard her cousins speaking of their company, they were not folk she would care for meeting with. Also Grace, as far as could be judged by her letters, was more content, and her mind seemed to be growing in wisdom and stature; and doubtless the bit glints she had got of the world, for all so unsatisfactory as they were, were yet aye helping to make her of a

more complete and perfect spirit, (no that I am meaning that any mortal can be perfect, seeing we are all prone to iniquity, but only in the way of her mind, that she was gathering knowledge), than she could have gotten abiding ever at Sunnyside ; which made me also comfort myself concerning her, seeing that the Lord was ordering this trouble for her good, and would, doubtless, bring pleasantness out of it, in His own time.

But there was one thing I aye marvelled at, and that was, that though her aunt and her father had ceased to contend with her, maybe, from a natural yielding of their spirits, or, maybe, because she was far from all her friends and in their own hands, yet, for all that, the bairn's heart turned not to them, but every now and then in her letters there would burst out a yearning for home,

and I know not how often she came over that place in the letters of the godly and persecuted minister, Samuel Rutherford, where he says that the swallows about the old Kirk of Anwoth were blessed birds—I think it is in one of the letters I have written down here. The bairn's mind seemed to be just in a manner possessed with it.

And as for my niece Mary, she was of necessity growing older too, though it grieves me that I cannot say there was much word of more wisdom, seeing the bit impatient way was there still, and to my sight stronger than it had been, even though I myself had grave converse with her concerning it, and had even told the minister, for I saw that he noticed it not; and truly, to do the bairn justice, it was only perceptible whiles.

Whenever, either at the Manse or Sunnyside, there was any word of Lilliesleaf or of the folk at the Castle, it seemed just to put a perverse spirit into the bairn, which, doubtless, was no great wonder, seeing the way Mrs. Elphinstone had behaved, and as for Mr. Allan, it was soon plain to me, that to say he would be at any place, was just sure to keep Mary away, though she might be keen of going before.

Mr. Allan himself I continued to see now and then, and still the young man kept me in perplexity and trouble with his varyings; for he aye remembered sometimes that he was a man of responsibilities, and yet he was aye plunging into that wild water of pleasure, that folk never come out of undefiled.

It seemed to me, that even his mother,

Mrs. Elphinstone, was feared at what she had done, and trembled lest the stone she had set a rolling with her own hands, should crush herself, before the play was played out ; for Mr. Allan, him that she had boasted of to me as being so good a son, was beginning, now that she had learned him to make his own quiet and pleasant home just a place to fill full of strangers, and to have festivities in, to be perverse and of an evil spirit, too.

Whiles, after he had been impatient and forgotten the respect that was due to his mother, he would be like to break his heart with grief ; but the evil spirit just came back again when that was bye, for if it is a sore thing to flesh and blood to wrestle with the enemy when he is coming in at the door, it is sorer still to withstand him when he is

dwelling in, and ruling over, the inmost spirit.

But, woes me ! for the weak mother that had to fight the battle with the father first, and syne, when she was spent with trouble and near the end of her pilgrimage, to have to begin again with the son—woes me ! more than all, that the last battle was of her own bringing on.

But, as I was saying, my nephew Claud had got his license, and was just abiding awhile at home, resting himself after his long college work, and writing sermons. Also preaching upon the Sabbath days in our own kirk at Pasturelands, and for divers ministers round about, it being aye their custom in our part (as it should aye be where they dwell together like brethren) for ministers to render help and service to one another, on the

principle of the old proverb, "Giff-gaff makes good friends."

So, while Claud was abiding at home in the Manse, there came letters from Mr. Kirkman of Dourbraes, the gentleman that had the presentation, asking him to go and preach in the kirk, that the folk might have a trial of him. And there being a consultation in the family, it was decided that Claud should go, for although, as Grace said, the charge of Pasturelands had grown to be hereditary in the name of Maitland, and my brother Claud would desire to leave his work in it to his son, as my father did to him, still the minister himself was a strong man yet, no far past his prime, and needed not assistance in the labours of the ministry; and, therefore, it was right, seeing the lad was like to be a most acceptable preacher, that he should exercise his gifts in the

field that was opening to him, especially as it was in troublous times for the Kirk, and she had need of all that regarded her purity, and prayed for the peace of Jerusalem.

So, the day before he was to go away, he came down to bid me good bye, and Mary with him. It so happened, that Mary needed to go down to James Selvage's shop, to buy some matter of providing for her brother, and so, being left to ourselves, Claud and me fell into converse.

“And are you to stay in the Manse of Dourhills itself, Claud?” said I. “I have heard it said among ministers, that had been in that part, that old Mr. Smail was a penurious body, and minded not what the Apostle said, that bishops should be given to hospitality.”

“No, aunt,” said Claud; “Mr. Kirkman

invites me to stay at Dourbraes *this time*. Of course, if I go back, I must get some place of my own. I am not quite sure that the charge will be a very comfortable one, for old ministers, unless they are very saints, do not care much for a strange Assistant and Successor; and it is scarcely natural they should."

"I am sure it would have been our desire, Claud," said I, "that you should exercise your gifts among the folk of Pasturelands, as your fathers have done before you; but at this present time, it behoves you to set your hand to the work, where Providence directs. I doubt not Mr. Kirkman will be rejoiced in his heart, if the people are moved towards you; for, according to all I have heard of Mr. Smail, he is but a coldrife preacher, being a Moderate, and a great slave to the paper."

My nephew Claud laughed, and said he to me :

“He is a strange body. He wanted Gilbert Anderson to be his assistant, you know, aunt, and wrote to his uncle, Mr. Coulter, of Kraims, a few years ago, offering him forty pounds a-year—to preach every alternate Sabbath, and do all the work of the parish.”

“But with his board, Claud,” said I, “that might not be so bad.”

“But it was without his board, aunt,” said Claud. “Mr. Coulter wrote back, praising Gibbie, but remonstrating about the smallness of the stipend ; and then came another letter from Mr. Smail, saying, that as he had heard much in Gilbert’s favour, he had made up his mind, though he could ill afford it, (besides that he would always be welcome at the Manse, and Mr. Kirkman and the rest

of the heritors were uncommonly kind,) to offer him—forty guineas !”

“ It’s no possible, Claud,” said I.

“ But it’s perfectly true, aunt,” said Claud. “ Gibbie showed the letter to the whole class ; for he had heard of the tutorship he is in now, just at the time, and he was always a sad inconsiderate fellow, and would have his joke, whatever came of it. But there was one poor lad, who was then in his last year, and was licensed very soon after, who really applied to Mr. Smail, and took the place. Poor Robert Sutor ! I grow a child again, whenever I think of him. After struggling how sorely, no one knows, to get through his college course, to go there when he was finished, and work himself to death.”

“ Bless me, Claud,” said I, “ did the poor young man die ?”

“ Yes, aunt,” said Claud, “ he died. How

he lived the two years he was at Dourhills, I know not, but Andrew Mettle, who went out to India a month or two ago, used to tell us, that his sermons, during the last winter, were like lightning flashes through the old place. Poor Robert ! with all his gifts, to run so short and so dark a course !”

“ Poor lad !” said I. “ Maybe the short life of him was for a warning to the like of you, Claud, to be aye mindful that your Master whiles comes suddenly. But what has come over the bairn Mary ? She should have been back by this time.”

“ Mary is not like herself just now, aunt,” said Claud, in a serious way. “ Is it because Grace is away, think you, that Mary has changed so ?”

“ Hout, no, laddie,” said I ; “ the bairn is but coming to graver years, and getting more

thought, and doubtless, the loss of Grace is a sore loss forbye, but it can never be that we are altogether parted, and it behoves us just to bide our time in quietness. Truly, it is me that am most like to be lone and dreary, for the light hearts of the like of Mary and her get above it soon; for all that they may aye have a bit sorrow at being parted. You are graver yourself, Claud; it is but that the bairn is coming to years."

Claud gave a bit shake of his head, and as he stooped down to lift up my clue of worsted, which had fallen upon the floor (for I was working him some stockings, seeing it was our desire that he should have a good supply of all needful things, and him leaving home) I heard him saying between his teeth,

"It would have been well for us all, if Grace had never come to Sunnyside."

“What is that you say, Claud?” said I, in wonder and astonishment. “Oh, laddie! it would break the poor bairn’s heart to hear such a word from you.”

Claud put down the clue upon the table, and his face was very red with the stooping, as I have felt my own oftentimes when I have looted down for anything.

“I did not mean to say that, aunt,” he said in a humble, subdued way; “but when there is so little prospect of us ever meeting again, except as strangers, you might excuse us for *almost* wishing that we had never learned to set so high a value on what we have lost so soon.”

The eye of my nephew Claud, met mine as he said that, and up he started from his seat, and turned round to the window.

It was as if a breath of wind had lifted up

the curtain, and I looked for a moment into his inmost heart. Woes me!

It never rains, folk say, but it pours: it was getting late in the afternoon by that time, and Claud and me had not begun our converse again, when Mary came fleeting into the parlour with her bonnet on, and a face of sore distress. I cried out what was the matter, and so did Claud; but the bairn gave a glance out at the window, and cried "There he is," and ran up the stair without another word.

I looked at Claud, and Claud at me, and I had risen from my seat to follow Mary, when Mr. Allan Elphinstone came in at the open door, and before he spoke a word, he looked round the room in an anxious and distressed manner.

"Where is she, Miss Maitland?" he said

to me. "I beg you to tell her it was not my fault, I forgot myself. Ask her to speak to me for but a moment. I entreat you to tell her, Miss Maitland, that the fault was not mine."

"What is it you are speaking of, Mr. Allan," said I in a grave way, for I was feared that Mary had cause of offence; but truly, it seemed that Mr. Allan could say nothing, but that it was not his fault and would she no speak to him, and would I no ask her to forgive him.

My heart was sore within me, for it was clear that the young man, Mr. Allan, was flushed and excited with wine, the which, I knew well, was a sin the bairn Mary loathed with a perfect hatred. So Claud, my nephew, came forward and said he,

"Mr. Elphinstone, you will be so good as

explain this to me. What is it my sister has to forgive ?”

Mr. Allan came to himself as Claud said that, and they both sat down upon seats : whereupon I went away quickly to Mary, the poor distressed bairn.

So Mary told me that when she came out of James Selvage’s shop, Mr. Allan (he was just new down from London, and had not seen her for a while) was riding by, and more gentlemen with him, and when he saw her, he came quick off his horse, and wanted her to take his arm, and would come with her to Sunnyside. And, with that, some more of them came off their horses too, and being in an excited state, one of the gentlemen pushed in between Mary and Mr. Allan, and would have her take *him* with her instead.

So being at the foot of the bræ, and no far from home, the bairn in her fear and trouble had flown out from among them, and never stopped till she was safe in Sunnyside. The poor bairn! her heart was beating all the time like a new-caged bird.

“But, Mary,” said I, “was Mr. Allan no angry at the other young man? An he were but himself, he would lose a finger before he gave you cause to flee from him. Mary, my bairn, Mr. Allan said nought to anger you?”

“Oh, aunt,” cried Mary, “what will become of him?”

“Whisht, Mary, my dear,” said I, “you must not say that.”

“He said nothing to anger me, aunt,” said Mary, in a quieter manner, “and I am not angry, but I am grieved. Oh, aunt! if

he was my brother, it would break my heart."

"Whisht, Mary," said I again, "let us no speak about that, the now. It is a thing the world thinks little of."

"And what is it to me what the world thinks," said Mary, with a slow voice, "and by and bye—what will it be to him?"

Alas! that the same old story should be so often told over again. There were more things than affright rising up in bitterness within the breast of the innocent bairn, and her scarce out eighteen.

We had not been long in the room, and Mary was but settling into a measure of composedness, when Claud came to the door, and asked if he might come in, the which I bade him do.

"Mary," said Claud, "will you come

down and say a word to young Lilliesleaf? You were only frightened, after all, and he is so much distressed about it. You have effectually sobered him for one day. Do come, Mary."

"Aunt, will you go for me," whispered Mary to me, "I cannot see him again, at least not now. Say I am not angry, but grieved and distressed. I cannot go down till he is away."

So judging it best to leave the bairn at that season to herself, I took Claud, my nephew, by the arm, and went away.

And a face of more shame and trouble than Mr. Allan's, I scarce ever looked upon; and little comfort he got from what Mary had bidden me say; but after a half hour, in which there was little speech and small cheerfulness among us, the young man went away, and we saw him galloping along the

road to Pasturelands, as if some ill thing was chasing him.

And after that, nothing would please the bairn Mary, but that I should go up with Claud and her to the Manse. I know not how often I reasoned with her concerning it, but there was aye the petition: "Come, aunt, only come."

At last, seeing the bairn had been in trouble and affright, and was looking but ill after it, I consented to go, which, doubtless, caused wonderment at first in the Manse; only they were, at that season, taken up with other things. Also they marvelled much concerning Mary's bit little tribulation, and were grieved about Mr. Allan; but being busy getting Claud's things ready, there was less speech about it than might have been at another time.

So the next day, early in the forenoon,

Claud went away, and we all walked with him as far down as Sedgie Bridge, where the coach passed, and saw him mounted on to it, and watched it careering far away on the road, till it turned round by the shoulder of the hill, and we saw it no more, but went our ways back to the Manse with sorrowful hearts.

We were not well in at the garden gate, (I am meaning the two Marys and me, for the minister my brother, had left us at the turn of the road, with the intent of calling on Jacob Wightman, who had been long ill with rheumatics, and was bedridden forebye, by reason of being a great age), when Betty, the oldest servant maid came running to us to say, that Mrs. Elphinstone and the young Laird had come to call, and were sitting up the stair waiting for us. .

So we went in, Mary keeping between her mother and me, and scarce ever lifting her eyes.

I thought Mr. Allan never would have been done, making his apologies, no that he spoke so very much either, but every now and then when the converse had turned upon other things, a sudden flush would come over his face, and he would glance at Mary and then stammer something I know not what; and truly I think he knew not very well himself. Mrs. Elphinstone had grown white and thin, and had the look of a heart-break in her eye, even as it used to be in the old times, when Lilliesleaf himself was alive, and I was wading through my own tribulations.

They say she dwined sore the time Mr. Allan was away at London, seeing she had scarce ever wanted him all his days before,

if it was not just a day or two at a time. And aye so wistfully as she would look at Mary. The poor proud woman! she had found out her sore mistake, and maybe it was too late now.

For oh! but it is an ill thing to wile a young spirit from the good that it should be wedded to. If Mrs. Elphinstone had not been feared that her son, the young Laird of Lilliesleaf, might be overmuch taken up with the daughter of the poor minister of Pasturelands, she maybe would not have sought to throw him so much in the way of temptations; and, past a moderate share of honest festivity now and then with his country neighbours, or a bit sojourn in Edinburgh, or even London itself, when he was tired, it's my belief, that if she had but let him alone, Mr. Allan would have had no hankering after what is

falsely called pleasure ; but just would have made a right endeavour to live for the benefit of the folk about him, and for the glory of his Maker, as a reasonable man should do. And truly, even if there had been no other world, but this weary and wicked one, would that no have been far better both for him and her ?

It was sore pain to me, all the time they stayed in the Manse, to see the downcast looks of the bairn, Mary. What with the trouble of the past night, and Claud, her brother, going away, the poor young thing could scarcely hold up her head, and I saw that her eyelids, when she looked down upon the bit seam she had taken into her hand, were bigger than I had ever noticed them—the poor bairn ! She had aye shed her tears freely before, for

her bits of griefs might have been known to the whole countryside ; but now she had begun to taste the sorer troubles that folk must hide in their own spirit ; and her bit heart was swelling, like to burst within her : I knew by myself.

“Margaret,” said my sister Mary to me, when the mother and the son were away, and the bairn also had left the room, “what ails our Mary ? Did you ever see so sorrowful a look upon so young a face ? What has come over her ?”

“It will be her brother going away, maybe, Mary,” said I. “A little thing makes a young heart heavy, and as little makes it light again. It is my hope that the dear bairn will get back a measure of her old blytheness before the week is out.”

“Ah! Maggie,” said my sister Mary to me, shaking her head, “you don’t think that.”

“And the bairn was troubled last night,” said I.

Mary my sister shook her head again, but said no more about it, for it was not a thing that could be spoken of, seeing Mr. Allan had said nothing either to her or to the minister, nor indeed to Mary herself, that we knew of, past just the way that he hung about her, wheresoever he could get near her. But, to my satisfaction, a moment after that, we heard Mary coming down the stairs, singing a psalm low to herself.

I like not commonly to hear folk going about a house in a light manner, singing what is a part of Scripture; but truly, considering that the bairn had been sore cast

down, I was blythe to hear her at that time.—

“Thy foot he’ll not let slide, nor will
He slumber that thee keeps.
Behold, He that keeps Israel,
He slumbers not nor sleeps.”

And she had a most pleasant voice.

They would not hear of me going away that night, though it was my desire to do so; therefore, I abode till the next day, and then I wiled Mary down with me, promising to the minister and Mary, my sister, that I would send her up again on the Monday.

So we came home safe to Sunnyside; and the first thing Jenny told me was, that there was a letter lying in the parlour from Grace. So Mary and me got it opened

soon, and lo! the first word I saw in it was
the owerword of the old song,

“ There came a young man to my daddie’s door,
A seeking me to woo !”

“ Bless me, Mary,” said I, “ is the bairn
daft ?”

“ Aunt ! aunt !” cried out our Mary, “ it is
dated from Edinburgh. Grace has come
home again. I will read it to you.”

So Mary read the letter.

“ My dear aunt,

“ There cam’ a young man to my daddie’s door,
My daddie’s door, my daddie’s door.
There came a young man to my daddie’s door,
A seeking me to woo !”

“ Do you think me daft ? I am, indeed,
so greatly exhilarated by finding myself so

much nearer home, that I can hardly keep in proper bounds. Dear aunt, do you not think all these bad things may turn out not so very bad after all. My hope sprang up exultant, as fearless as our Mary's, as soon as we crossed the border. Who knows but I may arrive at Sunnyside some day, as unexpectedly as we have arrived in Edinburgh!

“ You will think this has very little to do with the absurd text of this letter. Wait a little, aunt, till I get time to tell you. The young man who came to my daddie's door last week, is the cause of all my rejoicing. He is—but I must begin a new paragraph to do him justice.

“ He is, then, the most fascinating, the handsomest, politest, *smallest* specimen of mankind you ever saw. Have patience with poor Grace, aunt, even if you think her out-

rageous in her unwonted exultation. He is (this braw wooer of mine) to speak seriously, an accomplished (I speak by my cousin's report) little man, with an old baronetcy, and an extremely attenuated estate : Sir William Martyn of —, I do not recollect the territorial designation.

“Accidentally I had seen him once or twice in London ; and two or three days since, he suddenly made his appearance in a little morning room of my aunt's, where I chanced to be sitting alone, and made formal offer of his small self, and his small possessions. I was very much astonished, of course, and at a loss for a proper form of saying ‘No,’ so as to avoid mortifying the poor little man, but had managed to stammer out something, and had just met the most comical look of disappointment possible, when my father entered the room.

“The unfortunate small Sir William shrunk, and took leave instantly, and thereupon my father began to question me—heard my report with the greatest amiability, and assured me in his blindest tone, that had my decision been other than it was, he had his measures taken—nevertheless, he was pleased. I had done quite as he wished me.

“Twenty-four hours after, we were on our way home—though before there had not been the slightest indication of an intention to return.

“To-day, my cousin Harriet having heard the story, from her mother, I suppose, condescended to joke on the subject.

“Madeline shaking her rich curls, and glancing at me contemptuously, ‘Wondered at Sir William. People said he had good taste.’

“‘Oh! he’s a fortune hunter,’ said Harriet, hastily.

“I looked up. Harriet stopped abruptly, with an evident confusion, that gave point to what she said.

“‘Is he so?’ said Mrs. Lennox, turning upon her daughter the most withering *deadly* look I ever saw, and speaking so distinctly and steadily, as to attract my attention still more. ‘Your cousin may feel herself greatly flattered then, since any proposals to her must be perfectly disinterested.’

“I might have thought nothing of Harriet’s remarks, had my aunt taken no notice of it; but Mrs. Lennox’s very marked speech fixed it in my memory, and set my whole fleet of surmises respecting Oakenshaw afloat again. Can it be possible,

think you, aunt? If I could only see Mr. Monteith!

“Jessie tells me that I am honoured sometimes to be a subject of gossip among the ladies-maids of the household. The waiting gentlewomen of Mrs. and the Misses Lennox, are in the habit of entertaining visitors of the sisterhood with stories of my eccentricities. I am anxious to live like a nun, they say, and cannot bear the sight of a stranger, and am so crack-brained, that my friends are glad to keep me out of sight. Moreover, it is rumoured, that I can bake cakes and speak Latin, two very incongruous accomplishments, certainly, but imagination does not always, in her vagaries, study consistency. These scraps of gossip, indignantly resented by Jessie, drop from her sometimes in the

course of our long conversations, and other scraps more interesting, but probably quite as apocryphal, float in through the same medium from without.

“ One stranger of the sisterhood, whose mistress was a Scotch woman, professes to have heard her lady importuning Mrs. Lennox for permission to see me, on the score that she knew my mother, and professes, moreover, that her lady did not believe my kind aunt’s story of my unfitness for company, but said indignantly that the Hunters were no fools, nor indeed the Maitlands either, and that she did not know where my folly came from, for certainly it was not inherited.

“ *That* was consolatory ; but is it not very terrible, aunt, that one must suffer this imputation in silence and have no means of clearing oneself? I am resolved, the first

time I can steal out, to make one great endeavour to find Mr. Monteith's house, and ask him plainly what my position is.

“Mary is writing me very short letters now. Does anything ail our Mary, aunt? Do not let that young Laird of yours throw glamour over her, at least till I come home. See how confident I am growing of my home-coming!

“And now that Claud is licensed, where is he? They will not let him stay at home in inglorious ease, I am sure; but I hope the great waves of this stirring time will not carry him far away, but only suffice to cast him on some pleasant shore, not far from Pasturelands. I can almost think I am home again, the presentiment (do you believe in them, aunt?—I do, most devoutly) is so strong upon me, of a speedy return. I wish I had heard Claud's first sermon.

“I am still in Edinburgh, however, and among Lennoxes, not Maitlands, so I must bid you goodbye again.

“GRACE MAITLAND.”

It is a pleasant and cheering thing to see hope and blytheness in any place, and the letter put a kind of life into us. But I thought within myself that Grace, if she were home, would wonder and grieve sore at the paleness of our Mary's cheek, though the bairn seemed not so sorrowful either, or, if she was, hid it well.

But woes me! it is a hard thing, whether it be in age or youth, to sound the deepness of folk's own spirit, and try how far down the pain can go.

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