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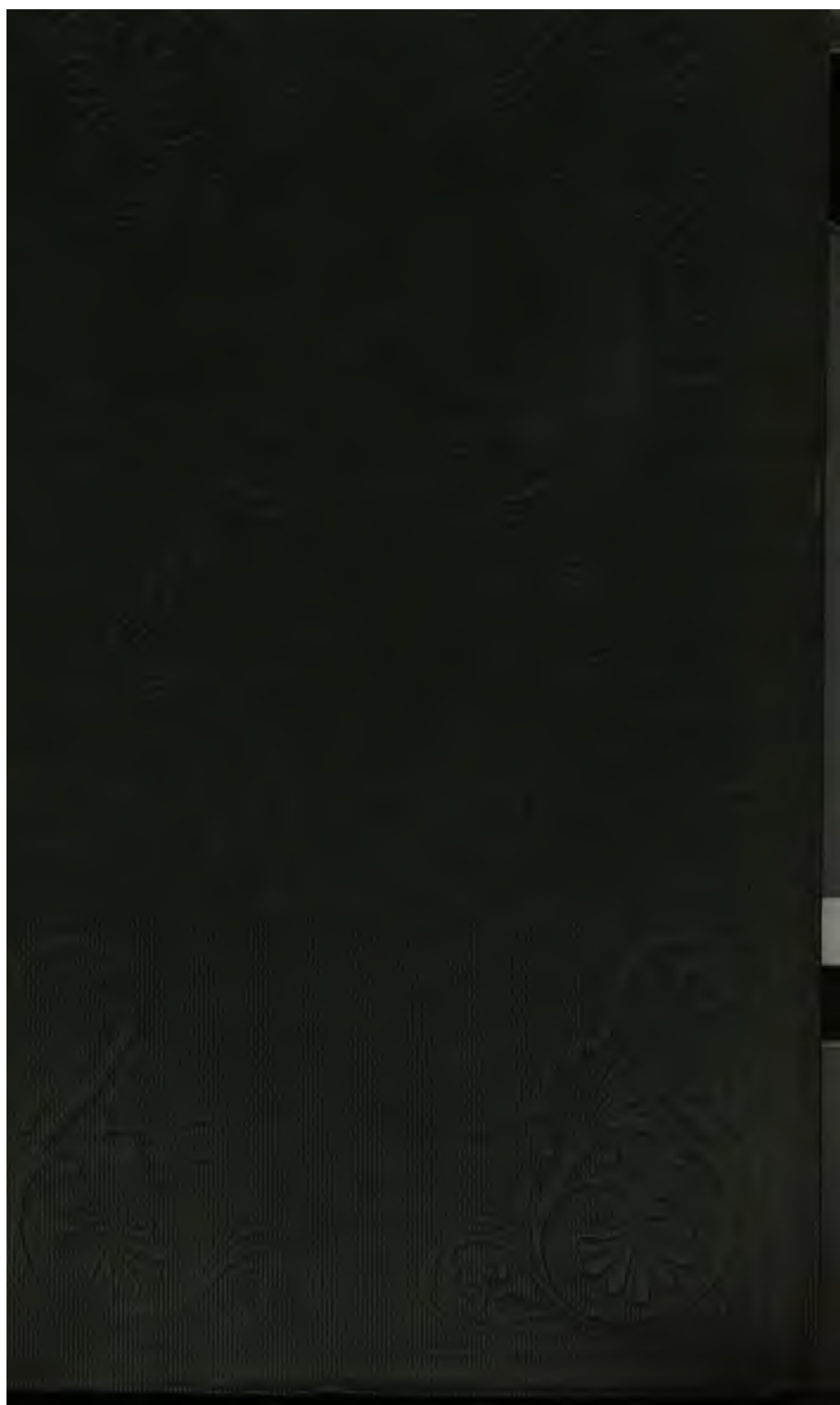
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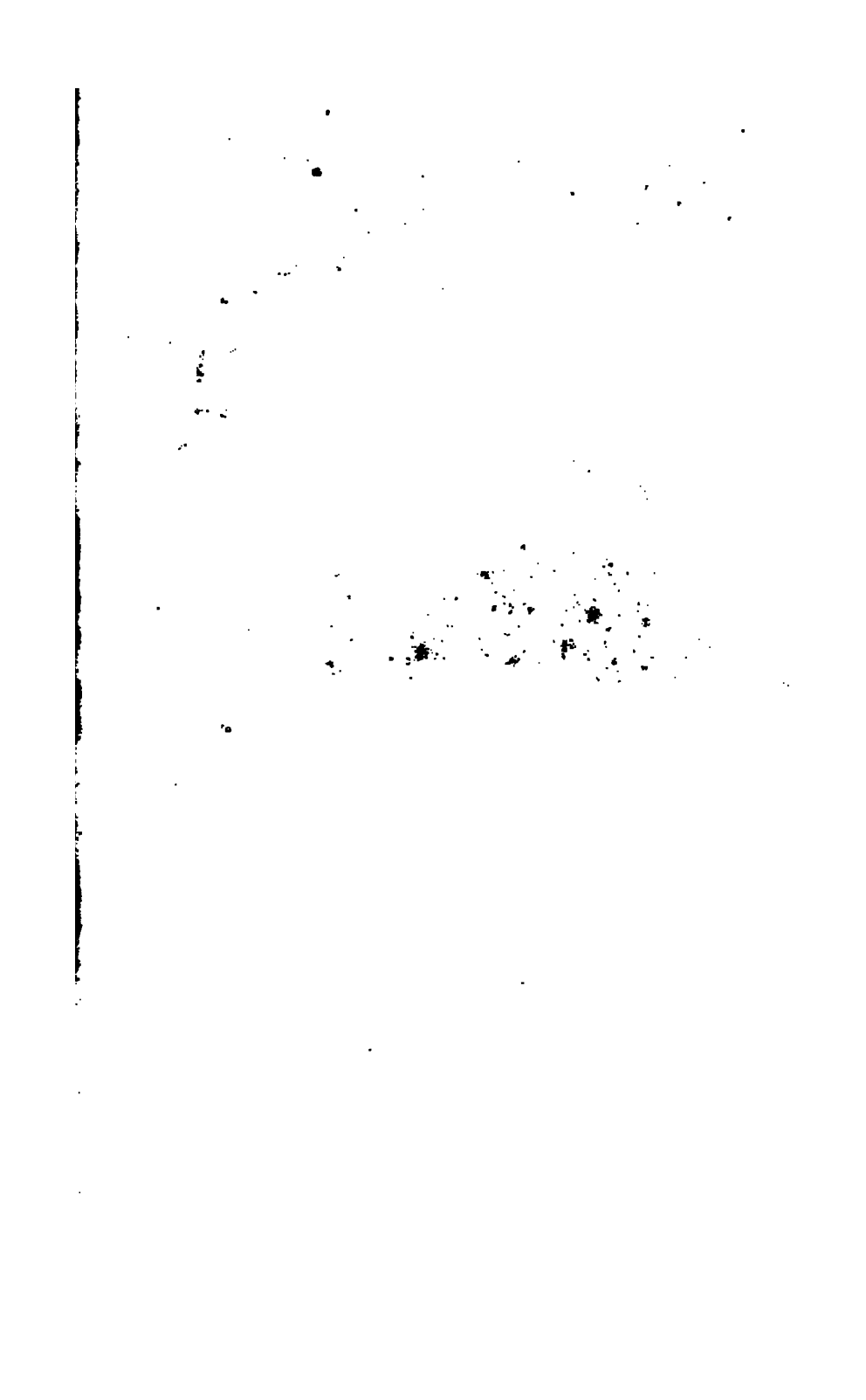


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PASSAGES
IN THE LIFE OF
MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND,
OF SUNNYSIDE.

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 M'AITLAND.

CHAPTER I.

It was about a month before Claud, my nephew, came back from Dourhills, and he was not well out of the parish as I have heard, till the people began to move about giving him a call, and finding Mr. Kirkman agreeable, they applied to the Presbytery in July for a moderation,* which was granted

* The first step in procuring a minister for a vacant congregation in Scotland, is the holding of a Presbytery meeting, for the purpose of "moderating

to them, and appointed to be on the twenty-second day of the month, Mr. Mavis of Lang Briery to preach, and old Dr. Bland of Summershaw to serve the Edict on the Sabbath week before. I mind the names so particular, because Dr. Bland had been once in the Earl's family in the office of tutor, in the which Mr. Essence, of Cosieland, succeeded him ; and Mr. Mavis was a young man no long out of the Hall before Claud, and had been out at Pasturelands whiles in

in the call ;" that is, after sermon, the call, or invitation, is signed in presence of the Presbytery, and attested by their Moderator, or Chairman. Notice of this meeting must be given to the congregation a stated time (ten days, we believe) before it is held, and their attendance requested. And the form of giving this notice, which must be done in the church after service, is called " Serving the Edict." The terms are generally understood in Scotland, and of course were so perfectly familiar to Miss Maitland, as a daughter of the Manse, that she does not feel it necessary to explain them.

the summer. So everything was in a fair way for Claud being settled.

It was bonnie summer weather I mind, and everything about us had outwardly the look of peace and pleasantness, and the full July sun shining over our heads, but for all that, it was not all comfort that was in my heart within me. Mr. Allan, poor young man, though he abode quiet a while after the fright he gave Mary, had just started on the race again, even as you may see a bairn stumbling over a stone sit down till it is mended of the fall, and then begin to its play with more birr than ever. I was not seeing my niece Mary, so often as ordinary at that season, and when I did see her, she looked but white and delicate; but truly, it is not given to mortals of erring nature such like as us, to see into the secret heart.

The month of July came to its close, and the call of the people of Dourhills to my nephew Claud, being harmonious, was

sustained by the Presbytery, so that his trials were appointed to him, and the day set for his ordination. The trials he won through well, the Presbytery taking him up at their two meetings in August, which they held on purpose, seeing that there was great necessity for him being settled in the parish soon; and he was to be ordained on the 12th day of September thereafter. So he had come home after the last Presbytery when he finished his trials, and was to abide till the 10th, seeing we were all anxious to keep him as long as possible, and yet did not want that the young man should be disturbed with travel and worldly occupations, close upon the day when he was to take the care of the ministry upon him.

So it was agreed that he should go back upon the 10th, which was a Tuesday, that so he might have one clear day to meditate upon the right import of his vows, and the minister, my brother, was going with him, to

be present and helping on the occasion, when his one son was set apart to the Lord's work.

Upon the Monday it chanced that I was taking a turn through the garden in the afternoon, (for the thorn hedge had then grown so thick and high that folk on the road could not see in) and greatly surprised I was to see Mary my niece, coming through the gate her lane; for I had not heard the gig.

"Mary!" said I, "is this you? Surely, bairn, you have not walked the whole way, and it seven miles."

"No, aunt," said Mary, "but Claud and Willie Elder were going to Rures, and they set me down at the Woodlands' toll. Claud will be here whenever he has bidden Mr. Shepherd goodbye, but I wanted to see you alone."

"You are no well, Mary, my dear, said I."

"I am quite well, aunt," said Mary, "only

I want to speak to you alone. Will you come in?"

"I will do that, Mary," said I, "but I like not to see you so white and shilpit, the which is a thing you have no call to be, any more than that rose bush would have to wither in the summer time."

"Ay, aunt," said Mary, "but roses *will* wither in the summer time. The bush they planted in the garden at home, the day I was born, has never had a leaf this year, and sometimes I think it's just like me."

"Whisht, Mary," said I. "I have known young things make troubles of their own fancies, where Providence had sent none. No that I am saying you are doing that, bairn, but only it behoves us to be canny. And, oh! Mary, the Almighty's had a full and kind hand to you."

"I know that, aunt," said Mary, leaning down her head upon her hands, for by that time we had entered in, and were sitting in

my parlour, "I know that, and that's what makes me hate myself, that I am so ungrateful—and I always think I could have borne anything else better. Oh, aunt! do not be angry at me."

"My dear," said I, "wherefore should I be angry? I have had tribulations of my own, Mary; so tell me, like a good bairn, what it is that has been vexing you. You need not be feared for me."

It would be two or three minutes before Mary spoke again, and then she looked up into my face, and said she:

"Aunt, I want you to ask my mother to let me go with Claud."

"With Claud, Mary?" said I; "what has put that into your head? You are surely no wearied of home?"

"No, aunt," said Mary, in a grave, firm way. "I am not wearied of home; it is necessity. I want to go away, because I cannot stay in Pasturelands—only for a

while—but for *his* sake, and for my sake, aunt, ask my mother to let me go with Claud.”

“For whose sake, Mary?” said I. The bairn gave a glint up with her wet eyes, and then hid her face in her hands.

“Mary,” said I, “is’t Mr. Allan?”

But the heart of the poor young thing was throbbing with trouble, and she answered me not.

“My dear bairn,” said I, “it is needful, if I am to wind this knotted thread, that you should let me see all the ravelling of it. What is it about Mr. Allan, that would make you leave your own mother home?”

The bairn lifted up her head in a degree, but shaded her cheeks with her hands, so that I could see scarce any of her face.

“He fears not God, aunt,” she said, in a voice that was like a whisper; “neither does he regard man. He is leading a sinful life, and suppose he promises to amend it,

it is not for God, but for me. Aunt, aunt, would we not be far better asunder? There could be no blessing on us."

"My bairn," said I, "have you had converse with Mr. Allan? Look up and tell me right, Mary. It's no a thing you need hide from me, for sure am I you are sore changed, if you either did or said anything, that was misbecoming Claud Maitland's bairn."

Mary lifted up her head with that, the bit proud womanly spirit kindling within her as I knew it would, and then she telled me, no in a very clear way, but aye as I could understand, that she had met with Mr. Allan, no far from the Manse, and that he had pleaded, and promised that he would change—that the first day she set foot in Lilliesleaf, he would be a new man, (the poor bairn minded the very words, and liked, I doubt not, to say them over, for

all her grief—wherefore should she not?—that he would give up every ill thing—that he would let her guide him to good, that his very mother, the proud woman, would rejoice and be glad—would she but let him speak to the minister.

“Aunt,” said Mary, to me, when she had gotten it all out and was quieter, poor bairn! “would you have bidden me trust to a change that *I* was to make—I, so weak as I am? Would you have let him put his caring for me in the place of his fearing God? Oh, aunt! I cannot stay in Pasturelands just now, but I could have done nothing else.”

“Mary,” said I, “I am troubled in my spirit concerning this matter. Truly I would like ill to have you wedded to a godless man, but mind you that Scripture that says what the believing wife may do? And Mr. Allan is a young man of a most pleasant

nature, and if he was just once out of temptation—I know not, Mary—it might be for the saving of him.”

“Aunt,” said Mary, in a firm and reproving way, “we are never to do evil that good may come, and do not you make me weaker than I am. I pray with all my heart that God may change him, but *I* cannot. Oh, aunt! do you not think it is hard for me, too?”

“And would you no let him speak to the minister, Mary?” said I.

“No, aunt,” said Mary, “it would only have grieved them all, and what good could it have done. Besides *he* is the chief heritor in the parish, after the Earl, and maybe hereafter, if my father had opposed or mortified him, it might have made dispeace. Oh, aunt! I did not know what to do, but I thought that was the best.”

“Well, my bairn,” said I, “we will see what time brings forth—and there’s aye

something in my spirit, Mary, that says Mr. Allan will mend. The Lord be about the pleasant young man, to keep him from evil. You are both but young yet."

"And will you ask my mother, aunt," said Mary, looking up into my face in the innocent way that she used to do when she was a little bairn, "to let me go with Claud?"

"Mary," said I, "what way do you keep this a secret from your mother, and tell it to me?"

The bairn looked down in a confused way.

"Aunt," she said to me, "since little Helen died, and that is so long since that I do not remember her, there has never been any sorrow in the Manse, and I cannot bear to grieve my mother; but you—aunt, do not be angry—you know what it is yourself."

“And so I do, Mary,” said I, “far better, it is my hope, than you will ever know; but you must not keep it from your mother.”

Mary gave her head a bit shake.

“You must tell your mother yourself, Mary,” said I; “and it will not be all grief to her either, any more than it has been to me. Mr. Allan will mend. But, bairn, Claud is to stay at Dourbraes at first, and Mr. Kirkman’s folk are strangers to you. I see not how you can go with Claud.”

“Claud is to get a little house from Mr. Kirkman,” said Mary, in a quick way; “and, perhaps, after he has been a week settled, I could go. I would not need to stay long, for *he* will, maybe, not remain at Lilliesleaf; or, maybe—oh! if I was only away just now, I would not care so much for what happened after!”

“Tell your mother, Mary, my dear,” said I, “and I will come up myself. You can

send down Robbie for me in the end of the week ; and, Mary, if some wee bird should whistle at your window, that the young man, Mr. Allan, had settled into a douce and godly manner of life, as becomes one that Providence has gifted so well, what would you say then ?”

I saw the bairn’s bits of white fingers clasped tight, and upon her face there came a wan smile, like a glint of the moon ; but she said not a word. We had much more converse concerning the same matter, until the gig came up to the door, with Claud, my nephew, and the youth, William Elder, in it, just new from the Manse of Rures ; and before they came in, Mary gathered up her hair right, and sorted herself, so that folk might not see that there had been anything in her mind, or in our converse, past the common.

“Mary, Mary,” said William Elder, “what a shame of you to bewitch yon

poor young minister ! You should have seen how woe begone he looked when Claud said you had set out with us, and left us to go to Sunnyside. Poor Mr. Shepherd thought he should have had as many attractions as aunt Margaret !”

“Mr. Shepherd was very wrong, then, Willie,” said Mary, with a smile that cheered me. “Did he really think I would go to Rures to see him ?”

“Oh ! his sister was the excuse, you know,” said William ; “and, by the bye, it’s as well Claud is going away, or else you would have been compelled to go with him, when he went to Rures, by way of safeguard. James Shepherd, you know, could have protected Elizabeth, and you Claud, besides doing a little private business on your own account—eh, Mary ? Do you know, I am jealous of Claud. Elizabeth Shepherd is a very nice girl.”

“I wish you did not think so much of

very nice girls, Willie," said Claud, with a smile. "He is a sad fellow, this young sprig of the law, aunt. We shall have him jealous of Reuben Reid next, for paying too much attention to Mary."

"As if there was nobody to be jealous of on that account but Reuben Reid," said William. "But, Mary, don't look frightened. I never was a talep yet. My aunt does not know to this day, who threw the ball that cracked the chimney-glass in the Manse dining-room, though I got a drubbing for it. By the bye, aunt Margaret, what has become of Grace? Has she married a lord yet?"

"If I were you, I would think sometimes before I spoke, Willie," said Claud, in a kind of angry way.

"Well, and so I do, Claud," said the wild boy Willie, for he was but a boy in a manner, being ages with Mary. "And what business had Grace in London, I would

like to know, if she did not intend to distinguish herself in some way? Why, man, all the young ladies in novels do it."

I marvelled at Claud. "Grace is not a young lady in a novel," he said, in a grave, ill-pleased tone.

"Whisht, bairns," said I, "there are worse things than novels in this ill world; and doubtless you will all get your fate some day, so you need not cast out about it. Also it is my thought, William Elder, that in due and right time, you will be bringing home to Bourtree a grave lady of tall stature and much discretion, seeing that folk (as I have often heard) aye like them that are opposite to themselves."

"Many thanks, aunt Margaret," said the mirthful laddie; "and who shall we get for Claud? neither too grave nor too gay—a 'wee lady.' Aha, cousin! I have you there. Grace, Grace—"

"Willie, don't be ridiculous," said Claud,

in an impatient manner, and with a cloud upon his brow. "I am going to bid Jenny good bye, aunt."

"Then you can tell Jenny to bring ben the tea, Claud," said I, "for it is wearing on in the afternoon, and you will be the better of it, after your long drive."

The which Jenny did; and after they had abode with me till the night was far on, they set away in the darkening, the three of them, my niece Mary having her heart lightened as I thought, and Willie Elder, like a wild lad as he was, keeping up a continual mirthfulness all the way.

And it was a bonnie night as mortal could have wished to see—with a bit silver mist here and there upon the sky, like the veil about a queen's head, (I have read that the poor unhappy Mary, of old times, was used to array herself so), and the moon at her full—it was pleasant only to look upon it!

Upon the next day the minister my

brother, and Claud my nephew, went away, and on the Thursday, the day the young man was to take the vows of the ministry upon him, Robbie came down with the gig for me early in the morning, with a bit note from Mary, asking me to come up soon. So I dressed myself and went.

There was much converse between Mary my sister, and me, concerning the matter that day, and vexed she was about it, though, nevertheless, like myself, no without a dawning of hope respecting Mr. Allan. Mary had told her mother, on the Monday night, as I bade her—and Mary, my sister, had given the minister an inkling of it, so that the road was clear in a manner for the departure of the bairn for a season, seeing it was clearly the wisest thing that could be done—only Mary, my sister, was waiting to see me before she would decide.

So having settled that, I returned again to Sunnyside, Mary making a paction with

me, that she would be down in the middle of the week, when the minister, my brother, came home (he was to preach at Dourhills on the Sabbath, and introduce Claud to his charge), seeing he was to bring with him satin for a gown, which Miss Janet Selvage was to make, for Mary had worn the silk of the changing colour a good while, and needed a new one to be her best.

So she came upon the Tuesday, having a kind of flighty cheerfulness, that I liked not much to see, because it was appointed that she should go to Dourhills upon the next Monday. Also she left the satin with Miss Janet, (it was a good fabric, and of a becoming and thrifty colour), under a promise that it would be made in a right and handsome way, in time for Robbie taking it up to the Manse with him, on the Saturday forenoon, when he was doing other errands in Burrowstoun.

I mind not anything more that needs

to be mentioned, for the next eight days, except that Miss Janet implemented her bargain, and the gown fitted and became the bairn, fine. And upon the appointed day, which was Monday, Mary went away in the inside of the coach, Claud being trysted to meet her in a town nearhand Dourhills where the coach stopped. So we were again in quietness.

I did not wonder, a day or two after that, when I saw from my window, the young man, Mr. Allan Elphinstone, riding quick, and in a hurry, up the brae to Sunnyside. I had not seen him since Mary told me her story; and I discerned by the face of him, whenever he drew near enough to be seen, that he was coming in haste and in trouble to question me concerning the bairn, so I put up a supplication within myself, that I might be made wise to speak a word in season, to the misguided young man.

He came ben, as it seemed to me, even without asking Jenny whether I was in or no.

“Miss Maitland,” he said to me, the very first word he spoke, “where is Mary?”

“Mary is away from home, Mr. Allan,” said I, “but sit down and rest you. You will have come all the way from Lilliesleaf, and it’s a long ride.”

“Where is Mary, Miss Maitland?” said the young man, as if he had not heard me speak.

“The bairn was but delicate in her health, Mr. Allan,” said I, “and she has gone to another place for a change—but sit down, and wear off this hurry. You have not been at Sunnyside for a while.”

Mr. Allan sat down, and looked at me in a bewildered way—and then he said:

“Is it for me, Miss Maitland! is it I who have driven Mary from Pasturelands?”

“Whisht! Mr. Allan,” said I, “where-

fore should you be grieved in your spirit, at either me or the bairn? There is not one of us, Mr. Allan, that would not seek your welfare, as much as if you were our own."

"And yet you prevent it!" said Mr. Allan, starting up off his seat, and traveling about the room. "Mary would not have done this, had she not known what the world says *you* did. I know—I am sure! Forgive me, Miss Maitland! I did not mean to grieve you, but I do not know what I say!"

"Mr. Allan," said I, "I know not where you may have heard that old story; and truly it is a thing the world has small concern with, and no mortal has ever heard it from me. But think you, I would have done that, which was a sore thing to do, if there had not been, in my own spirit, a reason sufficient? Mr. Allan, the world had little

hand in the upbringing of the bairn, Mary Maitland, even as it had little hand in mine ; and if we have both (and truly Mary had made her own judgment before she ever said a word to me), done things hard to the flesh, you may think at least that we had our own reasons, and thought them not ill ones."

Mr. Allan got a calmer manner as he heard me say that.

"Miss Maitland," he said, and he sat down upon a seat near me, "do not think I dispute that. Forgive me for speaking of your own history, and at least believe that, bad as I am, I am not bad enough to think lightly of your lifelong protest. But Mary—I do not excuse myself. I plead guilty to folly—but surely that was not enough to separate her and me."

"Mr. Allan," said I, "think not that I want to speak hardly to you. An you were

one of our own bairns, your weal could not be nearer to my heart—but Mary, in her upbringing, has been learned to call the like of that folly, Sin !”

Mr. Allan leaned down his head upon his hand.

“ I do not object,” he said ; “ call it sin, and what then ?”

“ Then, Mr. Allan,” said I, “ the bairn, Mary, has been trained, so far as mortal can be, to hate the very appearance of evil. Since ever she knew spoken speech, she has heard that it was an ill thing and a mad thing to outstep the way that God has made for us. We are all of a sinful nature, Mr. Allan, and so is she, but the blessing of Him that redeemed us, has been upon the bairn, and so far as mortal eyes can read His writing, the Lord has put His name upon her. Think you then, in your own spirit, what she would be like to thole worst in one that was near and dear to her ?”

Mr. Allan looked into my face in an earnest way, but spoke not.

“ Oh, Mr. Allan,” said I, “ it’s an ill thing to forget God. There may be a pleasure here, and a pleasure there, wanting Him—like poppy flowers among corn—but what would you think of the husbandman that would root out the young wheat, that the red poppy heads might be the bigger and the bonnier? You are but young yet, and the world is bright to look at before you; but oh! Mr. Allan, take heed to your ways, that you may have Him with you that is the King and the Lord of all!”

Mr. Allan put his hands over his eyes and we sat there for a while, and never spoke a word, neither him nor me.

“ Miss Maitland,” he said at last, “ did this grieve Mary?”

“ Sorely, Mr. Allan,” said I.

“ And was she angry?”

“ I know not, Mr. Allan,” said I. “ I

heard no word of that, and truly, I think that anger is not like to flourish, under the shadow of a great and sore grief."

It is wonderful to note whiles the likeness that there is in bairns' minds one to another, There was a glint of pleasure in Mary's eye when I said to her that the lad, Mr. Allan, would mend, and now there was a light flashed upon his face, when I bore my testimony that what the bairn had been constrained to do, was against her own heart.

So he rose up off his seat again and walked about the room, meditating, as it seemed to me, in his own mind. It chanced that there lay upon my little table which stands in the window, a testament that belonged to Mary, being a small thing, in a binding of blue morocco, with gilded edges, that I had given to her myself upon her birthday when she was a little bairn. Mr. Allan lifted it up and looked at it, and seeing

her name written in my hand, and also two or three "Mary Maitland's" in her own writing upon the first leaf (for as I have said she was but a very young thing when she got it), he gave a bit glance at me and then he held it in his hand, and when he went away took it with him.

"Mr. Allan," said I, when he was bidding me good bye, "you know not what a joy and a pleasure it will be to me to see you setting a godly example in the countryside, as it is right you should do; but, oh! Mr. Allan, when your thoughts turn to the good way, let it be for the sake of Him who spared not his own life for us; and no for the sake of a frail mortal bairn."

Mr. Allan gave a kind of troubled smile, and said something, I could not hear right what, about both being best, and with that he went his ways, leaving me in a state of sore dubiety for fear he might, through his thought of Mary, be going away to make his

wall with untempered lime, as it is written in Jeremiah, and to say to himself peace, peace, when there was no peace; but truly, it was all in a most wise and kind Hand, and I aye comforted myself with that thought.

We got word from Mary a day or two thereafter, when she was safe settled at Dourhills with Claud, saying that they had got a little house close to the banks of the Dour water, the which Mr. Kirkman in a very kind manner had put furniture into.

It was a very quiet place, Mary said, (for there was a letter to me myself, forbye the one to her mother), with much wood and water and few folk, only that there was a young family at Dourbraes, and Mr. and Mrs. Kirkman were uncommon kind. Also Mr. Smail, the minister, had a son and a daughter stopping at the Manse, the young man being the Doctor, and well inclined, as Mary thought, to be chief with Claud. But far more than that, Mary told me, to

my great wonder, seeing Claud had never said a word about it, that in the parish— Claud's parish— was the house of Oaken-shaw, and the water that Grace had spoken of was the very water of Dour, upon the side of which the bairn Mary was sojourning! Truly we are compassed with wonders!

Furthermore, Mary told me that Mr. Kirkman said, the lands and the great dwelling-place belonged to Grace's mother for her own hand, and the Edinburgh gentleman that had been her guardian, had caused the law papers (I am only writing down what the bairn said, for I myself know little concerning the like of these matters) at her marriage, to be so drawn out, that she had still the power to bestow her own possessions as seemed good to her, only seeing her death, poor young thing, had been sudden, Mr. Kirkman knew not whether she might have set her house in

order, but he thought it was like to be her wish that her bairn should be free of her father's hand, seeing he was an ill man. But it was only his thought Mr. Kirkman could tell, and in that there was no certainty. So we just remained as unsatisfied concerning my Grace as we had been before.

And just upon the day, that I got Mary's letter, Mrs. Elphinstone came to call upon me, a thing which gave me surprise and no uncommon degree of pleasure, for besides that the friend of my youth was sorely changed, the matter between Mr. Allan and Mary made it a trouble to me to meet with her. So our converse began just with ordinary things—the weather and such like, and me asking about her health, which had been but ill; and at last she said to me in a bitter way:

“ You would hear of the event shortly

to take place at the Castle, Miss Maitland?"

"No," said I, "I have no troke with anybody nearhand the Castle, and unless it was a thing public to the whole countryside, it is not like to come to me."

"Oh! it will soon become public enough, doubtless," said Mrs. Elphinstone; "Lady Julia is about to be married. I daresay you will be astonished, Miss Maitland, that I am not more nearly interested in it. I confidently believe I might have been, had not that foolish boy, Allan, stood in his own light."

It was not like that I could find much to say after that.

"Lady Mary and I had quite set our hearts upon their union," said Mrs. Elphinstone, with the kind of bit turn of the head, that folk give when they are speaking in a covert way at other folk, who have done

ill to them, "but they say these things go by destiny, and Lady Julia, it seems, has decided for herself. She has a perfect right, of course. Allan Elphinstone of Lilliesleaf is not likely to be an unsuccessful suitor."

"And who is the gentleman, Mrs. Elphinstone?" said I.

"A poor cousin of her own, heir presumptive to a barren title," said Mrs. Elphinstone. "I believe it would be immensely better for young people to have these things arranged for them, on a general principle of suitability—it is a precarious happiness, indeed, that rests upon the romantic inclination of an infatuated youth or a foolish girl; but young people that are reasonable in all other respects, seem to think they have a right to be perverse on this. I have seen my Allan positively rude to Lady Julia, because, I suppose, he suspected that I wished him to be the reverse."

"Truly, Mrs. Elphinstone," said I, trying to put on a smile, though I felt in no manner well pleased, as may be thought, seeing Mr. Allan had told me that his mother knew about him and Mary, "bairns will be bairns, and doubtless we have all had the like feelings in our season."

"I cannot say, Miss Maitland," said Mrs. Elphinstone; "but this is an extraordinary age. Walls of separation, that in my youth seemed invulnerable, are being cast down every day. I suppose there is nothing for it but submission."

"I am feared you have been vexed, Mrs. Elphinstone," said I, for it troubled me to see how the poor, pale, invalid woman was chafing in her own spirit.

"Oh, no! by no means," said Mrs. Elphinstone, in a proud and mortified way. "Lady Julia, of course, having the Earl's consent, has little occasion to trouble herself about mine; though I am very well assured

she might have been Lady Julia Elphinstone by this time, had Allan taken proper advantage of his opportunities."

"I am doubting we are going to have rain," said I, being anxious to turn the converse, as it was far from pleasant to me. "There is a big, white cloud throwing its shadow on the sky; and the country is not out of the need of it either, if it be just a shower, and away. It's ill pleasing husbandmen with the weather."

Mrs. Elphinstone made little answer to me, being taken up with her own thoughts.

"I have been seeing Mr. Allan so seldom for this while," said I, "that I have never got him asked about Cruive End. Do you know, Mrs. Elphinstone, if the young gentleman has seen the improvement on the folk that he wished."

"I really cannot tell, Miss Maitland," said Mrs. Elphinstone. "I have but little faith

in these schemes of improvement. One hears all one's life of some grand panacea that is to lift the poor out of their grovelling state, and make all mankind equal ; but so far as I can hear, Allan has not even succeeded in making his *protégés* clean."

"It's no my thought, Mrs. Elphinstone," said I, "that any plan can make mankind equal, seeing the very Gospel tries it not, in a worldly way. And the gifts of the Almighty in creating are even like His gifts in Providence, diverse, and in no manner equal to all. But Mr. Allan made a promise to me to take measures to have the Word carried in a more effectual manner among them."

"I cannot say, indeed," said Mrs. Elphinstone, with a manner that showed she was impatient of what I was saying. "I have something of a particular nature to say to you, Miss Maitland, and would be glad of

your attention. My son's purposes, as perhaps you are aware, involve things of more importance to your family than the improvement of a paltry village."

I looked at her in an astonished way, scarce conceiving what she could be minting at. So she began again.

"We are old friends, Miss Maitland; and though I will not disguise that I consented to what I am about to communicate to you with some reluctance, not from any objection to the young lady personally, but from a mother's natural ambition for her only son, the reluctance is certainly lessened by our previous connection. I believe you have already heard of my son's proposals to your niece?"

I bowed my head, for I was not in the turn for speech.

"Allan tells me," said Mrs. Elphinstone, "that there has arisen some misunderstand-

ing. Now, Miss Maitland, you will perceive my anxiety to gratify my son, from the fact that I have driven down to-day, solely for the purpose of signifying to you my consent to the marriage. I confess candidly that I have had objections, but my son's happiness is paramount to them all."

"Mrs. Elphinstone," said I, "my niece Mary, has a father and a mother of her own, in whose hands must lie the judging of this matter. It is not for me to take upon myself to answer for them."

Mrs. Elphinstone looked at me in an astonished way.

"The matter requires very little judging, Miss Maitland. Of course, my son will wait upon the young lady's father, and make the necessary arrangements. But—at once, for the sake of our old friendship, and to satisfy Allan—I have undertaken this long drive, almost a journey to a confirmed invalid

like me ; and having done this, really it seems to me, Miss Maitland, that I have done all that can be required of me."

"Doubtless, Mrs. Elphinstone," said I ; "and it needed not that, for Mr. Allan surely would not leave you ignorant that, in the present circumstances, the bairn Mary, had felt it her duty to decline the compliment he wanted to put upon her. It has been a matter of trouble and sorrow to me, seeing that Mr. Allan had won round my own heart, and I like not to see him crossed ; but, doubtless, good will be brought out of it in some way."

I never saw a look of more wonder upon a face, than was on Mrs. Elphinstone's, but aye she tried to keep up her haughty way of speaking.

"I surely misunderstand you, Miss Maitland," she said. "You do not mean that the young lady, your niece, has received my son's addresses coldly?"

“I know not, Madam,” said I, “whether I would be speaking perfect truth, if I said coldly; but the bairn Mary, has been constrained by her own judgment, at this time, to say Mr. Allan, nay.”

I had a fear within myself that the lady, Mrs. Elphinstone, would have lifted up her voice and flyted upon me, for she just burst out: “Upon my word!”—

But then she seemed to remember herself.

“Might one ask the reason,” she said, with a bitter smile, “of the young lady’s extraordinary decision?”

“Mrs. Elphinstone,” said I, “it is no my will to grieve you; but Mary, my niece, thought not that Mr. Allan was maintaining the walk he might have done. You’ll excuse me, Mrs. Elphinstone, for truly the welfare of the young man is precious to me also, as if he was one of our own.”

“Really, Miss Maitland,” said Mrs.

Elphinstone, in an angry manner, "this is going quite too far. Because my son, Allan, has the spirit that becomes his years and rank, and is not a vulgar Scottish precisian, it pleases your niece to reject him. We are honoured certainly!"

"It was neither my will nor my niece's, Mrs. Elphinstone," said I, "that she should be thrown in Mr. Allan's way; and the bairn has decided according to her conscience. I see not how I am called to suffer ill names upon a godly and honourable kindred. Mary Maitland's forbears, if they had not wealth, have ever had godliness and good fame, and the bairn herself would disgrace no house in all Scotland."

Mrs. Elphinstone grew quieter when she saw my spirit kindling, and said she:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Maitland; but you will allow that my irritation is not

wonderful. Why, what would she have? The whole world would ridicule such a decision as this !”

“The bairn, Mary, Mrs. Elphinstone,” said I, “having lived, as you may say, all her days under the immediate shadow of a pure and simple Kirk, has been more used to look to the Word for what was right than to the world, and to judge conformably thereto ; and it would be ill my part to counsel her otherwise.”

Truly my spirit was stirred within me. The world, said she ! as if I did not mind, in my inmost heart, how the world mocked at, and lightlied, the sin that maddened poor Helen Edgar, and made me a lone woman, desolate in the summer of my days !

Mrs. Elphinstone abode at Sunnyside a good while, and we had much more converse ; and truly, before long, it became

visible to me that she was growing eager and anxious about the thing that was to have been, at first, so great an honour to the family of the poor minister of Pasturelands. I could have smiled, even though I was also troubled, for truly, mortals are inconsistent folk !

CHAPTER II.

I WAS discomposed in my mind, as was but natural, after that visit of Mrs. Elphinstone's, and knew not well what to think, for there was but a poor prospect of Mr. Allan mending rightly, when the motive he had was only to win the favour of a frail mortal like unto himself. If it had not been a matter that was mixed up with sore trouble to two pleasant young things that were both near to me, it would have been a divert to see the change that was wrought upon the proud lady of Lilliesleaf. Instead of giving her

consent in an angry and offended way, as she meant at first, it was plain now that she would have done much to change the resolve of the simple bairn Mary, and that she had a perception that through her only, was the way of turning Mr. Allan, from the wild and gay life that had ruined his father before him.

It was not many days after that, when my sister Mary came down to Sunnyside (I wot well I had plenty visitors in that season) saying that Mr. Allan had been seeing the minister, and asking me to go up to the Manse, that Claud and her and me might have a consultation about the bairns. "For really, Margaret," said Mary, my sister, "this matter puts us in a very uncomfortable position."

"I doubt it not, Mary," said I.

"If it had only happened six months ago," said Mary, "before the poor young man was led into this course of folly. It

would be nonsense to say that we attach no weight to the temporal advantages of the match, but these I regard far less than the certainty it would give of having Mary settled near us. It is a dreary thing when a family grows up to look forward to parting with them, as we must do. Claud you see is gone already, and Mary—”

“The bairn is young,” said I, “and so is Mr. Allan,—let them wait. There is no hurry, and if the young man changes his life, as I have a confidence he will, it can be settled then in a comfortable way. You are thinking of what is past, Mary, even in regard of myself. Ay, but the case of Mr. Allan is far different. He has done no such ill thing, and he will mend.”

My sister Mary looked at me with a look of compassion and kindness.

“You know well, Margaret,” she said, “that it is far from my wish to recall painful recollections to your mind.”

“Say not so, Mary,” said I. “Think you when I had strength to thole in silence at the first stound, that I should not be quiet enough now, and it five and twenty years since? But let the bairns wait, and it will come right in time.”

Folk should ever speak the truth, and I had compunctions within myself, when I said that; for I, too, feared and trembled concerning the issue. Nevertheless, where there is no certainty, I think it is aye best to be hopeful.

So I went with Mary, my sister, to the Manse, and much converse and consultation we had. Mr. Allan had pleaded with the Minister, my brother, that he would cause the bairn, Mary, to put off her judgment for a while, and had said many more things, the which, I could see, had inclined the heart of Claud to him, even as mine was inclined, and Mary my sister, also had a great leaning towards the lad. So it was agreed among us, that the

Minister should be careful of exhorting him to have a right motive in the reformation he was promising, and to turn away from his vanities, because they were evil in the sight of Him who cannot look upon iniquity, and no because they were displeasing to the bairn.

Also Claud was to consent to wait a while, aye on the understanding that Mary herself was to decide, and that he, though he was her father, would not meddle with her conscience, or her inclination, in any measure, seeing the bairn had behaved in a most wise-like and discreet manner in the time that was past.

It was a fine night, and Mary my sister, and me took a walk in the gloaming, the Minister being busy with his sermon, as it was drawing to the end of the week. Bell, whom I have before mentioned, as having been once a servant at the Manse, the auntie of the boy Robbie, had been married upon a

crooked body, who was a shoemaker, a year or two before that, when they were both of discreet years. And as it so happened, that we were passing near her door, we heard a sound as of rejoicing, and Mary bade me draw near, that she might ask for Bell, seeing there was no saying what might have happened. The door was not quite close, and from within there came a noise of laughing, and of various voices; so Mary tirmed lightly with her finger.

“Come in, whaever ye be,” cried out John Whang, opening the door himself and pushing his coul off his blackened brow, (for the body was a swarthy body by nature, as well as being a shoemaker by trade,) “there shall nae mortal pass my door without hearing the sough of our rejoicing; the blessing of God has come to the house this day!”

“I am glad to hear you say so, John,” said my sister Mary. “Is it a boy or a girl?”

“Preserve us! is’t you, Mrs. Maitland?” said the body, in an abashed way. “You’ll excuse me, seeing I am so blythe about Bell. It’s a lassie, mem, the bonniest, genty, bit thing! But you’ll no pass without coming in to see the wean, and Bell, poor woman!”

So we did go in, and who should be in the kitchen, but the Dominie, Reuben Reid, and two or three young lads, that the body, in the fulness of his heart, had wiled in to rejoice with him, and I saw plain enough that Mysie Telfer, the boy Robbie’s sister, who was staying with her auntie for the occasion, had lifted the bottle off the table, when she saw who it was that had come in, but every one there had his tumbler before him, the which was but an unwise way of making merry on the coming of a new bairn into the world.

The room within, where Bell was lying, with the bit helpless thing beside her, was

full of women-folk, and of necessity, Mary and me had to taste the blythemeat, and put the glass of wine to our lips, (for the body, John Whang, was a man of substance in his way, and grudged no outlay for the occasion,) for fear we should spoil the bairn's beauty. After I had spoken to Bell, and looked at the baby, it chanced that I sat down upon a seat, close to the door, seeing I had in a manner worn out of acquaintance with the folk belonging to the parish, wh' were in the room; at least, I did not know them so well as Mary my sister, who was dwelling amongst them, and she had divers things to say to them all, asking about their bairns, and such like.

The door of the room was a little open, and I could not but smile within myself at the blytheness that was upon the face of the body, John Whang, who was just

uplifted beyond measure. So the maister and him, I could hear, were in an argument.

“ I’se uphaud it, Dominie, in the face o’ half a hunder sessions. What ! wad ye hae me to tak’ it in as quiet a way as if the bit living cratur was ane o’ the bestial, and no a genty human bairn, and my ain ? It’s because ye’re a prim auld bachelor body yoursel, and kenna what it is. But I’ll gie ye Scripture for’t, man, chapter and verse. Mysie, gie me down the Book.”

“ At no hand, Mysie,” said the Dominie, shaking his head in a solemn manner, at which I wondered, only I saw that evil thing, the toddy, was working upon Reuben also—we are weak folk ! “ At no hand, Mysie. Would you take the Book, John Whang, in an irreverent way—and you in no manner as you should be ? I am surprised that you should not be more careful, and me a licentiate of the Kirk !”

“ It mak’s nae, man !” cried out John Whang, “ you can look at the bit yoursel. Is’t no a wish in Jeremiah, that the man suld be hangit, or some sic evil thing, that took the word to his faither, as Mysie brocht it to me, (ye shall hae a new gown, lassie), that a bairn was born making his heart glad. What say ye to that, Dominie? and the prophet, if ane micht say sic a thing, was but a whinging carle hinsel, and had neither wife nor wean. A wee different frae my case, that am blessed wi’ baith.”

“ Haud your profane tongue, John Whang!” said the Dominie. “ It fits na the like of you to be animadverting upon the character of a worthy like the prophet Jeremiah. If you had seen my analysis indeed upon his pairt of the Book. But I never could get it back from Dr. Thrum, that was Divinity Professor in my day. Ye see an analysis is—”

“ The minister gied our Jean a new Bible in a present,” said Thomas Templeton, a

young man that served the Kirk in the capacity of precentor, (Reuben Reid, who should have done it, having no voice), "because she was the best at the questions in a' the schule, and there's an analysis at the end o' every book."

"And wha's caring for an analysis, I wad like to ken," said John Whang, "and a new bairn come to the world this day! I'll tell you what, Dominic, an it had been a lad as it's a lassie, (let's be thankfu'!) we wad hae made a scholar o't atween us—but there's a braw time coming."

"And that minds me, John Whang," said the Dominic, "that the time has sweeled away in a manner unparalleled; we should seek to be delivered from the enticements of thae creature comforts—and that's braw whisky. *Tempus fugit*, lads, which being interpreted, meaneth—but let me see if any o' you have paid sufficient heed to my instructions to mind—it's a common

word, reduced to be mair a phrase of our vulgar language, than of the old and pure Latin tongue."

"I wadna say but what it micht have something to do wi' a fugie warrant," said William Warstle, a lad of a striving disposition, but who had, folk said, a turn to be litigious, and liked to have to do with the law.

"And ye have just catched it, Willie; fugie as it likes, ye have putten saut on it's tail. Clear up your heads a wee, lads. In my young days, I would have let no man before me."

"I ken naething about tempest fugit, Dominic," said Thomas Templeton, "but I can tell you what a fugue is in music, and that's a wiser-like thing to be cracking about. Ye see there may be twa, or three, or four pairts, just as it happens; and I'll suppose that I begin wi' the tune, and when

I have got on a bar or twa, then John there (aye allowing he can sing, though I never heard him—he could bum in wi' the bass ony way), *he* taks it up, and Willie the next, a' in different pairts, like as they were chasing me, and then ye'll suppose I stop, and you join in yoursel."

"Me, Tam Templeton!" said the Dominie, in an angry way, "do you mind wha you are speaking to? Me that never kent the difference between a braw tune and a bairn's whinging a' my days, forbye being a licentiate of the Kirk!"

"Well, Maister, it maks nae odds," said Thomas, "it was only for the sake o' describing richt. We can say Mysie, and that'll do better, for she's a grand singer; so, I say, supposing Mysie was to join in, and when a' the three were in full birr, I was to take up the tune mysel again, and, by and bye, John was to stop, and then it

micht be Willie, and so on till it was finished, ane stopping and anither beginning—that's a fugue in music."

"A fule thing, I could have undertaken for't before ye began," said the Dominie. "It's a wonderful thing to me, Tam Templeton, how bonnie sounds—and I'll no deny that music has its ain beauties whiles, having power to sooth the savage beast, as it is written in poetry—can come out from the midst of such a band of handwaled haverels, as thae musical cattle are ; but, wi' a' your fugues, ye have gi'en the unlearned no manner of inkling of the meaning of the word."

"I hae tellt ye what the thing is, Maister," said Thomas, not very well pleased as it seemed to me, "and I wad like to ken what is the use of learning, if ane canna tell the meaning of words by it? I mind Miss Mary, the minister's daughter, saying once at the practisings, that it meant a

rinning away ; but I'm sure a fugue's a far bonnier word."

"An ye had sung a sang to us, Tam, it wad have set ye better than preaching about a fugue like a minister," said John Whang. "Up wi't, man !

"We'll hap and row, hap and row,
Hap and row the feetie o't!"

"John Whang," said the Dominie, "do you interrupt me with profane sangs, and me discussing etymology with the lads? The man's fou, or daft, to a certainty."

"It's you, gudeman,
Ye're fou, gudeman,"

sung the body, John Whang. "Me, truly! I defy ony man to say he ever saw me in sic a way as I couldna hae faced the very minister himsel, let alane the Dominie! Entymology, said he—as if I was heeding

whatna dead tongue the body was clavering about, and me the faither of a bonnie wean !”

“Ye’ll observe, lads,” said Reuben, rising up, poor man, in a kind of stately way, as if he was going to make a speech, “that the like of such words as fugie and fugue, are sprouts springing from the auld Latin verb *fugis*, to rin, the which is plain, in our vulgar language, in fugitive, and that rinneth, and other vocables of a like sound. I have two or three auld Rudiments at hame, and I would not be above gieing you a hand now and then, if you liked to set yoursels to so wise a study. It’s a braw thing to have the roots.”

“Tam,” said Mysie Telfer, coming close up to Thomas Templeton, who was a gardener to his trade. “The Dominie’s speaking about roots ; but mind, ye promised the bachelor’s buttons, and the gardener’s garters to me first.”

I heard not what answer the young man Thomas made, by reason of my sister Mary, coming up to me, and laying her hand upon my shoulder, "Is it Reuben Reid you are listening to, Margaret?" she aid.

"It's just a divert to hear him," said Mrs. Telfer, Bell's sister. "And John, you see, Miss Maitland is so uplifted about the wean. It's as guid as a play to see the twasome."

"You'll excuse our John, mem," said Bell herself. "It's a' the kindness o' his heart. I'm sure, a better man needna to be; and it's a' his blytheness that I hae gotten ower it sae weel."

So when we had bidden good night to Bell, we departed, as the night was wearing far on; Reuben Reid, poor body, being quite affronted like because we would not let him see us home.

"Here is a letter from Claud, Mary," said

the minister, my brother, when we went in ;
“ or rather, I should say, a joint epistle from
them both, which I have received since you
went out. Read it aloud, for, after my long
day’s study, I cannot make much of Claud’s
cramp hand, or these new-fangled, elongated
characters of Mary’s. There is nothing very
particular in it either, at least, nothing that
I could glean in my glance over it.”

So Mary, my sister, read it out aloud ; and
this is it :

“ My dear mother,

“ I am to write a descriptive letter to-day,
Mary says, by way of relief to the sedate
records of ministerial duty, which you are
henceforward to receive from the hermitage
of Dourside, though I fear my labours will
need to be so many, before I can do justice
to the parish, and its hitherto neglected
capabilities, that I shall hardly have leisure to
record them. I am to describe, then, a

house: in our neighbourhood, the name of which you have heard often, and in which you cannot fail to be interested. I mean Oakenshaw, the birthplace, if not the inheritance, of our old companion, Grace.

“ Under my first head, then, Oakenshaw is a large rambling house, conveying to one, in the first glance, a shivering sensation, prophetic of gousty rooms and long, bare, windtraversed passages. This is increased, of course, by the fact, that it has been uninhabited for years (I believe ever since Mrs. Maitland’s death): save by a few servants.

“ It lies low, moreover, and save for a glimpse of the ramblings of the Dour and the abundant foliage about it, would have a rather uninteresting outlook.

“ Within everything corresponds. We saw the interior, through Mary’s curiosity acting upon the anxiety of the housekeeper, who is one of our people, to oblige the “ new

helper," for that is my dignified title. The rooms are large, certainly, and shapely, and in good enough repair ; but inhabited solely by these spectral pinafores pieces of furniture, and with a neglect and solitariness brooding in their atmosphere which oppresses one sadly. I confess being interested in only one thing. A portrait of Mrs. Maitland, of Oakenshaw, which we could not persuade ourselves, was not intended for Grace. If our old friend is ever mistress of Oakenshaw, she may, without the least risk, call the picture her own.

"The housekeeper, honest woman, was immensely interested when she discovered from Mary's exclamations, that we knew Grace, and thereupon has followed a general invitation, giving us the freedom of the house—an invitation which I have just been scolding Mary for showing too great an inclination to accept. Six sheets, I believe,

a regular romantic young lady's letter has been despatched to-day, containing full particulars for the behoof of Grace.

“The Kirkmans continue very kind, and Mary is already quite at home in their nursery. I wonder what makes folk fancy such a flood of children, myself being in the greatest perplexity, whenever I am in their company, as to the individuals to whom belong the respective names of Willie and Robert, and Henry, Jane, Alison, and Clementina. One gets out of breath with the enumeration.

“Tom Smail is uncommonly patronizing, and the old gentleman and I get on as well together as is possible, considering the great difference of our views. The parish contains a good many very pleasant families also. Nevertheless, you must let Mary remain with me as long as you can. Our cottage is within easy distance of Dourbraes

on the one hand, and Oakenshaw on the other; but the Kirkmans, when Mary leaves me, will be my only near neighbours—”

Claud's writing broke off there, and then came in the hand of the bairn Mary.

“ Claud has got into such a rambling mood, dear Mother, that I am obliged to finish the letter for him! And such a bald and poor account as he has given you of Oakenshaw—poor Grace's Oakenshaw. But he did not think of it as he writes, and instead of caring little, was more interested than I, if that were possible, and stood before the picture I do not know how long—I could hardly get him away.

“ If Grace ever gets Oakenshaw, I am sure it will be a beautiful place; and is it not very fortunate that it should be in Claud's parish? Our little house is scarcely a mile from it, going by a very pretty path, close by the waterside. If Grace comes, I am afraid Claud will go along that road

oftener than any other in the parish, for Alison Kirkman says he was constantly wandering about Oakenshaw when he came first, and yet he never told them of Grace. Was it not very strange? I asked Mrs. Kirkman about Oakenshaw the very first night I was at Dourbraes. They would all like very much to see her—everybody indeed whom I have spoken to, seems interested in Grace.

“Mr. Smail is a very strange old man, and does nothing in the parish whatever, except preach his sermon every fortnight. I have not heard him yet, but Mr. Kirkman says it is the greatest relief to have Claud, after being obliged to listen to Mr. Smail, so long.

“Claud will not have much leisure here, at least for a while, for he wants to do all he can in the parish just now, and then the people will be the better prepared for whatever may happen in the Church.

“ From Claud’s little house we can see nothing but the water of Dour itself—and the woods, and the hills, and the sky; and when we go out to walk, we always find ourselves turning to Oakenshaw. I have written to Grace, to try and come out while I am here, and if she cannot manage it, we will go to Edinburgh before I return home; and Claud says, and I think, that no one surely could have any objections to Grace speaking to *me*.

“ Tell my aunt Margaret that I am wearying to get a letter from her. I like Dourhills very well, but still there are many things that I am anxious to hear about.

“ Mr. Kirkman has just sent down some new books, and Claud is calling to me to look at one, so good bye, dear Mother,

“ MARY MAITLAND.”

It might be two or three days after that, when I had returned to Sunnyside, and was

just in my old way again, and finding myself wearied one warm afternoon, I thought I would take a turn as far as Cruive End, to see with my own eyes how the folk were doing.

The new houses were nearly all finished, and the people fitted into them, and Mr. Allan had got a teacher from the city of Glasgow for the bairns. He had also caused that all the old houses should be taken down, and now the place was just like a long street of bits of wiselike cottages, far more comfortable, I doubt not, to dwell in, but not so pleasant to the eye, as when they were in little knots of three or four together, with their old gray roofs of heather theeking. The reason of the new ones being just in two stiff lines was, that seeing Lady Mary and the young folk at the Castle had come in the way, when Mrs. Elphinstone was drawing her plan, it turned out that, though it was a most fine design, it would not do,

being like the jackets and coats of many colours that the Castle ladies wanted the poor wives to wear, more suitable for a Swiss country place than a Scots one. So Mr. Allan, running away to the opposite extreme, as young folk are apt to do, just dotted down the two straight lines, and caused that it should be erected so.

The first thing I saw when I entered the street made me marvel.

There was a man, one of the dwellers in old Cruive End, that had long been a terror and a trouble to the country side. His name was Peter Young, and to his trade he was a tinkler, and travelled the country with a cuddie, in a gipsy way, being, as was commonly reported, of real gipsy blood himself. It was not that anything ill could be traced to Peter, for he was learned in all the wiles of his wandering and wild race, but there was many a theftdom found out in the farm houses round about, after Peter had

made his call, that no man could say plainly he had done, while everybody believed in their own mind that it could have been done by none else. Also, folk by habit and repute thieves, had been seen at odd times in and about his dwelling, But for all that, he had a measure of cleverness about him, that made many folk less minding about his faults.

So, as I was saying, I marvelled greatly, when the first thing I saw in Cruive End, was Peter Young, with his coat off, and a clean shirt on, delving in his bit little garden before the door, and whistling "Clout the Cau'dron," with all his might, so that you might have thought there was not a man with a lighter heart, or a freer conscience, in the whole country side.

So I suppose the man had heard my foot upon the stones, and turned round to see who it was. And knowing me, by reason of having mended the little goblet, and the

brass pan which Jenny had burnt a hole in, the last year, when we were making our jelly, Peter put his hand to his hat.

“There’s a great change on Cruive End, Peter,” said I, “I would scarce have known it again.”

“I see nae reason for them ca’ing it Cruive End at a’ noo, Miss Maitland,” said Peter. “Without doubt it was as bad as ony swine’s cruive ance; but noo I’m clear for them ca’ing it Allantoun, or Elphin-stonetoun, after the young Laird. He canna hae ower muckle honour for his wark, and Mr. Novimundy, the gentleman that’s lecturing here then noo, says it was aye the way in the auld Greek and Latin times.”

“Is there a gentleman lecturing here, Peter?” said I.

“Ay, mem, e’en as I hae tellt you, Mr. Novimundy. There’s a lecture three nichts in the week: braw things for the mind,

Miss Maitland. There's been ane on the richt way to read poetry, (though where we're to get poetry to read, if it be not an odd ballant now and then, or an auld book o' Allan Ramsay, or Burns, I kenna), and ane on the choice o' books, and ane on the Latin Cæsars—a when auld rips thae last. To think o' the Apostle Paul, honest man, answering for his life afore that diel, Nero, as I micht do mysel afore the sheriff."

"Whisht, Peter!" said I, "and so you think it is like to do good to the folk, the care Mr. Allan is taking of them?"

"Guid, Miss Maitland!" said Peter. "Look at mysel; I'll no bid you look furdur away. When did ony mortal see me wearing commonly on an ilkaday, the like of this bonnie white sark, afore? or delving in an innocent manner in my ain garden, when I micht have been doun at the 'Elphinstone Arms' yonder, wi' a' the idle loons in the townend. Guid! hasna the Laird offered prizes for

the cleanest house, and the finest flowers? My certy! the guidwife sall get her paiks if she doesna win the tane, and I'll scour the country mysel, frae Burrowstoun to Embro', before I'll lose the tither."

"Well, Peter," said I, "I hope you will continue in as douce a spirit. A man may do ill to himself even in the sorting of flowers; but at least he's no like to harm his neighbours."

"It's an elevatin' and intellectooal purshuit, mem," said Peter, with a glance of his eye, that made me uncertain whether he was mocking or in earnest, "for wha could think to do ill and the like o' thae bonnie things a' round about him, looking up wi' their bits of steadfast e'en into his face, and pointing him to the clear sky that is aye spreading out its lang arms, and watching aboon our heads? Ye hae nae occasion to smile, Miss Maitland; that's the last sentence but twa of Mr. Novimundy's

first lecture, only wi' improvements o' my ain."

"You will soon be fit for lecturing yourself I think, Peter," said I. "Have you your bairns at Mr. Allan's school?"

"Without doubt, mem," said Peter, "and I tak the twa auldest callants to the lecture ilka nicht when there is ane. Bess, she's auld enough to gang too, but the wife and the schulemistress laid their heads thegither and threeped it wasna richt for a lassie to be out o' the house the hail forenicht; sae I was obliged to gie in. Maybe they kent best, maybe they didna; but nae doubt lassies, that are the weaker vessels, begging your pardon, Miss Maitland, may do their turns weel enough, without learning the richt way to read poetry; but for the lads—I kenna, ane o' them may be Prime Minister yet."

He was a strange man, that Peter Young. There was a glance in his eye, as I have

before said, the time he was speaking, that made me misdoubt that all the time he was laughing at the thing he pretended to praise ; and what to say to it myself I knew not. Lectures to the poor folk of Cruive End, three times in a week !

So I went further on to see the place better, and it so chanced that when I got almost to the end, near where the school-house was, I saw a woman, called Nelly Bisset, standing at her door, and, being wearied, I went into the house, and sat down.

She had ever been a decent kind of a woman, Nelly, and kept her own house to herself, and maintained a measure of order therein, so the change of the new habitation was less odds to her than to most ; but I noticed that she kept her eye on me, in a kind of jealous way, and gave me but a short welcome. So said I :

“Well, Nelly,” (for seeing we have known the folk all our days, and them us, it is not the use in our part of the country to call every honest woman, mistress), “how are you liking the change that Mr. Allan has made?”

“Middlin’, middlin’,” said Nelly, in a short way. “What the Laird orders, it’s little use for puir folk finding fau’t wi’.”

“But this is a better house, Nelly,” said I.

“I’m nae judge o’ houses, Miss Maitland,” said Nelly, “the auld ane served my turn weel enouch. But I’m jealous ye’ll be ane o’ the leddies, the young Laird has gotten to see whether we hae clean firesides or no? Weel, weel, there’s an end to a’thing, and if it werena for the Laird, we might aiblins no get bread.”

“But you are far mistaken, Nelly,” said I, “to think I would come with such a

purpose. Mr. Allan may get gentlewomen to do the like of that, but sure am I, he never will get me."

"I kent it," said Nelly, "I was sure in my ain mind that you werena the leddy to turn on a pair body that gate; but Jean Wylie threeped till she had near deaved me, that the leddy o' Lilliesleaf had come herself ance errand to ask you. And for the house, Miss Maitland, maybe it's tichter frae the wind and the rain. I'll no say but what sclates is a better roof than straw theeking; but this place will ne'er be like the auld ane to me. Nae doubt there's a floor o' deals, and the last place was but earth, but I gaed ower yon wi' a light fit and a young heart, and rocked my first wean, ay, and watched the bits of totums mony a day, creeping about the heights and howes of the cobbly earthern floor. I'm auld noo; but, to be sure, it's mair comfortable for the bairns."

“And you have a good school for little Helen and Johnnie,” said I, “which is a great comfort.”

“Ay, Helen’s coming on grand,” said Nelly. “She’s a discreet young woman, the schulemistress: and the bairn’s shewing is maist beautiful. I hae a notion o’ bringing her up to be a mantua-maker, Miss Marget, for though I carena for thae pingling genteel trades mysel, she is but a slim thing for service, and the schulemistress can learn them that also, and it’s a’ ae charge. I canna say sae muckle for Johnnie. The callant learns not a haet that I can see but some new way o’ playing at the ba’, and swinging on ropes and singing—and that’s nae profitable thing to pay a wage for, forbye spending the bairn’s time.”

“And what think you of the lectures, Nelly?” said I.

“Indeed and I think muckle ill o’ them, Miss Maitland,” said Nelly. “They say

it's to gie the men rational amusement, and keep them frae the public. Maybe it may do sae, I kenna, for my guidman was never ane that frequented publics, but just used to spend the nicht in his ain house, as the father of a family should, sometimes looking ower the bairns' copies, or taking a spell at an auld book, or cracking. But noo they hae gotten him out to thae lecturings, and the auld fuil body, he's proud at what he ca's improving his mind, and here Menie and me are left the leelang nicht our lane, and Sandy either at the lectures or following the pleasure o' his ain will. I am maistly driven to gang and rug the auld man out, whiles—by the lug and the horn."

"But you might go yourself, Nelly," said I.

"Me, Miss Marget!" said Nelly. "My certy! that wad be letting the tow gang

wi' the bucket; and wha would look after the weans, or mak' the parritch, or keep a'thing gaun within and without—and you wadna hae me to leave Menie wi' the care o' the house. It wad set me brawly, nae doubt, to be learning the way to read poetry. I'm jealous the Psalms o' David, whilk is the only poetry I am like to read, wad be scarce the better for sic expounding."

"And has the gentleman been long lecturing, Nelly?" said I.

"Near a month, Miss Maitland," said Nelly.

"Dear me!" said I. "I am surprised I never heard of it before. But truly I have been taken up about other things."

I was vexed to see, when I rose and came away, that the good intent of the young man, Mr. Allan, was like to be the means of enticing men from their own firesides, and breeding dispeace at home:

and truly it was a most daft-like thing. Lectures three times in a week to the folk of Cruive End! If it had been the very preaching of the Word itself, I would not have thought it wise—but speeches about poetry! Truly I know not what Mr. Allan could be thinking about.

So I continued my walk on to the school-house. The first place I came into was the lower end, where were the bits of girls, and it was just a pleasure to see the forms full of sedate things, sewing at their seams, for they had got the most of their lessons past. The mistress was a young-like woman, with a subdued, quiet look, and a widow's cap, the which made my heart warm to her, seeing it was clear she had known trouble.

So, from that, I passed into the other big room, and my mind was filled with wonderment, when I found no bairns therein, but

only forms and desks, and stands with bits of pictures and lessons hanging upon them, and no mortal to be seen. I heard a noise, though, and there was an open door, so I went out. And, lo! I was in a big playground, with two or three tall, high things erected in it, with ropes hanging from them, and bairns fleeing round, swaying on the ropes, and the whole place filled with a flood of uproarious callants.

“Johnnie,” said I, for it chanced that my eye fell upon the bairn, Johnnie Bisset, “what has become of the maister?”

“Yonder he’s,” said the boy, and away he went with his game, as it was natural for a bairn to do, without heeding me.

So I looked round about, and certainly I did see, in the midst of a crowd of callants playing at the bools, a little body that looked as though he had come to man’s estate, with a harsh voice, and a head of

black hair. But it came not into my head that it could be the maister, till, maybe noticing me standing there bewildered-like, he came forward to me; and after I had spoken something about the school he said,

“In my opinion, ma’am, *this* is the place for teaching—here it is that one sees the passions and evil propensities developing themselves. I could undertake to do more good to a pupil in the play-ground in a day, than I could accomplish in the school in a year.”

“Maister! maister! it’s your turn,” cried out a boy, and away the body went.

Dear me! unless I had seen it with my own eyes, I could not have believed it. To think that a man in his right mind, could try to bring up bairns in a grave and serious country like Scotland, by means of playing with them at the bools; or that a young man in authority, like Mr. Allan, should

endeavour to regenerate a whole people, by bringing strange men, three nights in a week, to learn them how to read poetry right !

Truly, as Mrs. Elphinstone said, it was a wonderful generation !

CHAPTER III.

UPON the next morning after that, when I was sitting in my parlour sewing at a seam, as was my wont, I heard Jenny let somebody in at the outer door, and in a while she came ben, bringing in Nelly Bisset, the woman that I had had the converse with at Cruive End. And truly, I marvelled at the grief and trouble of Nelly's face, which, in ordinary times, was a face both blythe and sensible; and Jenny also looked vexed, as if she had been hearing of some misfortune. So Nelly, poor woman, waited till Jenny was away, and then she just burst out :

“ Oh, Miss Maitland, my Sandy !”

And with that, she lifted up the ends of her shawl to her eyes, and rocked herself upon her chair, in sore tribulation.

“ Dear me, Nelly !” said I, “ what is the matter ?” And truly, I was feared in my own spirit for what she would say, for the young man, her son Sandy, was a mason and a quarryman, and it might have been some accident.

“ Sandy ! Oh, Miss Maitland, *my* Sandy ! my ill bairn ! He was listed to be a sodger yestreen, and me dwelling peaceable at the fireside, and thinking no evil. What sall I do ? What sall I do ? And the auld man greeting like the very bairns—and the house desolate ! Oh, Miss Maitland !”

And the poor woman Nelly, in her sore tribulation, lifted up her voice, and wept.

So I tried to comfort her in my small way, minding her that He that sent the

evil brought aye good out of it, and asking her if nothing could be done to set the poor misguided lad free of his bondage.

So Nelly put force upon herself, as I could feel by the shaking of her frame (for I had laid my hand on her shoulder in my endeavour to comfort her), and wiped her cheeks with her shawl, and said she to me :

“ I came na here to greet, Miss Maitland—I can do that at hame ; but they say that siller will redeem the puir prodigal, and—ye’ll think me but a bauld woman to come to you on sic an errand but I canna, I canna, Miss Marget, gang frae door to door, and publish the backsliding o’ my ain bairn—and—we haena a’ the siller.”

“ How much will it take, Nelly ?” said I.

“ They say twenty pund,” said Nelly. “ Wae’s me ! that I should ken o’ sic things for my ain hand ! Twenty pund, Miss

Maitland, besides the auld man's charges gaun into Edinburgh to bring him hame; for they sent him to Edinburgh this morning, him and a wheen mair, the scum o' the countryside, Miss Maitland, and *my* bairn amang them—*my* Sandy!"

And the distressed woman's tribulation burst out again.

"Whisht, Nelly!" said I. "If the lad is delivered, it's my hope he will repent and mend, and we must just put up with the scorn; and truly, you are no the first."

"Ay, Miss Maitland," said Nelly; "and I hae said that to mysel ower and ower again; and so did Menie, when the auld man's gray hairs were weet yestreen wi' his greeting. But when it comes to ane's ain turn, Miss Marget, the comforts that ane could say to anither are a' turned to gall; and micht I no also gar the neighbours ca' me Mara, seeing, the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me!"

So I went to Grace's little desk, that was standing upon the table in the window, and opened the drawer in it, where it is my wont to keep my siller, and I found, (for seeing that we live in a most quiet manner, Jenny, my maid, and me, we are at wonderful little expense), that I could give Nelly, poor woman, the half of the sum she was wanting, so I said :

“ Here are ten notes, Nelly ; they will aye be some assistance, and if you have no way of getting the rest yourself, I could speak to the minister, my brother.”

So Nelly was very thankful, and said she :

“ We have the ither ten oursels, Miss Marget ; and there's odd shillings about the house, that will pay the auld man's charges. And Menie, she's away this morning, to try if James Bandster, that is head man to Mr. Forrest, of Woodlands, will hire her for the shearing, for we maun mak' up the siller

somegate. And if Sandy—puir Sandy!—will but settle to his wark again, and the auld man's spared, it's my hope we'll be able to pay ye back the siller sune, Miss Maitland; but out o' your debt we'll never be! Only I ken it's aye a pleasure to your ain kind heart to do a guid turn."

"There is no hurry about the siller, Nelly," said I, for she was a most decent woman, and I could have trusted her with more than that. "And Menie is but a delicate thing to go to a harvest-field; and shearers are in no manner good neighbours for the like of her. Would it not be better to get her a place?"

"I wad not like to have her serving folk that were just suchlike as oursels," said Nelly. "Waes me, I am not minding how sorely we are humbled since yestreen—but I ken o' nae guid place, and we maun a' work noo because o' the siller. It's naething for gentles that can pay it ony time to be

awing ither folk, but it's a weary burden on a labouring man."

"I might speak to Mrs. Elphinstone," said I. "They are aye needing maid servants about a great place like Lilliesleaf."

"I kenna Miss Maitland," said Nelly, "if Lilliesleaf would be muckle better than the harvest rig; it's no right to mint an ill word on the Laird, for they say he's a guid lad, and never turns from the petition of a puir body; but, oh! Miss Maitland, thae weary lectures!"

"Do you blame them, Nelly?" said I.

"Ay, truly, Miss Maitland," said Nelly, wiping her eyes, for her trouble was softened, poor woman, with having met a measure of kindness and gotten the siller, "them and no other thing, for the lad bid to go to them, seeing that the Laird and the body that lectured, said they would elevate him, and do away wi' the difference between rich

folk and puir folk ; but I ken naething will do that, Miss Maitland, but the Gospel its ain single sel, and no even it, in respect of this world. So he gaed, my puir Sandy ! and came hame wi' his head fu' o' vain notions of how the world was to tak' up perfectness at its ain hand, and was growing better ilka day, fleeing in the very face o' Scripture, and on the nights when there were nae lectures, the lads behoved to meet to speechify themsels, and, frae that, they got to the public, and there, there would be debates among them, whether there had ever been a greater man in Scotland than Robert Burns, and sic like, and it was aye improving their minds, they said. And so they had fa'en in wi' the sodger officer, and he bid to speak too, wherefore should he no?—and got them into a lowe singing “Scots, wha hae,” and sangs like that, and telling his leeing stories. And so my Sandy, my puir bairn, fell into the snare. And, oh ! Miss Maitland, was it

no *their* blame wha led him away frae his faither's fireside, and wiled him frae the richt faith he had in his Maker, to trust to his ain puir strength, the broken reed?"

"Nelly," said I, "there is another Hand working in these matters, and we see not the end from the beginning. It's my hope that this tribulation will have an outcoming of good to Sandy your son, and also to more than him, and truly, I will take it upon myself to speak to Mr. Allan."

"And Miss Maitland," said Nelly to me, when she was going away, "you will ken I am most thankful for your kindness, though I am no guid at speaking; and we'll pay back the siller faithfu', and if there's ony turn that suld ever be wanted, if it was at the dead o' nicht, to rin ony gate or do onything, and ye wad just let us ken, we wad be sae blythe."

"Whisht, Nelly," said I, there is no hurry

about the siller. Doubtless, you might have got it from plenty folk more than me."

"Mr. Wallace, the minister, was down this morning," said Nelly, "having heard o' our tribulation, and he offered me the siller; but I could na think to tak' a shilling frae him, that has e'en ower little for himsel, and to spend it in sic a manner—and I wad hae sell't our hail providing, or I would have sought it from ane that might have cast it up in my puir bairn's face—and a' the puir bodies near hand ken they will aye get a kind word o' counsel at Sunnyside, and I thought ye wad rather I askit it frae you, Miss Maitland, than took it from the minister."

"You were quite right, Nelly," said I. So Nelly departed, saying she would come back and tell me, whenever they had any word of Sandy.

And truly I fell into a meditation after

she went away, thinking within myself what a merciful thing it was that when one sinned and fell in a family, the hearts of the rest, (I am meaning in a right family, where there was the fear of God, and affection one for another), were aye drawn out in an especial manner to win back and to uphold the transgressor. And the poor mother aye coming over that word *my*, '*My bairn, my Sandy,*' as if the poor lad's sore fault and backsliding was just another chain, binding him to her more than ever.

So upon the next day I saw Mr. Allan, riding slow and in a languid manner up to Sunnyside; for it seemed as if he had lost his old blythe spirit, and cared little now what he did. At first I thought he was not coming in, and was going to send Jenny to bid him come, for I wanted to speak to him about Sandy Bisset; but just as I was crying to her—he lighted down at the gate, of his own accord.

“ And Mr. Allan,” said I, “ I am most blythe that you have come in to-day, for I wanted to speak to you about a lad in Cruive End.”

“ You have heard the story then, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan, in a grieved way.

“ Yes, Mr. Allan,” said I, “ the poor lad’s mother was here yesterday, and sore grieved she was concerning his backsliding.”

“ Backsliding, Miss Maitland !” said Mr. Allan, in astonishment. “ I did not expect you to give it so light a name.”

“ Truly it behoves us to be merciful, Mr. Allan,” said I, “ aye remembering our own weaknesses. And the lad is but young in years, and, I am grieved to say, his mother blames for it the lectures that have been set up in Cruive End.”

“ I know—I know,” said Mr. Allan hastily, as if he was feared for me speak-

ing more. "And the poor mother would be in despair?"

"It is an ill thing to despair while there is any outgate, Mr. Allan," said I, "and Nelly thinks the lad's freedom may be bought."

"Of whom are you speaking, Miss Maitland?" said Mr. Allan, with a look of bewilderment.

"Of the poor lad, Sandy Bisset—George Bisset, the mason's son, Mr. Allan," said I, "who listed to be a soldier in a fit of sore folly. His mother was here speaking about buying his freedom, and in great tribulation concerning him."

"Another!" said Mr. Allan to himself, "and this is Novimundy's boasted progress! And my lectures were blamed in this case also, were they, Miss Maitland?"

"Yes, Mr. Allan," said I. "I am vexed to tell you that they were; for it is an ill

thing, at least for folk like them, to be drawn away, night after night, from their own household and fireside. If it was the very preaching of the Word itself, I would not think it right ; for you know, Mr. Allan, it is against nature to be aye living in public."

"I am learning that by stern experience, Miss Maitland," said Mr. Allan, gravely. "No, I see it won't do. This wholesale education will suit no class,—and the reproaches of these unhappy mothers!"—and Mr. Allan wiped his forehead, and bent his head upon his hands, with a grieved and troubled expression of face.

"There was nothing like reproach in poor Nelly's head," said I, "only she was sore bowed down with her affliction."

Mr. Allan started up, as if that was more than he could bear.

"Miss Maitland," he said to me, "you know not what affliction, how much heavier,

and less easy to remedy, I have been the means of bringing on other mothers in Cruive End."

"Dear me, Mr. Allan," said I, "what has happened?" Mr. Allan walked about the room a while, as was his custom when he was troubled; at last he said:

"It is a very painful story, Miss Maitland. You know a man called Peter Young?"

"Yes," said I. "I had converse with him no further back than Monday, and truly, he looked like a reformed man, only it is ill trusting to appearances."

Mr. Allan drew his handkerchief across his brow again.

"On Monday night, Miss Maitland," he said, "a cattle dealer from the north was travelling home; he had past Woodlands' toll, and was driving quietly along, intending to pass the night at a little inn on the road-side, where he was expected, when he was set upon suddenly by a party of ruffians,

who robbed, and nearly murdered him, and then, placing him insensible in his gig, suffered the frightened horse to gallop wildly down the road, calculating, no doubt, that if the body was found, their victim's death would be attributed to accident. Fortunately the horse was used to the road, and found its way to the inn, in time enough to save its master's life."

Mr. Allan stopped, as if the story was overcoming him.

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

"The man has some knowledge of the country," said Mr. Allan, "and was able to give information as to his assailants yesterday. He saw their faces, and swears positively to Peter Young. And the last of the story is worse than the first, Miss Maitland. From inquiries which have been made, it is clear that several young men belonging to decent families in Cruive End are inculcated with him. Young himself and another

gipsy fellow are in custody. One of the unhappy lads has fled; the others may be in the hands of justice by this time; and of all this misery and shame, the blame is mine."

And Mr. Allan sat down, and covered his face with his hands.

"Oh, Mr. Allan," said I, "that is sore news. But say not the blame is yours—they might have fallen into temptation any way. But who are the poor misguided lads?"

"The son of John Gellatly, is one," said Mr. Allan, in a troubled voice, and without lifting his head. "Young Robert Blair is another. I did not hear the name of the third, but he has fled—and these lads are ruined, character and mind; and the responsibility is mine. Who can their friends blame but me?"

There was little spoken between us for a while after that, for truly I was greatly

troubled concerning that news, seeing the like of it had hardly happened in the countryside in my remembrance, and it was a matter of shame to the whole neighbourhood that such folk should be among us. Also I did not want to make light of it before Mr. Allan, seeing it might be the means of leading him to right views.

So Mr. Allan was the first to speak.

“Miss Maitland,” he said to me, “will you give me your nephew’s address? He is near Edinburgh, I believe, and will, perhaps do this for me—I mean, procure the discharge of the lad Bisset. That must be done without loss of time, and I cannot well go to Edinburgh myself just now.”

“But the old man is going in, and has got the siller, Mr. Allan,” said I.

Mr. Allan’s face grew red.

“That must be *my* work, Miss Maitland, and not the father’s,” he said. “They must have suffered sufficiently, without in-

curring pecuniary loss too. I wish it were as easy to restore the other unhappy lads. But all that can be done, I will endeavour to do. I hope a short imprisonment will suffice: that scoundrel, Young, has been so clearly the tempter."

"Imprisonment!" I cried out, "Oh, Mr. Allan, could they not be sent out of the country till the blast blows by? for they would never get the better of the ill name."

"They must," said Mr. Allan, in a firm, stern way, "if it was once over—the punishment, I mean—their future shall be cared for. If I have helped to ruin the lads, I will at least not leave them now—and they may recover themselves yet."

I shook my head.

"Do not, Miss Maitland," said Mr. Allan earnestly, "do not destroy my only consolation. If it is possible to make up for my first false step, it shall be done. What is Mr. Claud's address? I will write to him immediately."

“ Dourhills will be enough, I think, Mr. Allan,” said I, “ for a minister is commonly well-known in his parish, and it is near Edinburgh, you know. But Mr. Allan, the lectures can be in no manner to blame, for the leading away of the lads. I believe it was them that hurt poor Sandy Bisset ; but the other lads might be wild lads, and have no right principle before—and the lectures themselves were not learning them ill. You are taking overmuch blame on yourself now.”

“ The fellow, Young,” said Mr. Allan, looking up, (for I had given him paper, and bidden him write his letter to Claud, seeing it was near time for the post going away), “ was Novimundy’s great example of the success of his system. He held him up as a trophy at all times, and got myself even to notice him ; and so young men, who shunned his company before, were led into it. And the fellow is a clever scoundrel. He has

considerable satirical powers, I hear, and had also managed to throw some romance over his crime. I do not say that the mere abstract nonsense which Novimundy pours forth so fluently could occasion this of itself; but it most unhappily, has brought together a skilful tempter, and unformed lads susceptible of temptation; and so we just return to our starting point, Miss Maitland—my folly in expecting to regenerate a people by such means as these.”

“And what will you do now, Mr. Allan?” said I.

“Send back Novimundy to the Mechanic’s Institute that brought him forth,” said Mr. Allan; “and henceforth eschew all regeneration that professes to be merely intellectual.”

“Truly, Mr. Allan,” said I, “it is not easy dealing with you hasty young folk, for you are aye running into extreme things. If you were sending the poor man away, he

might maybe lose his bread, and the understandings of the folk are aye the better of being cultivated."

"I promise you, you shall be pleased with my next plan," said Mr. Allan, with a kind of subdued smile; "and Novimundy shall not want bread either."

So the young man wrote his letter, and great pains he took, writing it twice before he was pleased with it, and reading the second copy over many times, with a face of consideration. Also when it was put up and sealed, I saw him look at it with a kind of anxious smile, like what comes upon folks' faces sometimes, when the heart is sick—stealing over his pleasant countenance; and truly, I saw there were two reasons for him being so anxious to write to Claud, part for the sake of Sandy Bisset, doubtless, but part also because it was aye keeping himself before the mind of the bairn, Mary.

So, two or three days after that, having gotten no word from Nelly Bisset, and being anxious in my own mind to hear about her son, I went down to Cruive End to inquire. And when I was nearhand the house, I met Menie, her daughter, and she told me that they had heard word from Sandy that morning, and that Claud, my nephew, (the young minister Menie called him) was at the place in Edinburgh as soon as her father, and bought the lad off; and that her father and Sandy, poor man, were coming home the next day, with all the siller.

So I went on to the house with her, to say a word to Nelly, and in the kitchen, before I went in, I saw two men sitting—the one of them being a small person with uncommon fair hair and wearing spectacles, by reason, as it seemed to me, of having tender eyes; the other a lad of an uncommon pert-like manner, and of a stunted growth,

having sandy hair upon his head and no much of that.

“I knew not, that you had strangers, Menie,” said I.

“It is Mr. Novimundy, mem,” said Menie, “and the ither lad is a cousin o’ our ain, a travelling merchant frae England. He’s well off in the world, and has siller in the bank, but he’s ower conceited. You will, maybe, mind of his faither, Miss Maitland? They ca’ him Andrew Skirving.”

“Will he be come of the Skirvings of Neeps, Menie?” said I, “for there is many of the name in the countryside.”

But I mind not Menie’s answer, for we were just going in at the door. So Nelly said she would have been up in the morning to tell me the word, but for the coming of the lad Andrew Skirving, who, being a stranger, needed to be attended to; and then we fell into a converse concerning Peter Young.

“ They say the young Laird’s sore ta’en up about it,” said Nelly: “ if he has not gotten an auld head yet, he has aye a young heart and a maist kindly ane, as I can testify. I saw him mysel gaun into John Gellatly’s house no long since, and it maun be a comfort to Janet, if onything *can* comfort ane that has a bairn in sic a heavy sin and misfortune.”

“ But, mother,” said Menie in a shame-faced manner, “ George Gellatly threeps he kent naething ill about it, but he just gaed neighbour-like wi’ Robbie Blair, in the thought that it was the Earl’s factor, that has been meddling wi’ the tacks o’ the cottars at Springside, and it was only to fear him and there was nae robbing in their head—and John Gellatly says George never tell’t lee a’ his days.”

“ I’m afraid a judge and jury will pay very little attention to that, Menie,” said the lad,

Andrew Skirving, with a smile as if he could speak with authority. "I never was present at a trial yet, and I've had some experience in my day, where the defendant did'nt vow he was innocent."

"But ane can easy tell the odds between truth and a lee," said Menie.

"Ah, that's all you know," said the lad, "*I* would'nt believe a defence like that, if *I* were on the jury I know."

Menie gave an ill-pleased look at him, but did not say any more.

"I am feared Robbie Blair kent mair o' the ill than George did," said Nelly. "Waes me, it's aye somebody's turn, but he has nae mother to break her heart about him, only there's that puir lassie, Beenie Laing, and the very time was set for their wedding. Oh! Miss Maitland, and to think that a' that suld come o' ill company."

The small gentleman, Mr. Novimundy,

had been going to speak two or three times before that, but now he turned to me, and said he :

“ I trust, madam, that you do not agree with the ignorant people who lay the blame of these follies on my course of lectures.

“ Ignorant !” said he, “ I heard Nelly Bisset whispering to herself, ‘ My certy, lad, but ye’re no blate ! ’ ”

“ Truly, Sir,” said I, “ I am no able to say, seeing I know not what the preachings were about.”

The lad, Andrew, laughed in an ill-bred manner, and Mr. Novimundy gave an angry-like look at me, and then he went on.

“ The subjects, madam, of my lectures, were of the highest and most elevating kind. I designed, and Mr. Elphinstone had the full intention of carrying out my theory, before these accidents occurred, to let the young men of Cruive End have the full

benefit of that course of mental training which Mechanics' Institutes, and other educational establishments, secure for their compeers in large towns, in accordance with the liberal and progressing spirit of the age—this young gentleman is an instance of their beneficial power.”

Young gentleman!—Nelly Bisset's nephew, a travelling packman, from England!

The lad gave a smirk, and said he:

“Yes, Mr. Novimundy, country people have strange notions. My own sister, when she visited me lately in England, had actually more pleasure in sitting at home sewing, than in listening to an excellent course on the Characteristics of the Age, from which I got many new ideas. I told her, too, that she might never have another such opportunity—and even a *soirée* of our Debating Society, where I myself was to speak—I could hardly get her to go to that.”

Mr. Novimundy looked at his watch.

“Mr. Elphinstone is to meet me here,” he said, “and I may have time to set you right in regard to my system, madam, if you will permit me. My belief is, that the world is progressing rapidly in a course of mental development—that we, for all the highest purposes of life, are a step before our fathers, and our children will be before us, and, in this state of progress, it becomes the duty of every one, and especially of young men, by all means, and in every available manner, to improve their minds, and keep up with the age.”

“I will not cast out with you about the last thing, Sir,” said I, “for, doubtless, the Almighty’s gifts should be aye well guided; but I have more years on my head than you, and I am feared this ill world will scarce be mended by its own hand. Truly I see not myself how this generation is better than the old one, only I am, maybe, no a good

judge; but are you sure you are taking a right plan for the betterment of the lads?"

"Oh! there is no fear of that," said the lad, Andrew Skirving, with a confident laugh. Mr. Novimundy also gave a smile, as if it were at my ignorance, and said he:

"At our institutions in towns, we have lectures, evening classes, and libraries, and we encourage the young men to exert their own energies and talents, in societies like that which Mr. Skirving has just mentioned, where important subjects are discussed among themselves, both by written essays and by speeches."

"Like as, whether Robert Burns was the greatest man in Scotland or no," said Nelly; "begging your pardon, Mr. Novimundy, but an there had never been anither in the world like him, what were the lads to be better o' that?"

Mr. Novimundy gave her an angry look, but just went on again.

“The young men acquire the power of speaking fluently and easily in public, madam, and in this age, that is of the greatest importance. You could not estimate the good done by these societies and lectures, in expanding the mind, unless you saw them in operation, or were brought into contact with the young men cultivated by their agency.”

The young man, Andrew, drew himself up in a conceited manner, and laughed, as if he would have said: “Look at me.”

“And when it is all done, Sir,” said I, (for truly, when folk are improving the land, it is aye for the sake of a better harvest), “what are the lads to do with it?”

“Madam!” cried out Mr. Novimundy.

“Eh, Miss Maitland, and that’s true,” said Nelly, “my cousin, Marget Lamb, was

married upon a man that played the fiddle, and I've heard her near greeting mony a time, at it thrum thrumming through the house at a' seasons ; but preserve and deliver us frae a man that made speeches ! The fiddling wad be naething to that."

"And is it possible, madam," said Mr. Novimundy, looking at me through his glasses in a severe manner, "that you would desire to keep the poor ignorant of all the refinements of life ; that you would build up the old barriers between them and education ; that you would smother talent, merely because it was found among *the poor*."

"At no hand, Sir," said I, being in a manner angered at the body ; "and I would not call my old neighbours 'the poor' either, as the new-fangled folk of this generation do. I would have the lads read books, wheresoever they could lay their hands upon them, and truly, I would counsel Mr. Allan to let them read their books at home, where

other folk might have the benefit as well as themselves ; and I would have their minds guided to all manner of wise and high thoughts, as becomes folk made in the image of their Maker, though it is dimmed and broken by reason of a fallen nature ; but I would not learn lads that are in no degree more sensible than their neighbours, to set themselves up as guides and exemplars to other folk. And if there should in truth be a greater spirit than common among them, be not you feared, Sir—the light will aye make itself seen.”

“Thank you, Miss Maitland, for your exposition of *your* plan,” said Mr. Allan’s voice behind me ; and when I turned round, there was he coming in at the door.

So I shook hands with him, and said I, “I am blythe to hear, Mr. Allan, that the matter is scarce so bad as you thought.”

“It is bad enough still, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan. “The lad, Gellatly, I believe, is perfectly innocent; but Blair knew the real object of the attack better. The other one—his name is Waters—it is perhaps not right to rejoice at such information, but I assure you, Miss Maitland, it was the greatest possible relief to me to hear that his character was very bad before, and that this can make him very little worse. He has escaped, however. *He* was another of your disciples, Novimundy.”

“That is my misfortune, Sir, not my fault,” said Mr. Novimundy, with a firm-like look, which made me better pleased with him.

“Truly, no,” said I; “and you are no doing right, Mr. Allan, to cast it up to the gentleman. And that will be Thomas, Gideon Waters’ son. He was ever an ill lad.”

So there was some more converse, and Mr. Allan said :

“ In respect for the feelings of these afflicted families, I would like you to suspend your lectures, Novimundy. Suspend them at present ; they can be decided upon finally afterwards.”

“ Very well, Sir,” said Mr. Novimundy, in a stiff manner. Doubtless, the poor man was not like to be pleased, and it was also putting in jeopardy the winning of his daily bread. “ Do you desire the library to be closed also ?”

“ I see no particular use for that,” said Mr. Allan, with a smile. “ No one’s morals will be jeopardized, I fancy, by associating with the books. And come to Lilliesleaf to-night, Novimundy. I want to consult you.”

Whereat, the poor man’s brow grew clearer again. Truly, it was not right to blame him, for it was only his trade after all.

So, having spoken to Nelly in a most kind manner, and bidden her send her son to speak to him at Lilliesleaf when he came home, Mr. Allan departed with me, and walked with me to Sunnyside; in which walk, I mind not that there was anything in the converse that I need to write down here.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next month after that was an especial epistolary time. I think not I ever got so many letters in one while before, for between Grace and Mary, they kepted me that I had one mostly every morning.

For Grace, the bairn seemed in a state of darkness and perplexity, as folk might be, groping in a dark room, and knowing all the time that the opening of a door or a window, if they could but win to it, would bring light. It seemed to me, that her kindred, among whom she was dwelling, bid to

have some reason for keeping her as she was, for she said it was like as if they set a watch upon her, to keep her from getting out any place, without some of them with her, so she had never had an opportunity of seeking out Mr. Monteith.

And the letters of the bairn Mary, brought tears into my eyes often ; no that the general tone of them was so mournful, but now and then, at the end, there would be a question, no plainly about Mr. Allan, but aye as I could understand, the which was a plain evidence to me that the heart of the bairn was clinging to some hope concerning the young man. And truly, it did seem to me, that what had passed had wrought a change in Mr. Allan. For the answer of Mary, seeing he also had a perception as well as us, that it was given against her own heart, and only because she could not be wedded to any but a god-fearing man, had wakened the lad to consider in a right and serious manner the one thing need-

ful, which the bairn descried the want of. Also the misfortunes that had come to pass in Cruive End, had given him a view, as I thought, of the vanity of trusting to his own strength, or to the strength of any frail and sinful man.

He came many times to see me in that season, and then he would just sit for maybe an hour at a time, sometimes no speaking half a dozen words all the while, but aye, as it seemed, ruminating in his own mind. He had been uncommon kind to the Bissets in regard of Sandy, and had employed him, and also his father, building a new bridge over the Sedgie Burn, at the place where it is widest. And also, when the other lads were examined before the Sheriff, Mr. Allan had got an advocate from Edinburgh to plead for them, and there was good hope that George Gellatly would get clear off, Mr. Allan coming under a bond for him, and that Robert Blair's punishment would not be heavy, seeing it could be proved, that it was all a plan of

Peter Young's, and that the lad, being young, had just been led away. But that was not settled at the time I am writing about.

So the autumn went by, slow enough, as I mind thinking at the time, though, seeing there was little come to pass in it, it looks short now, when I turn back to it in my memory. The crops were mostly all in, for it was a good year, and the month of October was drawing near its close, in a melancholy manner to me and Jenny my maid, seeing we were so much alone, and no even Mary coming glinting in upon us now and then, to comfort our hearts, as she had done the winter before. The October time, when the days are drawing in, and the long nights beginning, has ever been a favourite time of mine; for though the heart rises with a blythe summer day, yet the summer night, pleasant as it is, brings aye a lone and sorrowful feeling into my spirit, I know not wherefore.

Nevertheless, that October was in no manner

a season of cheerfulness, for seeing the bairns, poor things, were in their tribulations, it was not to be expected that my mind should be without a burden. So it chanced that I was sitting by the fireside, myself, sewing at a seam (it was a garment for a baby if I mind right, for Beenie Throuther, the foolish bairn, who was married upon James Edie, the hind, just before Grace went away, had had twins, and having only a scant providing for one bairn, and no thought of two, needed to be helped upon the occasion) and no in any very blythe frame of mind, upon the afternoon of one of these gray October days when the month was far on.

It was ever a most quiet place, Sunnyside: if there happened to be anything in the town, either of rejoicing or lamenting past the common, you might hear a soft and far away sough of it, but when things were in their ordinary way, as they were at that time, there was no sound came through the thick thorn hedge, and

except for the fleeing about of the leaves that had fallen, which was but a melancholy sound, and Jenny's croon ben in the kitchen, which was a pleasant one, though she was no great singer, there was quietness all round about me.

So I sat there and sewed, as I was saying, most part of the afternoon, till just when I was thinking of crying upon Jenny to bring ben the tea, I heard some kind of a conveyance stop at the gate, and then somebody came to the door. I was feared that it might be Mrs. Elphinstone, so I just sat still and listened, and lo ! at the very end of Jenny's croon, there uprose a perfect Babel of noises, so that I thought not but Jenny was losing the pickle of ordinary sense she had in common times. So with that I went cannily to the window and looked out, and I had only time to notice that it was a post-chaise that had driven to the door, when somebody came

fleeing into the room, and I was straightway gripped on either side. I know not what came over my eyes.

“Mary!” said I, “bairn, is this you?”

But there was one also on my other hand. Bless me, it was my dear bairn Grace!

I could not say a word. The two young things were there, I had only a perception of that, and by and bye, they set me in my chair, with their arms, poor bairns, meeting round about me, and it was hearing a sob from one of them—I mind not whether it was Grace or Mary, that brought me to myself again.

And the joy of the two was just like to overwhelm me—in especial Mary’s—for the bairn Grace, though she had gotten a womanly look that made me wonder, just lifted in her stool, and sat down at my feet, the way she had done when she was a little bairn, and drew my hand over her shoulder, and seemed as if she would have been content to it that way for hours, and was not caring

for speech ; but Mary was mostly out of herself. It seemed to me that she could not bide still, nor be silent a moment. And no mortal can tell the joy and the trembling that were together within my spirit.

“ Grace, my dear bairn,” said I, “ how is it that you have gotten home? My mind is troubled within me for all my joyfulness. Have you come away in a secret manner? Tell me, like a good bairn.”

Grace looked up into my face with eyes like sunshine, and the blythest smile I ever saw.

“ No, aunt,” she said, “ I have not run away.”

“ But, Grace,” said I, “ it’s no right to tantalise me in this manner. I can scarce believe my own very eyesight ; and till you have telled me, I cannot be sure in my spirit, that the Lord has indeed brought my own bairn back to me.”

“ There is no fear, aunt,” cried out my

niece Mary. "Grace is quite safe, though everybody in Burrowstoun was a Lennox. Grace, begin at the beginning, and tell my aunt the whole story."

Grace laughed.

"Aunt, I have come home, my whole great self—clothed with the mightiness of Oakenshaw — and only encumbered with a guardian, who has committed his guardianship into your most kind and gentle hands."

"To me?" said I, "was it your father?"

"No, aunt," said Grace, lifting up her head in her old stately way, "a charge that had been in his hands would do but little honour to you. It was not my father."

"Whisht, bairn!" said I, "it is your part to honour him, whatever other folk may do."

"But the story, Grace, the story!" cried out Mary.

"Are you not weary of hearing it, Mary?" said Grace. "Aunt, Mary is the most unsympathetic of girls. All yesterday and all to-

day, has she been rejoicing over the troubles of a young lady, to whose kindness I owe my freedom—my well-beloved cousin, Harriet Lennox.”

“Bairns—bairns!” said I, “is it your purpose and intent to bewilder me altogether? What has that to do with Grace coming home?”

“Will I bring the tea, mem,” said Jenny, opening the door, and looking in with a blythe face. “Miss Grace is sair changed, I reckon, if she doesna like her tea; and the strange young woman, that’s ben the house, says that neither Miss Grace, nor Miss Mary, have tasted a thing since seven o’clock in the morning, but a bit nip of nonsense biscuit,—and the like o’ that is out o’ the question for young folk!”

“Yes, Jenny,” said Grace, “by all means bring the tea. Mary and I were a great deal too pleasantly occupied on the road, to think of such vulgar things as eating and drinking. My aunt says ‘yes,’ Jenny, bring the tea.”

“And there’s the strange man, Miss Grace,” said Jenny; “he’ll no bide to get a meal o’ meat, for he says he maun meet his maister, somegate up the country the nicht, and he’s wanting to ken if you have ony word.”

Grace started up, and got her purse, and took out, I know not how much, but I saw the glittering of golden coin, and said she bid to go and speak to the man, who was a servant, in a douce and becoming livery, that had been sent to take care of the bairns, as I heard after. So I bade Jenny try and get him to take something to refresh him after his travel, and both Grace and Jenny went out of the room.

“Mary,” said I, “what is it that has wrought this? Has our Grace truly come home, no to go away again?”

“Grace will tell you all the story herself, aunt,” said Mary; “but she is free from these people in Edinburgh; and Mr. Mon-

teith will let her live here, or wherever she likes, if you are with her. Aunt?"—and the bairn, after speaking that very quick, stopped in a perturbed manner, and looked in my face.

"It's my prayer and hope that everything will wear round right, Mary," said I. "Truly, it looks to me as if the dew was falling upon the pleasant young man that brings blessings with it. But what has Mr. Monteith to do with Grace?"

"Everything, aunt," said Mary; "and her father nothing. But here she is. Grace, you have no idea how curious my aunt is; but the story, the whole story—begin at the beginning."

Grace laughed.

"Aunt, I am afraid you are growing angry with us for carrying this so far. I am to have no bondage in future, but the pleasant one of your own will, and, for a time, Mr. Monteith's. Mr. Monteith is—"

"The story, Grace—the story," said Mary.

“Tell me the story, then, Grace, my dear,” said I, entering into the blytheness of the bairns, “seeing it will not content Mary if I hear it any other way.”

But Grace had not begun, when Jenny came in with the tray and the tea.

“Eh, mem!” said Jenny to me, “wasna it a providence that I bakit the scones, and Miss Grace sae fond o’ them? and soupler anes never came off a girdle. But the strange young woman, Miss Grace? I’m doubting she’ll hae been used wi’ a muckler house, for she gies strange glances, and maybe she wadna like to sleep in my bit place. Maun I pit her into the best room?”

“It is Jessie, my maid, aunt,” said Grace, “whom I have mentioned to you so often. She will soon get used to Sunnyside, Jenny, and you will like her, I am sure.”

“But will Miss Grace and Miss Mary bide in their auld room?” said Jenny. “And

what maun I do wi' the strange young woman?"

"I will tell you after, Jenny," said I; "there is plenty of time, and the bairns and me will consult about it; but be careful of the stranger, and make her as comfortable as you can."

So Jenny departed out of the room, being greatly pleased because Grace was praising the scones; and we sat down at the table. So I craved a blessing myself, and then Grace began:

"Well, aunt," she said, "as I must begin at the beginning, and tell my story in due course, on Monday last, (it was the Thursday afternoon that), I was sitting in my own room alone, when I had a visit from my cousin Harriet, looking so particularly gracious, and speaking so condescendingly, that I felt assured she wanted something. Harriet, you know, aunt, has always been my especial patron in Mrs. Lennox's family."

“ So you have told us in your letters, Grace,” said I.

“ Harriet did me the honour to enter into conversation with me,” said Grace, “ and began with asking me about you, aunt, to conciliate my favour, I suppose, to the request she was about to make, and so gradually introduced it: ‘ Cousin,’ she said, ‘ I want you to be my confidante; Madeline is *so* selfish, and Fred says he is quite sure you will help us.’ Having no idea of what the duties of a confidante were, I made no professions, and Harriet went on.

“ ‘ You know, cousin, Fred Bellendean, poor fellow! is very—very much attached to me, and mamma is so heartless—so cold—I don’t believe she ever loved anybody all her life, and she forbids me even seeing him, because Fred is not rich. He is Bellendean of Bellendean, you know, and has a good estate; but when he came of age, he was generous, poor fellow! and got into debt, and so his estate

is in the hands of a set of horrid trustees, who have let Bellendean to some vulgar rich person, and mamma has forbidden him even calling.'

"Harriet paused to take breath, and cried a little.

"'But, Grace, dear,' she resumed, 'it's not at all likely, and I am sure you would not think it right, that Fred and I should give up our own happiness for mamma. So, if you will only help us, we shall not need to care for her.'

"'Harriet,' said I, 'I am sure you know very well that anything I could say to my aunt, would only make her opposition stronger.'

"Harriet stared at me with a look of perfect amazement, and then laughed vehemently."

"'Upon my word, Grace!' she said, 'that simple, sheepish look of yours is inimitable. You surely cannot imagine that I would think of asking your *intercession* with mamma?'

"I was growing very much astonished, and I

suppose looked so, for Harriet indulged herself in another long, but somewhat nervous and hysterical laugh."

"Dear me, Grace!" said I, "what could the young lady mean?"

"I soon became aware of that, aunt," said Grace. "If all Harriet's intentions have as pleasant results she will be fortunate; but—well, never mind, Mary, I will go on in the most methodical manner possible. Well, aunt, Harriet continued:

"'We have got all that arranged, Fred and I—trust us for that. Did you never hear of Gretna Green, Grace?—but if you are only a reasonable, kind creature, cousin, as I am sure you will be, we may be so comfortable.'

"I could only ask in still greater astonishment what she meant.

"'Why, it's very easy seeing what I mean,' said Harriet, peevishly; 'I have told you that these odious trustees have shut poor Fred out of his own house—let it to some low

tradesman—a Glasgow cotton-spinner perhaps! and you know, cousin, I am quite sure mamma will be very angry, and will not let us come here; indeed, I don't wish it either—and to go to Fred's lodgings, or to some miserable two-roomed cottage would break my heart; now if you would only let us have Oakenshaw, I should be so happy?

“‘But I have no power over Oakenshaw, Harriet,’ I said. ‘Is it not my father you should ask; you know whether Mr. Maitland is likely to favour your scheme or not?’

“‘Don't be silly, Grace,’ said Harriet, impatiently. ‘Mr. Maitland, indeed! I should as soon think of asking Madeline—she had a *penchant* for Fred once herself you know, and no one could conceive how spiteful she is—and I'll tell you, Grace—only remember mamma and my uncle would kill you if they had the least idea you knew—Mr. Maitland has no more to do with Oakenshaw than I have; not so much, indeed, for I am sure you will let us

have it till we can get Bellendean.' You may imagine, aunt, how I started. 'It would be very hard, cousin,' said Harriet, 'to be disappointed now, when we have everything arranged, and Fred and I, (poor Fred! he is so very, very much attached to me!) have been so long engaged; and the lease of Bellendean will be out before you come of age—at least, not very long after—and I am sure if you had asked me such a thing I couldn't have refused you.'

"'But how could I, Harriet?' I inquired, 'if I were willing. How could I give you Oakenshaw?'

"'Only a word to Mr. Monteith, Grace, dear,' said Harriet, 'and I am sure Fred and I would never forget your kindness.'

"'And what has Mr. Monteith to do with Oakenshaw, Harriet?' I asked.

"'Why, everything, to be sure!' exclaimed Harriet. 'Isn't he your guardian? and has he not been receiving the rents in trust for

you ever since Mrs. Maitland died, all but that paltry three or four hundred a-year for your education. You will do it now, Grace, I am sure you will !'

"Your guardian, bairn !" said I: "is it possible, Grace?"

"I could hardly believe it was possible at first, aunt," said Grace, "but there was no disbelieving Harriet; she was too anxious about her own object to care for her mother's. I don't know how much longer our conversation might have continued, Harriet supplicating with all her might, and hinting at the motives of my father and Mrs. Lennox, even more plainly than I wished; while I, in spite of my own excited feelings, tried to dissuade her from her purpose—when I was suddenly summoned to my aunt's presence. Harriet grew very pale, begged me to 'say nothing to mamma,' and said she would remain in my room till I returned. I went with some trepidation, which was by no means diminished, when I found

my father beside my aunt. They were exceedingly gracious, however, my aunt telling me that she had sent for me to say, that I was to accompany them to the country on Friday; and bidding me consult with Madeline and Harriet about my dress, which Mrs. Lennox said was too plain. My father also made some suggestions as to the colours becoming my dark complexion, in a tone of such unparalleled kindness, that I wondered what was coming next.

“ At last he took up a pen, and seemed to be writing his name, carelessly, two or three times, and then he offered it to me saying: ‘ I believe, I have never seen your signature, Grace. I must have you write to me when I leave Edinburgh. See, sign your name here, I shall have your autograph at least.’ I took the pen with some little apprehension, and noticed he withdrew the paper on which he had been writing, and gave me another folded in a peculiar manner, desiring me to

put my name close to the fold. I got curious, and managed to turn the paper itself half over. It was written, on the other side, in a stiff upright hand; and, to tell the truth, aunt, looked exceedingly like one of those law papers which we used to see in the hands of our father, and Mr. Elder, of Bourtree, when Mr. Blythe of the Meadows, died, and seemed to want nothing but the signature, which my father was so kindly pressing me to affix. He observed my hasty and frightened glance, and held the paper tightly down before me. I said there was some mistake—he could not want me to put my name there.

“ ‘Pshaw! an old letter,’ he said, ‘come Grace, don’t be a little fool. Do what I desire you. There now—don’t falter, write boldly.’

“ I put my pen to the paper and then stopped again. ‘If you will tell me what it is, Sir,’ I said, ‘I will sign it immediately.’

“ I saw Mrs. Lennox and him exchange glances, but he kept his temper wonderfully.

“ ‘What fancy is this you have got into that foolish little head of your’s, Grace?’ he said, ‘Why, what possible good could your signature do me? Come, let us be done with these heroics, and give me your autograph.’

“What good indeed, I should have echoed an hour before; but fortified by Harriet’s communication, I kept my position, and said as respectfully as I could: ‘If you will read this to me, sir, or suffer me to read it, I shall sign it at once whatever it may be, but I cannot do it in ignorance.’

“My father glared at me—positively glared, and then seizing my hand, brought the pen hastily down upon the paper, and tried, though with an affectation of playfulness, to make me sign, producing, however, to my joy, only a great blot—on seeing which he dashed me away, and tore the paper into fragments in unconcealed rage.

“ ‘Go to your room, Miss Maitland!’ commanded Mrs. Lennox. ‘We have, truly in

these days, most edifying instances of obedience. I did not believe self-conceit and importance could go so far. Go to your room. We shall not desire your further company to-day!

“So I made my escape. But really, aunt, I am almost out of breath, and my story is not more than half done.”

“Take a rest, Grace,” said I, “and your second cup of tea, like a good bairn, before it gets cold—although, doubtless, I would like to hear all the story.”

“Well, aunt,” said Grace, “when I went up-stairs again, I found Harriet waiting for me in alarm, and was immediately questioned as to what I was wanted for. I told her it was nothing in the least referring to her, but that my father had wanted my signature to a paper.

“‘Oh! don’t for the world sign anything for my uncle,’ exclaimed Harriet. ‘Why he might borrow great sums of money, and leave you to pay it when you came of age. He

would think nothing of squandering all you have, and I declare I could not think of *your* money being spent as my uncle would spend it—you who have such an abhorrence of a life like his. I am sure, Grace, it would be very different with Fred and I, if you were helping us—we should be so happy and comfortable. And then, cousin, if we were at Oakenshaw, you could come and live with us. I am quite sure you don't like to live here, mamma is so ill-natured.'

"I think your tastes and mine would not agree very well, even in Oakenshaw, Harriet," I said. "And then, to elope—it is so unwomanly—so wrong—"

"'Yes, Grace,' said Harriet, rising, with a more elevated expression in her face, 'if one were leaving a delightful home like what one reads of in novels, with mother and sister so tender, and so pious, and so good. I don't think one would have run away from that

Sunnyside you were telling me of, but it is so different here. Mamma has no objections to Fred, except that he is poor; and how much do you think either Madeline or she would care, if they were never to see me again? now, it is quite another thing with Fred. Now, Grace, will you let us go to Oakenshaw?’

“And did you, Grace?” said I.

“I did not say ‘No,’ aunt,” said Grace; “I could not in gratitude, and so Harriet left me, telling me she took my silence for consent, and that ‘Fred’ and she would be safely lodged in Oakenshaw on Thursday. She promised to visit me again in the evening, and tell me all their arrangements. So, after Harriet had left the room, I consulted Jessie as to the possibility of making our way to Broadlee. Jessie did not know where it was, but thought if we got ‘a noddy,’ there was no fear of us. So we waited till we heard my aunt go out,

and managed to steal away unperceived, after many reconnoiterings, and in due time, with the assistance of the noddy, we reached Broadlee. And with that, aunt, commences the second fytte of my most eventful history."

"And that is just the part, Grace, my dear," said I, "that I am most anxious to hear about, only the tea will be cold for Jenny; and we will send it away first."

So I gave thanks, and when Jenny had taken away the tray, Grace began again.—

"We found Mr. Monteith at home, ~~aunt~~, to my great satisfaction, and he received us most cordially, but was perfectly amazed when I told him the ignorance I had been kept in, and as indignant as amazed.

"How did you find all this out, Miss Grace?" he asked. 'I was giving you credit for being a distrustful little monkey. I beg your pardon, but you know my privileges now, at least. How did you find it out?'

"I stammered something about my cousin,

for I did not want to betray Harriet, after her good offices."

" 'Your cousin? come, that's not so bad,' said Mr. Monteith. 'Which of them, Miss Grace? I shall owe her a kindness for it.'

"My cousin Harriet told me, on the occasion of confiding to me an important secret of her own, Sir," I said, half wishing he would ask me what it was, for I did not feel very comfortable about encouraging Harriet in such a scheme.

"But he only laughed, and said, 'Well, well, some love affair, I fancy—she should have her hands full,' and then, growing suddenly grave, he went to his writing-table, opened an inner drawer, and taking out a letter, put it into my hands, without saying a word."

"And what was the letter, Grace?" said I, noticing that the bairn stopped in a confused manner, as if she thought shame to say any more.

"I am ashamed to tell you, aunt," said

Grace, "it was addressed to Mr. Monteith and signed 'Grace Maitland,' and conveyed a request that he would give Mrs. Lennox a hundred pounds for me, as I wanted to make a present to an old friend."

I lifted up my hands in wonder and astonishment, and the bairn held down her head in a shamefaced way, as if it was a grief to her even to tell about an untruth like that.

"A hundred pounds, bairn!" said I. "Bless me, that is more than three times as much as Mrs. Lennox used to send for you in a whole year."

"Mr. Monteith asked me, aunt," said Grace, "if that was my writing, and, of course, I told him it was not, and mentioned the attempt of the morning.

"'Like a law-paper,' he said. 'I don't see what good that would do them, as you are a minor, unless it was to impose on somebody.'

I mentioned Harriet's suggestion.

“‘To borrow money?’ said Mr. Monteith. ‘Well, it might be so. I stood out so long about these last drafts of yours, (for that is but one of many *billet-doux* which your aunt has done me the honour to write in your name) that I suppose Mrs. Lennox would think there was no more hope from me. Upon my word, Miss Grace, I was inclined to call you a most extravagant young lady. To borrow money—humph, that cousin of yours is too sharp for a girl.’

“We had some further conversation on the same subject, and then Mr. Monteith asked me if I was going to stay with him till I was old enough to take possession of Oakenshaw, saying he would get a widowed cousin to reside with him if I did so, and urging me very kindly to remain in Broadlee. I thanked him, aunt, but said, I had a very dear friend, parting with whom had been my greatest trial, and whom I

earnestly desired to be with again ; and on his inquiring your name, I told him.

“Aunt, I never saw a face change so. He had been smiling and looking at me with a particularly kind expression. Now he started, turned grave, threw himself upon a chair, and sat in silence, looking at the ground for I do not know how long.”

“What said he, bairn?” said I, though there was a mist gathering before my eyes, and I perceived not right where I was, nor anything, but that the bairn’s voice trembled.

“He said nothing, aunt,” said Grace, “for many minutes, and then he raised his head and tried to look as easy as he had done before, and said, ‘Margaret Maitland engrafted on Grace Hunter—a rare combination!’

“And then he asked about you, aunt, most earnestly, and told me, not as you would have done, but with something of testy impatience, that he was alone in Broadlee, and you in Sunnyside, all for a punctilio ; and then he

paused suddenly and said he did you injustice, and begged my pardon—it was a subject he never could enter upon. So now, aunt, you know who my guardian is.”

Truly, my heart had forewarned me long since: and Harry Monteith was an old and solitary man! But it became me not to occupy myself with the like of these long-past things, when the bairns were in their joy beside me: so I said, in as blythe a way as I could, “But you are no done yet, Grace.” So the bairn began again:

“I told Mr. Monteith, aunt, that Mary was at Dourhills, and he promised to go down with me to Oakenshaw the next morning; which we did, and Mary can tell you the rest.”

“But did your aunt seek after you in no manner, Grace?” said I. “And what about the young thing, your cousin?”

“Mr. Monteith had an interview with Mrs. Lennox in the evening, aunt,” said Grace. “I begged of him that the letters might not be

mentioned; and though I suppose she would be very much enraged, Mr. Monteith said nothing about it. He did not seem to have the least doubt of his own power to keep me from them, and of course that made me confident. He did not wish to speak of them at all, I thought. And for Harriet, I told him her story when we were travelling to Oakenshaw, and he laughed and shook his head—said they were both very silly, but it might be a new chance for them, and that he would not interfere. So I ventured to tell the house-keeper at Oakenshaw to receive them. Do not look grave, aunt. I owed my freedom to Harriet, and Mr. Monteith did not forbid me.”

“I misdoubt greatly if he was likely to be a good judge,” said I. “To be sure, he is a man of years now. But, Grace, my bairn, wherefore had your father and your aunt kepted you so?”

“My father, aunt,” said Grace, holding down

her head, "is, unhappily, a man of little principle, and little income, and many wants, and Mr. Monteith thinks they had intended to keep me in perfect ignorance of my real position, until, by my coming of age, they had got the revenues of Oakenshaw into their own hands. When my poor mother died, Mrs. Lennox had affected great grief for her, and great affection for me, and undertaking to have me brought up in the country, as she said my delicate health required, had obtained a promise from Mr. Monteith that, in consideration of my father's circumstances, he would not mention the way in which the property was settled. Several people knew it, of course, but the world did not; and that was all Mrs. Lennox cared for."

"But, dear me, Grace!" said I, "if the witless folk had let you stay in Sunnyside, they might have gotten it all their own way; for what was the like of you, an innocent bairn, heeding about siller?"

“I have thought that often, these two or three days, aunt,” said Grace, “but scheming people are strangely short-sighted, and defeat themselves sometimes by over-wariness.”

“And, aunt,” said Mary, “do you not want to hear how Grace came to Dourhills?”

“Doubtless I do, Mary,” said I, “I doubt not but Claud and you would be mostly out of your wits; and lone he will be, poor lad, being left to himself.”

“It was the day before yesterday,” said Mary, “and Claud had just begun to write his sermon, and I was wondering what my mother would be doing without me at home, when Grace came in. Oh, aunt! you should have seen Claud! He threw the introduction to his sermon into the fire, though it was a very fine one, he was so rejoiced.”

“Indeed I did not think it, Mary,” said Grace, “or else Claud has changed the fashion of his rejoicing strangely since I saw him last. I thought he was positively sad; and, what

do you think, aunt? Claud, our Claud, was going to address me as Miss Maitland!"

"It was strange, too," said Mary, in a meditative way. "I am sure, aunt, for half an hour after Grace told us about Oakenshaw, Claud never opened his lips—but sat still, and looked at the fire, and sighed. It *was* very strange. I did not think of that."

It was not what you could call a strange thing, that the bairn Grace, sitting as it were, just on the fire, should have much colour in her face at that time, for all so pale as it was for ordinary; and besides that, she was just drooping her head in an uncommon manner at the moment, the foolish bairn!

"And then," said Mary, "we came away this morning, and Mr. Monteith's man came with us, to take care of us—and—here we are."

"And is it really so, Grace, my dear bairn!" said I, "that you have come back, no to go away again?"

There was a smile upon Grace's face—I know not what the bairn might mean—but she said :

“Never again alone, aunt, so long as I live; but when I go to Oakenshaw by and bye, you will go with me, will you not?”

I mind not right how I answered, for it was a confused night, for all so joyful as it was.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN I wakened the next morning, I could hardly bring myself to a right knowledge of what had passed the night before, for first I thought that I myself was back again into the season of my youth, and Harry Monteith was coming about the Manse, as was his wont then, before his transgression ; and then it seemed that Grace had never been away ; and, by and bye, it all floated upon my mind, and I put up my thanksgiving within myself with a fervent heart, for had not the Lord returned

double to me for all my tribulations on account of the bairns.

So having a desire to see them with my own eyes, and be sure in my mind that they were truly safe at home, I rose up out of my bed, and went cannily to the door of the room where the bairns slept, (as I have before said, it was a little chamber, and opened off mine), and opened it in a small degree, just to look in. And truly there they were, the young things, Grace and Mary, sitting upon one seat, and reading their morning chapter out of one Bible—the dear bairns!

So when we were all down the stair, and had called in Jenny, and likewise Jessie Gray, Grace's maid, we went to our exercise, in the which, for I know not what reason, the bairn Grace, had begged me to sing that Psalm:

“ In dwellings of the righteous
Is heard the melody

Of joy and health, the Lord's right hand,
Doth ever valiantly.
The right hand of the mighty Lord,
Exalted is on high,
The right hand of the mighty Lord
Doth ever valiantly."

And truly, it was a season when my heart was stirred up within me, to give thanks to Him who had taken away and given back again, whose Name is blessed for evermore.

"In dwellings of the righteous
Is heard the melody
Of joy and health—"

The bairn Grace, repeated to herself, after the exercise was past, the figure of her swelling as it seemed to me, and her eyes, so deep as they were, like to overflow with a still and quiet joyfulness.

"Wherefore do you come over the psalm in that manner, Grace, my dear?" said I, "doubtless, it is a grand psalm, and there are few even in the Book itself that have so many owerwords,

for you will notice that there are more near the beginning, in especial that one swelling up as it does, "They compassed me about, I say : they compassed me about;" but wherefore, Grace, were you saying over that verse?"

"Because the contrast struck me so, aunt," said Grace, "between a godless household and the dwellings of the righteous. There was neither joy nor health yonder, but here, and at the Manse, how different!"

"Grace," said Mary, "people say the service in the English Church is more impressive than ours. Surely you don't think so."

"No, Mary," said Grace; "I do not think so, but I am a very prejudiced person you know; and all that I can say of it is merely how it strikes a stranger. The English people seem more impressed by mere seeing and hearing than we are. We in Scotland think more, I fancy (do not smile at me, aunt) without expressing our thoughts so much. No doubt the English service impresses greatly those on whose reverence it has an hereditary claim, but it fails with us. And only

think, Mary, how you would like to see our father or Claud alternating in the solemn services of the church with professional singers."

"It's no possible, Grace," said I, "that the English ministers, being men of much learning and also of godliness, would do the like of that upon a Sabbath-day. I mind being once in the Catholic Kirk, in Blackfriar's Wynd, when I was at the school in Miss Scrymgeour's, and there were such things there, whereat I mind I was greatly astonished; but it is surely not so in the reformed Kirk of England."

"It is so, indeed, aunt!" said Grace, in a smiling way; "that is the impression it left on my mind, at least. I saw a bishop once, and a great band of clergymen consecrating a church, and I felt almost ashamed to see the venerable, dignified man, and two or three of his older Presbyters—ordained ministers of the Gospel, to say nothing of their temporal rank—actually performing their parts in turn with a choir of singers. It jars upon our Scottish feelings strangely."

“But then I have heard, Grace,” said I, “that it is grand to hear the music.”

“I am no judge of music, aunt,” said Grace, “but I know that I should be far more impressed by hearing the simple folk of Pasturelands sing one of David’s magnificent Psalms, to some such plaintive and moving tune as Martyrs or Montrose, than by the chanting of all the liturgies that were ever set to music—but then I am prejudiced—very much so, and no proper judge.”

It so happened that Jenny came into the room just at that time, with some of the breakfast things, and Grace began to ask her how she was pleased with Jessie, who was a wise-like young woman, douce in her demeanour, and of a pleasant countenance.

“She’s weel enough,” said Jenny, for, as I have before had occasion to mention, Jenny was a thought jealous of anybody but herself working about us. “I hae naething to say again the strange young woman, for she looks

to be quiet and discreet, and no gi'en to claver-
ing, like the maist feck o' her kind. But it's
far frae being a wise-like thing, Miss Marget,
—begging a' your pardons for using the free-
dom—that the Mistress should be putten intill
the chalmer in the wa', and the maid hae the
big room, and ane canna tell wha micht come
inbye, that it wad be a credit to gie up-putting
to. Sae I was just thinking to mysel that we
might get James Rule to pit up the bit bed,
that was ance in the bairn's room in the Manse,
(in the auld Mistress's time): it's no that wee
but what it might do for ae young body brawly
—in my bit chalmer, and I could tak' the garret
to mysel."

"It's no an ill thought, Jenny," said I; "but
we will take counsel about it after."

"And if ane might ask, Miss Grace," said
Jenny, "what is the strange young woman to
do? for though she washed up a when cups
and saucers this morning in a genty way, it's
clear housework is no what she's used to, and I

am jealous the cratur taks it ill to see an auld body like me gaun about my common wark, and she sitting wi' her hands afore her ; for she looks to be a well dispositioned lass, and to hae a right respect for years—no that I am sae dooms auld either—but she'll be grand at sewing it's like."

"Jessie will find some way of employing herself by and bye, I dare say," said Grace, "but you must let her get accustomed to Sunnyside first, and you know, Jenny, there are few people so industrious as you."

Jenny was aye pleased to get a good word, so she said, "Weel, weel, Miss Grace, it's a fuil's part to roose ane's sel, but I had aye the name o' being eident ; and the strange young woman, I cannot but say, has a discreet regard to them that's aulder and wiser than hersel. Sae I will speak to James Rule about pitting up the bed."

So the morning wore past, and Mary told me that she had written to the Manse the day

before she came away from Dourhills, and had asked her mother to send down Robbie with the gig for us that day, for the bairn insisted, in her bit positive way, that we bid all to go and stay awhile in Pasturelands, that the Minister and Mary my sister, might also rejoice over the bairn Grace.

So it had worn on to about twelve in the day, and the bairns were at the window looking for Robbie and the gig; and Mary began to ask me if she had left her little blue Testament at Sunnyside, for she had missed it when she went to Dourhills. So I said she had left it, and Mary said she was blythe of that, for she would not like to lose it, seeing it was a present from me.

“But I am misdoubting you have lost it, Mary, for all that,” said I. “Doubtless, I did see it once lying upon that little table in the window, that Grace is leaning upon; but a reiver came, and carried it away.”

The bairn Mary, looked at me in a strange

manner, and grew red, and shook like a leaf in an April wind—it is wonderful how quick of understanding bairns are at times: and Grace lifted up her head, and glanced at me with a smile.

“Have you reivers about Sunnyside, aunt? I am sure there were none before I went away,” said Grace. “And poor Mary’s little blue Testament—what a shame! I have mine safe enough.”

Mary had turned her head to look through the window the time Grace was speaking, and in a minute she cried out, in an agitated way,

“Oh, aunt, there he is! Do not tell him that I am here!” And with that, the bairn ran out of the room.

“Who is it, aunt?” said Grace, looking up to me quick. “There is a young man at the gate. Is it Mr. Elphinstone?”

“Has Mary told you about him, Grace?” said

I, seeing by a glance from the window that it was indeed Mr. Allan.

“Yes,” said Grace; “that is, Claud gave me a sketch of what has passed lately; and I have gathered something from Mary’s hints and half confidences;—but there he is coming up to the door. He has a good face, aunt—and what a hurry he is in!”

“I am feared, Grace,” said I, “that Mr. Allan may have taken you for Mary. Whisht! he is speaking to Jenny. Now mind, like a good bairn, and do not say that Mary is here, unless it be needful for the truth’s sake.”

So I had hardly got that spoken, when Mr. Allan Elphinstone came suddenly in at the door. He shook hands with me, and then, when I was going to tell him that this was Grace, he went past me quick, and said he:

“No, I do not need to be introduced to Miss Grace Maitland. We agree so perfectly on some points, that I hope we cannot fail to

be good friends. Miss Grace, when you are here, I am sure your friend cannot be far distant. Will you tell me where Mary is?"

Grace looked at him and at me, not knowing well what to say.

"Miss Maitland," said Mr. Allan, poor man, in his agitated, hurried way, "is Mary here?"

"It's no in my power to tell you an untruth, Mr. Allan," said I. "The bairn is in Sunny-side."

"Then you will let me see her?" cried out Mr. Allan. "Miss Grace, I beg of you to intercede for me. Miss Maitland, let me speak to Mary. I will say nothing to distress—nothing to grieve her; but my probation does not include this. She will surely not refuse to see me."

I tried to quiet Mr. Allan, and to say that the bairn was wearied, and new off a long

journey; but nothing would serve him but just aye "Mary—Mary."

I never saw the like of the young man. I had noticed that Grace was reading him with her eyes, as she was wont, when she was a little bairn, and it seemed to me that she was satisfied, for, after she had heard me trying to put him off for a while, she rose up, and went away out of the room, and up the stairs.

The door was scarce closed upon her, when Mr. Allan sat down, and was silent in a moment, waiting with a troubled spirit, for he knew as well as me, the errand that Grace had gone on; and truly, my heart was sore for the young man, to see the weary looks he gave at the door; and also for Mary, seeing that, however it turned out, it could not fail to put her in a state of trouble, poor young thing. Grace had not been long away when there came a message to me, and I went to the room where the two were.

“Aunt,” said Mary, (she was perturbed, poor bairn), “do you think I should go down?”

“I see not what ill it could do, Mary, my dear,” said I, “and maybe it might do good; and you would not need to stay long.”

“Come, Mary,” said Grace, with a smile in about the corners of her mouth—for it is wonderful, whatever pain or trouble there may be in the like of these things, how bairns will aye find a measure of mirthfulness in them, “let us make a virtue of necessity, and do it with a good grace, since we must do it—always under protest, aunt, that as for this young Laird, we would not go so far as the window to see him. Come away, Mary, do you not see your hesitation makes him of too much consequence.”

I was mostly ill-pleased at Grace for bantering the poor bairn so, only I knew it was just to rouse Mary, in the which she was successful; so the two bairns went away down

the stair together, in a quiet way, Mary being maybe no altogether ill-pleased at seeing Mr. Allan, though she was feared and trembled in her own spirit, I knew, lest she should be drawn into connecting herself with one that feared not his Maker.

So I sat down to wait a while, thinking that I would let the young things get their meeting over before I went into the room myself. It was in Grace's little chamber I was sitting, and greatly I wondered when, a few minutes after, I heard a light foot coming through my own room, and heard my Grace's voice singing low the owerword of the song :

“Just to preserve the puir body in life,
I think I will wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I will wed him to-morrow.”

“Dear me, bairn,” said I, “wherefore have you left them? and it's no like you, Grace, to lightlie the troubles of our Mary, which are, maybe, sorer to bear than might be thought.”

“I do not hold anything that troubles our Mary lightly, aunt,” said Grace, and I saw that her eyes were glistening like as though they had been wet, “but your Laird of Lilliesleaf is quite too much in earnest to make the presence of a third party altogether agreeable at present. I wish most sincerely that the future of this Mr. Allan of yours, aunt, may be such as to remove Mary’s objections. I think he is just such a person as I should like to call brother.”

“And then the bairn in a manner would never need to leave home,” said I.

Grace gave a kind of a sigh. “You forget, aunt,” she said, “that Oakenshaw is far away.”

“No, Grace,” said I, “I do not forget—but families that have been bairns together are often blythe to meet in parish kirks when they are grown up, and have entered upon their warfare for their own hand; and seeing that you three are sundered, as truly, little else was

to be expected, it's a blessing that you are no scattered, one here, and one there, through all the country, but are just in two places, and even them no more than a day's journey from one another ; but was it no a wonderful Providence, Grace, that the lot should have fallen both to Claud and you in the same region."

The bairn turned round about, away from me very quick, and began to turn over the two or three books which, as I have before mentioned, were upon the little table.

"Yes, aunt," she said, speaking low, "it was wonderful, very wonderful, that of all the parishes in Scotland, Claud should have got that one ; perhaps it might be to give you another inducement not to desert me, aunt, another link of attraction to yon solitary Oakenshaw of mine. So long as Claud is in Dourhills, the people of Pasturelands will perhaps remember Grace Maitland."

"My bairn," said I, "think you we are like ever to forget you?"

“Not you, aunt, not you,” said Grace, “but Mary will have stronger claims upon her by and bye, and so will—all the rest—and poor Grace would be left alone in the wide world were it not for you—therefore, aunt, bear with me. Mind you are mother and sister, and everything else to me.”

“My dear bairn,” said I, “what has put it into your head to speak in so sorrowful a way? I wot well you will never lack friends. And we will be a blythe company at Oakenshaw, Grace, for I misdoubt we will find it no possible to keep the young man Claud, out of our house. But whisht, is that Mary?”

And truly it was Mary, and the bairn came in, in a subdued and quiet manner, and with a graveness about her, which, I was pleased to see, was more of consideration than of sorrow.

“Aunt,” she said to me, “are you not going down stairs?” And the bairn, for all her composedness, sighed sore.

“Come away, aunt,” said Grace, and she went before, leaving me to speak a word to Mary. “Mary, my dear,” said I, “how are you pleased with Mr. Allan?”

“I do not know, aunt,” said Mary, “I cannot tell what to do, but I am sure I want to do only what is right, and God will guide me. Go down now, aunt, and when he is away, you will tell me what you think of him.”

So I went away down, and Grace and me (for she had been waiting for me in the stair) went into the room together; and truly, the change in Mr. Allan’s look was just a pleasure to see, being like a man that had come into a clear and right road out of darkness and mists. I know not well what our converse was for the first while, seeing we were all in a manner confused, and knew not right what we were saying, but, at last, I tried to bring in something about Cruive End.

“And Grace, my dear,” said I, “there is one new thing you have to see, for thanks to

Mr. Allan, Cruive End is now mostly what you could call both bonnie and clean, which is a wonderful change to behold."

"I have heard of that, aunt," said Grace, in a smiling way. "I have heard of the regenerator of Cruive End, Mr. Elphinstone; and even that our old terror, Peter Young, had grown poetical and a florist, and that Willie Lightfoot wrote verses. I congratulate you on so successful an issue to your labours."

"Dear me, bairn," said I, "did you no hear about Peter Young?"

"I won't quarrel with you, Miss Grace," said Mr. Allan, speaking liker himself than he had done for many a day, "though I am afraid you are inclined to provoke me; and I am glad to tell you, Miss Maitland, that a favourable view has been taken of Robert Blair's case, and I hope he will very soon be free. I have seen him, poor fellow, and he is terribly weighed down by shame and grief—so much, that I think one may have good hope for

his future conduct. The girl, his betrothed, came to see him while I was with him. She has stood by him through all this bad report nobly; and in temporal matters, at least, I shall take care that she is no sufferer."

"And is Mr. Novimundy still at Cruive End, Mr. Allan?" said I.

"Mr. Novimundy, Miss Maitland," said Mr. Allan with a smile, "is at present delivering a course of lectures on 'The Passions, physiologically and pschyologically considered,' in his Alma Mater—his native Mechanics' Institute; and the whole machinery, whereby he was to raise the human nature of Cruive End to perfection, is broken up, with the sole exception of the library."

"But, Mr. Elphinstone," said Grace, "all this might have happened, though Cruive End had never heard a lecture; and all schemes of improvement fail sometimes. Have you not thrown away your theory too soon?"

"Tired of my toy, you would say, Miss Grace," said Mr. Allan. "No, I do not think

I can, in justice, be accused of that. At first I paid no attention to Novimundy myself. Yes, Miss Maitland, I understand that kindly sorrowful glance of yours—it was my dark hour—and it was not till I was fairly startled into observation by these misfortunes, that I saw the absurdity of the system—a parcel of heterogeneous unconnected lectures, delivered by a man of tenth-rate ability. No! I fancy it must fail everywhere, as well as in Cruive End, so long as a little knowledge remains a dangerous thing. You remember the lad Skirving, Miss Maitland, Mrs. Bisset's nephew? He came to Lilliesleaf with his repentant cousin, Sandy, and very much facilitated the breaking up of Novimundy's apparatus. He, with his conceit, and smatterings of information, is the best possible specimen of what the system can achieve; and I have no desire to people Cruive End with copies of either Novimundy or Skirving. So we must plan other plans, Miss Maitland."

"And what is your new one, Mr. Allan?"

said I, for I saw by the look of him that he had something more to tell us about. It chanced at that moment that there was the sound of a foot on the stair, doubtless Jenny going about her work, and Mr. Allan turned his eye in an anxious manner to the door, and waited till he saw that it was nobody coming in.

“I have the dim outlines of two or three plans floating before me, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan, eye keeping his eye upon the door. “In the first place, I am about to plant a new village in Pasturelands.”

“A new village, Mr. Allan?” said I.

“Well, not quite a village either,” said Mr. Allan. “Miss Grace, you will remember a tract of very wild muirland, between Lilliesleaf and Sedgie Burn; Malcolm’s Moss, so called in compliment to some hapless ancestor of mine, who lost his life upon it. Well, I plant my colony there.”

“Bless me, Mr. Allan,” said I, “it’s nothing but a peat moss!”

“There is a knowe at the end of Malcolm’s Moss, near the school,” said Grace, in a musing manner, “where a village might be planted, well. The moss is a dreary thing to look out on, certainly—but then there is Sedgie Burn and the school on the other hand.”

“Thank you for the suggestion, Miss Grace,” said Mr. Allan, growing blyther as he entered into his plan: “the knowe is the very place for the houses. But my colonists only go there on condition that in a very short time, Malcolm’s Moss shall cease to be a dreary thing to look out on.”

I myself was full of wonderment, thinking Mr. Allan was just away, chasing an impossible thing again, but when I looked to Grace, I saw she was started from her quietness, and was looking at Mr. Allan in an earnest manner. So she said:

“Go on, Mr. Elphinstone. I think I can see your plan already.”

Mr. Allan stopped again for a moment to

listen if anybody were coming, and gave a disappointed look at the door.

“ I will portion the Moss out, Miss Grace,” he said, “ in allotments for each family of my colonists, provide them with all the means of improvement, and trust to their own industry and energy (which we must stimulate besides, of course, human nature being, as I am forced to confess, no better than it is called) for making the wilderness a fruitful field.”

“ But is't possible, Mr. Allan ?” said I.

“ Quite possible, Miss Maitland,” said Mr. Allan blythely, “ what one man *has* done, other men can do, and my experiment is not the first. So I cannot claim originality. I took the suggestion from a theorist of a higher class than Novimundy—one of those ubiquitous Edinburgh ministers of yours, Miss Maitland, who can do every thing—and practical men give it their full sanction. So you will join me, I am sure, ladies, in wishing all manner of success to my small farmer tenants, who shall in a year

or two be peacefully paying me their rent for, and happily reaping harvests from, the bleak breadths of Malcolm's Moss."

"Seeing's believing, Mr. Allan," said I, "and, doubtless, if it has been done already, it may be done again; but, truly, it will be little less than a miracle to see anything but heather growing upon Malcolm's Moss."

So we had much more converse on that matter, Grace being greatly taken up with it. Also Mr. Allan told me he had gotten a young probationer, that was a friend of Claud's, to labour in Cruive End, and he was going to build a kirk, which I was most blythe to hear. So, having taken many weary looks at the door, Mr. Allan said to me :

"Will Mary not come down again, Miss Maitland? or is it my presence that banishes her?"

"The bairn is taken up in some way, Mr. Allan," said I. "Mind, she has been a good while away, and it would be hard if she might

not have her own will the first morning of her homecoming; in especial, seeing that Grace is here, and Grace, since she was a little bairn, has aye set her face against Mary being hindered of her own pleasure, saving it should be for a wrong thing; and the bairn is but a delicate bairn, Mr. Allan: it's no right to ask overmuch of her."

"I will go then," said Mr. Allan. "Miss Grace, may I not ask you to be my advocate? These two last months have learnt me many lessons; but Miss Maitland looks grave yet, and to Mary I am still only a godless man. May I leave my cause in your hands?"

I did not hear right what Grace said, but Mr. Allan turned round to me, and said his mother would be coming to see me; and just at that moment the boy Robbie came driving up to the gate in the gig.

"We go to the Manse to-day," said Grace. And so Mr. Allan left Sunnyside.

It was needful, without doubt, that the boy

Robbie and the pony Donald should both get some provender before they started again, and also that we should make ourselves ready; so Grace and me went up the stair. The bairn Mary was standing looking out at the window, in an earnest manner, but started away very quick when we went into the room, and seeing that we behoved to make some little preparation for staying awhile at Pasturelands, we had not much converse at that time.

It is not the wont of strong and healthful callants like Robbie, nor of such a little spirit of a Highland creature as the pony Donald, to bide long over what is set before them, so we were soon ready to go away. There was a number of young folk standing about the gate when we went out, so that I scarce thought we could ever get Grace into the gig, for the sough of her coming back had gone through all the town. And Willie Lightfoot, the little imp of a bairn, that I should say so, had slipped out

of the smiddy, with his blackened face and his little leather apron, and was standing high up upon the pillar of the gate, in among the withered thorns, waving his bonnet about his head, and crying "hurrah," till he lost his voice. It was ever an uncommon wild bairn, that, but in no manner of an evil disposition.

And at last we got fairly away upon the road to Pasturelands—the two bairns and me, by reason of sitting close, being all in the front seat, for it is a common thing in the country to make the seats of gigs wide and broad, to hold as many as possible, and Mary and Grace were but slim and slender bairns, as was natural to their years, besides that I myself had never any disposition to bye-ordinary stoutness.

I cannot but say it was a most blythe and pleasant drive, for the spirit of the bairn Grace rose, the moment Donald lifted his foremost

foot, and Mary, being in no manner disheartened, by what had come to pass that morning, was mostly as wild in her rejoicing as when first she arrived at Sunnyside; and as to myself, it's no to be denied that I was near as blythe as any of them, seeing my spirit is ever cheered within me at the joyfulness of bairns.

And so we got to the Manse, and truly, there they all were at the outer door, the Minister, and Mary my sister, and the two maids, and great rejoicing there was. So, when we got in, Grace's story behoved to be told over again, and great thanksgiving there was among us concerning her return.

It chanced, in the evening, that the two bairns and me wandered out by the Sedgie Burnside to get a walk—in the darkening I should rather say, for it was before tea-time, seeing the days were wearing short—and so, with much converse among ourselves, we came near to the door of Reuben Reid's school-house,

having first taken a look from the knowe over Malcolm's moss, which was a most dreary place to look upon.

The house in which Reuben had his habitation was a big house to be a country school, there being, besides the school-room itself, and the kitchen, and the bed-chambers, a little room to the front, where Reuben, poor body! kept his books and his writing things, and chiefly sat himself, for he had a lass to keep things right about him, seeing he was a careful body, and could make a little go a far way. So, Nannie being young, and in no manner graver than her neighbours, though she lived under the shadow of the Maister, had got out a while, that night, to some ploy or other, and Reuben, having doubtless felt cold, poor man! was sitting in the little room he named his study, with a plaid wrapped about him, fanning a bit new-kindled fire with the boards of an old book that some ill-bairn had torn the substance out of. So we entered into converse

with him—though Reuben thought shame, honest man, to have been found so—and he bade the bairns welcome home.

“Mair be token, Miss Marget,” said Reuben, “that I had a revolution in the schule on the strength o’t, headed by that wee fairy, Femie Telfer; and if I had not yielded in a graceful manner, and gien them the play as they wanted, I kenna what the little rebels might have dune—to me, too, their lawfu’ head and maister.”

“I would scarce have thought the bairns could have minded Grace so well,” said I; “but doubtless they are blythe of an excuse to get the play.”

“Na, I know not if the bairns would have had the discretion to carry the thing right out themselves,” said the Dominie, “though there’s nae want o’ smeddum among them—if it had not been for the young Laird; but he came to the schule upon his grand gray horse, and scattered his siller amang them, till the

bairns were louping daft to be down to Elsie Donsie's, at the Brig, to ware't on apples and sweeties. He's a discreet young man, the Laird of Lilliesleaf, and has a perception past the common, of the time to rejoice, and the time to weep."

It was plain to me that the Dominie, having a measure of pawkiness in him, gave a kind of glance at Mary, as he said that, and the bairn was standing looking down upon the fire, with a meditative face.

"But I am thinking, Mr. Reuben," said I, "you will not cast out with the play yourself, at an odd time."

"At no hand, Miss Marget," said the Maister, "for, saying it be on the Saturdays, my auld cronies there have mostly to bide still on their shelves, except when I take down the biggest of them whiles, to pit on the form when Bessie Donsie, or Annie Allan, or some more of the weest weans are at their copies, to let them get right up to the desk, for no man

knows the manifold cares that a teacher of youth has ever on his mind. And the most I am able for at night, after a long day's warstlin' with them, is maybe just a bit of the 'Assembly's Annotations.' It's a grand copy that, Miss Grace, the real auld edition. I bought it mysel for little siller, in a big stand, established solely for the sale of such precious merchandize, at the head of the West Bow, when I was a collegianer. Dr. Thrum, I mind well, offered me a whole golden guinea for't; but I had strength to resist the temptation."

"I hear you are going to have neighbours, Mr. Reuben," said I.

"I thought I had the news to tell you, Miss Marget," said the Dominie; "but I reckon you would get it before mysel. I have some skill in surveying and measurement, and the like, as ye ken, and the Laird had me out wi' himsel, and a great farmer frae the east country, this hail afternoon, measuring at the

Moss; but ye'll ken the new name o' the knowe."

"No, Mr. Reuben," said I, "I did not hear that," and the two bairns looked up to hear what it was.

"The Laird's gaun to build his houses thereupon," said Reuben, in a pawky way, "and most proper and right it was, that it should have a bonnie name. So he has called it Mary's Knowe, Miss Marget. Wha after, I cannot exactly condescend upon. Maybe Mary might be the leddy's name that was wife to Laird Malcolm, that died on the Moss; but I am in no manner learned in the history of the family."

"It is getting dark, aunt," said Mary, with a bit shake in her voice, going quick out of the door before me; and when we had followed her, I looked into the bairn's face, the which I could see plainly, for the moon was in the sky, although it was not what you could call full night, and Mary's eyes were shining wet,

though there was little like sorrow in her face—the innocent bairn !

It was a blythe night, that. I mind well after the tea was past, and the candles lighted, that we all drew in our chairs about the fire—even the minister himself ; for though it was a Friday, and he was not all done with his sermons, the bairns, Grace and Mary, went ben to the study, and in a manner imprisoned him between them, there being one upon each hand, so that he could not help but come back with them, to where Mary my sister, and me were sitting.

And I mind when the three came in at the door, so proud like about one another—the strong man, Claud Maitland, my one brother, with his high head, (wherein, though I say it, abode wisdom and godliness) rising above them, and the young things on each arm that were our pride and crown of rejoicing—truly my heart swelled within me in supplication, that

the blessing of the God of our forbears might dwell upon the father and the bairns.

So upon the next morning, early in the day, I saw the bairn, Grace, coming away from the window, with a smile upon her face; and when she had set Mary down at the table, to look at some books she had brought from Oakenshaw, she came and drew me to the window; and truly, there was the carriage of Mrs. Elphinstone upon the road, and Mr. Allan riding on his gray horse by the side of it; and before ever Mary knew, they were both in.

The bairn exerted herself, just in a wonderful way, to look as if the visit was nothing to her, and Mr. Allan, poor man, if he had not been among kent folk and friends, would have left but a strange notion of his thoughts and manners upon the minds of them that saw him, for one while he would sit, and never speak a word, but just look at Mary, and then he

would start, and begin in his old quick, rattling way, till he was breathless. Truly, the like of these things did not make me think any less of Mr. Allan, for I am necessitated to say, that I like not folk that are ever of so even and composed a mind that nothing will stir them, or put them off their ordinary ; but it was just a divert to see the two, and I think not I ever saw the bairn Grace so blythe.

Mrs. Elphinstone was greatly taken up with her, and would give a bit look, and speak a word to the bairn Mary, in a delicate way, now and then, which pleased me also ; for having in a manner got her son back again, after the while of wild fever he had been in, the heart of the Lady of Lilliesleaf melted within her, towards the bit delicate bairn that had the spirit to be so steadfast. And was not that steadfastness like to be blessed, that was working, no to the purifying of the young man's life only, but to the turning of the mother's heart ?

Before they went away, Mrs. Elphinstone gave an invitation to us all to come to dine with her in the next week, any day that would suit the minister. So we fixed that we would go upon the Tuesday, seeing I did not want to be long away from Sunnyside; whereupon, Mrs. Elphinstone spoke to Mr. Allan about going home to Lilliesleaf; but Mr. Allan heard her not—and I was obliged myself to bid the young man notice what his mother said, before he, in a most slow and unwilling manner, rose up to go away. And then Mrs. Elphinstone went up to Mary, and spoke low to her, so low that no one could hear but me, because I happened to be sitting beside the bairn.

“My dear,” she said, and truly, I thought her very voice changed the time she was speaking, “we are friends, are we not?”

Mary, poor bairn, was bewildered by such a question, and I heard not that she made any right or plain answer.

“You will come to Lilliesleaf on Tuesday,”

said Mrs. Elphinstone. "Nay, my dear, you must not shrink from Allan Elphinstone's mother. Shall we not let bygones be bygones, and be good friends now?"

And with that, Mrs. Elphinstone took Mary's bit little hand into hers, and touched Mary's white brow with her lip. How things in this mortal world will turn and change! Truly, when I parted with her that day, I was thinking more of Susan Græme, of Lochlee, than of the proud Mrs. Elphinstone, of Lilliesleaf.

It was but natural to think that Mary would be moved by what had come to pass that day, but the bit pride of the bairn, which I have before had occasion to mention, was so strong within her, that she abode still in the room, wanting us to think that she heeded not greatly—as if eyes so anxious as ours could be cheated that way; till at last, when it was clear that the bairn heard not what we said to her, and that her thoughts were elsewhere than about

her seam, my Grace took it out of her hand, and drew her away.

“Mary,” said I, to Mary my sister, when the bairns were out of the room, “for all folk say about Time, it’s just wonderful how little odds he makes when the spirit is the same. I was mostly beguiled into wondering this morning, where the old lady of Lochlee was, that Susan Græme should be in our house, her lane.”

Mary my sister, gave a smile, and said she, “That is a name we have almost forgotten, Margaret; I have never heard you use it since Mrs. Elphinstone came home.”

“She was never like herself before,” said I. “It is because our bairn has warmed her heart.”

My sister Mary sighed. “And so Margaret,” she said, “we will need to part with our Mary, after all.”

“Mary,” said I, “it made a sore hole in Bourtree when you came to the Manse.”

There was a smile came upon Mary's face.

"And Mary," said I, "what if the bairn had been married upon a minister in the north country as Jenny aye said?"

So Mary, my sister, went away to the window, and looked out to the turn of the road which leads to Lilliesleaf.

"Well, Margaret," she said to me, "I once thought of the Manse of Rures; but who could have imagined that our little Mary should reign at Lilliesleaf?"

CHAPTER VI.

It was a very pleasant season, that week that Grace and me abode at the Manse: for not only her home-coming made us blythe, but the light that there was upon the face of the other dear bairn, Mary, was just a pleasure to behold: so that the minister, and Mary my sister, rejoiced within themselves, that they had suffered the bairn's absence for a season, to get her home so well.

Upon the Tuesday, according to our appointment with Mrs. Elphinstone, we went to Lilliesleaf, though no pleading could induce

Mary my niece, to go with us. And Mr. Allan looked sore disappointed, and cared not, I think, that we should stay long, seeing he came away with us, to convoy us, as far as the door of the Manse, and even (for we could not do less than ask him in when he was there) abode a whole hour by the fireside. But it is little use entering into the particulars of that. Young folk have done daft-like things from the beginning of Time, and are like, for all that I can see, to do them to the end.

There had been a great rejoicing among the young Elders of Bourtree, about the returning of Grace and Mary. And upon the Wednesday night we had appointed to go to Bourtree, in a quiet way, mostly that the bairns might meet, and get their bits of friendship made up again.

There was a big family of the Elders, and pleasant bairns they were, and our two were in a bye-ordinary manner pleased, as was visible,

at the prospect of spending the night so. And about four o'clock in the afternoon, William Elder came in a conveyance, which the callant called a phaeton, to take over Grace and Mary, seeing the gig would not hold us all. And when we ourselves got into the drawing-room at Bourtree, the whole of the young folk were crowded about Grace—and Mary was sitting the furthest out of the ring, with Mr. Allan, no less, standing beside her. And how it happened I know not, but the two seemed in no manner ill friends.

“Aunt Margaret,” said the young man, William Elder, to me, “it’s all up with Rures.”

“Dear me, William Elder,” said I, “what like a way is that to speak?”

“Nobody’s listening,” said the blythe lad; “Lilliesleaf won’t trouble any one to-night, and all the rest are busy with Grace—and I say, aunt, I suppose I may set about fascinating Elizabeth Shepherd as soon as I like. Claud won’t meddle with me in that quarter.”

“I know not, Willie,” said I; “truly I have heard that Mr. Kirkman, of Dourbracs, has many daughters, but I am thinking they are but bairns yet; but you are a bold lad, to be so confident in respect of the discreet young lady, Mr. Shepherd’s sister.”

The young man laughed in his mirthful way.

“Yes, indeed, aunt Margaret,” said Janet Elder, who had come out of the ring to speak to me, (for they all called me by the same name as our own bairns, though I was not what you could call sib to them at all—at least, in no manner in the same degree.) “Willie is very confident; and Elizabeth Shepherd would have nothing to do with him, I know. Only look at Mr. Elphinstone, Willie, or even at Adam Blythe: they both look a great deal better than you, but they don’t think half so much about it.”

“Listen to her, aunt Margaret,” cried out William to me. “Confident am I, Janet?—

if I were as confident as you say, I should certainly try the power of my manifold attractions on Grace."

"Grace! Grace!" cried out Claudia Elder, one of the youngest bairns; "do you hear what Willie says?—he is going to set his cap at you," and, with that, there got up such a laugh among the young folk at Willie, as made him like to run away.

I should have said before, that seeing there were more daughters than sons in the Bourtree family, it so fell out that my brother, the minister's namesake, behoved to be called Claudia, and not Claud—for after Willie, who was called after his father's father, as was right, and Janet, then came James, who was after his own father, and Edward, after Edward Elder, the merchant in India—and then the minister was to get the first name; but it so happened that daughter came on the back of daughter, and there was no word of another boy. So the fifth little girlie, and a sweet

bit thing it was, was called Claudia Maitland Elder, which was truly a grand name, and quite out of the common.

Upon the next morning after that, Mr. Allan Elphinstone came to the Manse, so early that he was necessitated to bide a while at the gate, seeing we were at our morning exercise—and when he was let in, he came not to the room where we were sitting, but went into the study and abode there with the minister, I know not how long, but I mind it was a weary time, for Mary my sister, had to send away the tea to be kept hot, and it was a necessity that Betty should boil new eggs—the which circumstances remain in my mind, because eggs were scarce at that season, and Betty thought it was a great wastry. However, in course of time, the two came ben together, Mr. Allan having a face shining with joy and gladness, although there was likewise a measure of agitation about him—and my brother Claud,

with a wonderful unsteady look, at which I marvelled, as if he knew not whether he was most joyful or sorry. And by and bye, I know not how, the same look and the same feeling came creeping over us all.

I saw my sister Mary, the mother of the dear bairn, turning about her head from the table, to wipe off some wet from her cheek with her handkerchief, and I saw the bairn herself sitting shaking, and feared to lift her head; and I saw my Grace, with her hand upon Mary's shoulder, looking into Mr. Allan's face with those deep and earnest e'en of hers, as if there was not a corner of all his spirit but what she could fathom and read—and truly, it was a most open and kindly face, that it was just a pleasure to the eyes to see. And then I heard the voice of my brother Claud craving a blessing on the offered mercies, and on them that were to partake thereof, even on the household, and on all who were near and

dear to it. And then there was a mist came over my eyes, so that I saw not at that moment any more!

There was not much said in the way of explanation that morning, for we all understood without words that the thing was settled—that the Minister was satisfied, and the bairn herself had not said Mr. Allan nay.

“I wish Claud were here, Grace,” said Mary, when the breakfast was past, and we were sitting together in the window, Mr. Allan being at some distance, in the room, pretending to keep up a converse with Mary my sister, though his eyes were ever travelling our way. And then the bairn shaded her cheeks with her hands, and said low: “No, I do not wish Claud were here either, just now.”

“There is some one else looking wistfully at this corner, Mary,” said Grace, “so we can do without Claud to-day. We shall need his assistance bye and bye, you know, on a certain

important occasion. Now, Mary, like a good girl, do not look so pale: you make us grieve when we should be rejoicing. By the bye, I may not see the Laird soon again: I must go and ask him about the future village of Mary's Knowe."

And with that, Grace went away, no to speak to Mr. Allan, but out at the room door, and in a while so did I. And seeing Mary my sister, had her household concerns to give an eye to, in the forepart of the day, I misdoubt greatly that she had to come away too, and that the bairns would be left to their own cracks.

Upon the next day, Grace and me returned home to Sunnyside, driving in the gig, with Robbie in the back seat, to take it to the Manse again; and when we had gotten safe home, and were at our own fireside, we began to have much converse about Mary.

"I have a sore drither concerning it, Grace,"

said I: "no that I am doubting the young man, but only it is a great change in the family."

"So it is, aunt," said Grace, "but then—it must have happened sometime, and he does seem a very fine young man. Now that it is settled, aunt, we must do all we can to increase Mary's confidence in him. She could not live in distrust and doubt."

"And I think not, Mr. Allan will ever give her cause again," said I. "It's no like his natural habitude, Grace, my bairn, but the young man was thrown into temptation, and we are all frail."

So just as I said that, Jenny came into the room with a letter for Grace, directed in the fine pointed hand that ladies are all learned to write now, and of which you cannot tell one writing from another.

Grace laughed when she looked upon it, and after she had glanced down the page, she

looked over to me, and said, "Listen, aunt," and then began to read it out loud.

Oakenshaw, October 29th, 1842.

"My dearest cousin,

"We have got so comfortably settled in this dear old place, and Fred is so delighted with it, that I was sure you would be glad to hear how happy we are. We got off on Wednesday night, without any one having the least suspicion, for mamma was so dreadfully angry about you, that she could think of nothing else, and so I said I had a headache and would not leave my own room. I took my maid with me, for one would not like to be an absolute fright, you know, when one was going to be married, and she is such a faithful girl; and we stole out without anybody seeing us in the evening after dinner.

"We had a delightful dash over the country during the night. I did not feel cold in the least

degree, as I feared I should, for Fred had cloaks and shawls enough in the carriage to have furnished half-a-dozen young ladies for the whole winter, and nearly smothered me with wrapping me up. Thanks to Fred's good arrangements, we arrived at Gretna *so* early, that we had it all over comfortably before mamma and Madeline had opened their eyes upon the morning, and a delightful morning it was. Rather damp and chill-looking, you know, and the country is by no means picturesque, and once we got a glimpse of that flat, broad Solway, looking so motionless, and blue, and cold, that it made me shiver, but for all that, the morning was delightful.

“Well, then, Grace dear, we started off again on Friday because I wanted to have all our travelling over, and got to Oakenshaw in the evening, just in time to have dinner and make ourselves comfortable. I think we shall get on very nicely in the house, though it is *very* old-fashioned. Fred says there is excellent

shooting, and the house-keeper has really been very attentive, and had the rooms made positively enduring, that is, considering all the circumstances. I think you should write to Mr. Monteith though, and say that you have given me *carte blanche* for re-furnishing it, and that I shall send in the bills to him; for the furniture you know, love, is monstrous—one would hardly like to ask a party into such old-fashioned rooms. I fancy they must all have been furnished when your great grandmamma was married, and never touched since; but if you entrust it to me, I am sure you will be pleased; for every one allows that I have excellent taste.

“ And speaking of that, dearest Grace, I am sure I should be very glad, and so would Fred, if you would come and stay with us for a month or two. We could have your rooms nicely fitted up, and you need not think of putting us to inconvenience; for we shall never have any use for one half of this great

rambling house ; and then we could have a few nice parties, you know, to bring you out, and Fred has some delightful friends (I let one of them have a glimpse of your mamma's picture, and he quite fell in love with it) coming to pay us a visit ; and we have so many nice people in the neighbourhood. Do come, love ; and then you could help me to choose the furniture, if you liked.

“ I am sure I shall be very happy—and then mamma and Madeline can't have the least idea where we are—isn't it delightful ? I should like to see how they look when they hear that we are at Oakenshaw. It was so good of you, Grace, to let us have the house ; I don't know how to thank you, and Fred too, is so much obliged.

“ My maid Charlotte, has told me how to direct this, for she used to see the address of your letters sometimes. I am sure I should be very glad to send a present to your *bonne*, if you could tell me what she would like. She

must be a very good person, or you would not be so fond of her.

“ The housekeeper tells me that the young clergyman here is a friend of yours, so I have made Fred promise to ask him to dinner ; and, you may be sure, we shall take great notice of him, for your sake. I intend to go to church to hear him, too. And now, dear Grace, you must promise to write to me, and tell me how you are, and when you will come to Oaken-shaw—and with our united loves, (for Fred feels so much obliged to you),

“ I remain ever,

“ Dearest Grace,

“ Your most affectionate,

“ HARRIET BELLENDEAN.

“ P.S. Don't you think my new name is prettier than my old one? Mamma was in a dreadful passion about you going away, and she is sure to try some way of bringing you back. I heard them say something about Sir William

Martyn; don't listen to him, if he proposes to you again—it will only be a scheme of my uncle's; and Fred's friend, who fell in love with your mamma's picture (you know it is just like you) is such a fine fellow! If mamma should come to you, and seem very kind, (she can when she pleases) don't believe her. If you come to me I shall take care of you. Mamma cannot cheat me."

"Upon my word, a most dutiful and unassuming young lady," said Grace, folding up the letter. She had been half laughing all the time she was reading it, except the bit about Claud and me, when she drew up her head in her proud way, and read the words with such a smile, as I never saw on her lip before.

"Truly she is not blate to be a young lady, Grace," said I, "an she had been dwelling in her own house even, she might have spoken in a different way—but to ask you to your own habitation so. Truly, my bairn, it's my fear

you have been too simple in letting her into it at all."

"Well aunt," said Grace, "I could not help it—and it will do us no harm. I hardly think I will ever like Oakenshaw as I have liked Sunnyside."

The bairn stopped a moment, and then raising herself up again with a light shining out from her eye, she went on.

"How strangely the world judges, aunt—these two butterflies, Frederic Bellendean and Harriet Lennox, actually fancy, and get other people to fancy, that they honour Claud Maitland by taking notice of him. *Our* Claud! whose notice of them would be so infinitively above their merit—" and the words were no sooner over her lip, than the bairn's face flushed, and she turned her head round from me.

"My bairn," said I, "the world will never learn to do without steps and degrees of rank; and truly I see not that it would be wise to

dispense with them : and our Claud, if he has not wealth, has, maybe, things that the very world itself knows, are no to be bought with siller—so we must even be content with the world, Grace, so far as that goes. I have a suspicion that Claud would think more of what you said just now, than of all the honour that the like of your cousin could pay to him.”

To be a bairn, of a composed and quiet nature, it's no to be denied, that Grace was wonderful easy moved to indignation. She opened the letter again, and though she had her head turned away from me, I saw that her very neck was red, which was a thing whereat I wondered. But said I :

“ Are you going to let the young lady, your cousin, furnish the house of Oakenshaw, Grace ?”

“ No, no, aunt !” said Grace, “ if Oakenshaw is to be refurnished, we must do it ourselves—the housekeeper would surely never let Harriet lay sacrilegious hands upon my mother's room.

I told her to keep it shut. I would like you to see it as it is, aunt. I—I only wish Harriet may not be impertinent to Claud.”

“No fear, Grace,” said I. “Claud will never think of such a thing—but what think you the young lady minted at about her mother trying to get you back? Will she be coming to besiege us in our own peaceable habitation?”

“What is that, aunt?” said Grace, starting in a hurried way; and truly, it was a long and loud knock upon the outer door, and a ring of the bell, that made it sound through all the house for five minutes—there was both a knocker and a bell upon the outer door at Sunnyside, seeing that it was close upon a town, and no in a lone country place like the Manse.

We were both greatly started, the bairn and me, for even Mrs. Elphinstone’s serving-man, that sat at the back of the carriage, never gave such a summons at our door as that. So by and bye, we heard Jenny open it; for Jenny

was none of the quickest in her movements, especially when she was hurried—and after a space, steps came through the passage, and the parlour door was opened, and in came a tall, grand lady, and a gentleman like her, only with an evil look, which made me shrink. Also there was a small gentleman behind them; but I scarce saw them at first for looking at Grace.

A kind of smile had come upon her face the time we were waiting, and then she rose up; and when the strangers came in, although she was even, as may be said, my own bairn, I could not help but be filled with admiration of the stately young thing, standing there her lane, so firm and solitary, though I saw she had a clear perception of who it was, and that they came not as friends.

The tall, grand-looking lady came forward, as if she would have taken my Grace into her arms, but the bairn drew back, and only bowed, and then, whether she would or no, they shook

hands with her. Also she introduced Mrs. Lennox to me, but the names of the gentlemen she mentioned not.

“You have a sweet little place here, Miss Maitland,” said Mrs. Lennox to me, in a condescending way; “quite realizing the expectation one forms from the name. However jealous I may be of my niece’s desertion, I cannot accuse her of bad taste—can I, Sir William?”

“Miss Maitland can afford to be very indifferent as to the beauties of her residence,” said the small gentleman, in a very polite manner, though, poor lad, it was evident that he was sorely troubled with a burr. “A prospect without the windows can be of very little consequence when one has so much better a prospect within,” and the little gentleman bowed to my bairn Grace.

“Our prospect within is generally very limited,” said Grace, with a kind of smile. “And Burrowstoun, our ancient and honourable

capital, you will already have made acquaintance with, Sir William. I presume you are residing in the neighbourhood?"

"I have got a little box of a place at some ten miles distance," said the small gentleman; "a late acquisition of mine, where Mrs. Lennox and Mr. Maitland have done me the favour of visiting me, and where I shall hope to receive a still more honoured guest. You love the picturesque, and my little place is beautifully situated, Miss Maitland. I am sure it would please you."

"Sir William understands your taste, Grace," said Mrs. Lennox, intending, as it seemed to me, to be bye-ordinary kind to the bairn. "The Lodge would enchant you. Madeline is with us, and she spends hours sketching. We shall be quite wealthy in drawings when we return. Your cousin is very anxious to see you, my dear. She would have accompanied us to-day, but for an engagement with young Burrows-toun and his sisters; and Madeline feels her

sister's loss so sensibly, poor love! She is quite longing to see you, Grace."

My Grace made a little motion with her head, but spoke not a word, and I saw she was troubled within herself, being jealous for fear she might be drawn in to speaking some of the polite untruths which folk think so little of.

"Are you acquainted with the Earl's family, Miss Maitland?" said Mrs. Lennox to me, not, I could see, without a side glance at her brother, and a smile that looked as if she intended to mock me.

"I have had converse with the Earl himself at divers times, Madam," said I, "mostly in the season of my youth; but the family have been long away, and saving by sight, I know not the young part of it at all."

"Lady Julia and young Burrowstoun were with us frequently last season," said Mrs. Lennox. "You must have met them, Grace. Oh! I forgot your most nun-like retirement.

Do you enforce monastic discipline on the ladies you educate, Miss Maitland?"

My Grace's face flushed up to the hair, and she spoke before I myself could answer.

"My aunt, madam, has little experience in the education of young ladies, myself being the sole and highly favoured individual on whom her kind cares have been expended."

"Upon my word, Miss Maitland," said Mrs. Lennox, with a strange smile, and a look that mostly made me feared, "I shall begin to be jealous of you in earnest, if my niece continues to transfer her allegiance so completely. You and I, Charles, are entirely thrown into the shade. Yet the ties of blood are stronger than those of friendship, Grace. You should not altogether forget that."

"Let me remind you, Mrs. Lennox," said the small gentleman, Sir William, "that you promised to use all your influence to induce Miss Maitland to return with us—for a day

or two at least. You are bound to Miss Lennox as well as to me."

The lady gave a look at Sir William, that, I thought, had mostly thrown the little man over, and she said in a languid way :

"Well—I did make a half promise to Madeline, to see if her cousin would have compassion upon her. Madeline is so melancholy and out of sorts, poor darling, with the loss of her sister's society ; I dare say you will have heard, Grace, of Harriet's sad foolishness. Ah ! that exuberance of feeling which becomes an elegant young creature so well, is greatly to be deplored sometimes. My poor Harriet's warm heart has ruined her prospects totally, dear foolish child ! You have heard the story, my dear ?"

"Something of it, madam," said Grace, drooping her head. The letter of the young lady, Miss Harriet, was lying upon the table.

"And Madeline ! she is so sensitive, and has such highly delicate feelings in respect to ladylike decorum and propriety—you may

imagine how she felt it. She has drooped like a flower ever since ; indeed, that is the principal cause of our present visit to the country—change of air is always recommended in such cases—and we trusted greatly to your company, Grace, for restoring Madeline. You will come with us, I am sure, to the Lodge for a day or two. Your cousin will hail your appearance most joyfully.”

“ I fear I could not be of the slightest service,” said Grace, in a confused way. “ You know, madam, how very ill I would fill my cousin Harriet’s place.”

“ Your style is quite different, certainly,” said Mrs. Lennox, with her mocking smile ; “ nevertheless, Grace, my dear, your gravity might be more acceptable to Madeline, in her present mood, than if you were as gay and light of heart as my dear, imprudent Harriet, and you will really oblige us all by returning with us to the Lodge. Nay, nay ! I cannot hear any objections. Miss Maitland will excuse you.”

Grace's face flushed again deep; the bairn was ill at withstanding kindness, even when it was but in appearance.

"I—I really cannot go, madam," she said.

"Cannot go! Nonsense, my love. You think you will find us inclined to resent your late escapade—nay, we will give you our word. Besides, here is Sir William, a true knight, who would take your quarrel upon him, against all the fathers in Scotland. I am sure, Miss Maitland, you cannot refuse me your influence, to induce this young lady to undertake so benevolent a mission?"

"Our time is nearly exhausted, Grace," said the tall gentleman, her father, "not to speak of such a quality as patience, of which I flatter myself, I have a considerable share, when the caprices of young ladies are in question. Come, ring for your maid, and get yourself equipped as speedily as possible. These horses of yours are restive, Martyn; I shall warrant them to grow quieter when they have the humours of

a Lady Martyn to wait upon. Come, Grace, we have no time for pretty whims just now."

Mrs. Lennox was looking at her all the time, with a smile upon her face, and Sir William was aye casting the other glance sideways, as if he tried so to make Grace see how fond he was about her.

"You shall not need, sir," said Grace, very low, as if she thought shame for the strange young man. "I beg you will not let me detain you, madam; I have my guardian's permission to remain with my aunt, and—my guardian's express injunction also not to leave her."

I saw a look pass between the tall gentleman and the little one; upon which Sir William, bowing low to Grace, straightway went out; and then there arose a storm in my quiet house, the like of which never was in Sunnyside, before nor after. The lady, Mrs. Lennox, ordered my bairn to go with them at once. The tall gentleman, Grace's father, bended his

brows, and warned her to disobey them at her peril; but the young thing stood firm at my side, with a white face, and resting her hand on my chair, moved not a step, and answered not a word, but only lifted her eyes up to the ill folk, with the light swelling in them, like the waves of a great and full sea. Two or three times I tried to lift up my feeble voice in defence of the dear bairn, but they railed upon me, and bore me down, and I thought not, but what they would carry her away by the strong hand, seeing they were more angered than ever, that the kindness they pretended had had no effect upon her.

“Girl,” said the strong man, her father, “I give you the alternative, for by —” and he swore an oath, the which made me feared within myself lest the Almighty’s wrath should fall upon my house, for the sin that was in it; “if you do not come at once and voluntarily, you shall come by violence. What guarantee have I for the use this—” (the poor man called

me an ill name, which truly, it is not needful to write down) “may make of your confidence? Disobedient fool! am not I your father?”

The bairn looked up into his face, her lip having a curl upon it, the like of which I never saw upon mortal countenance before, as if her whole might was thrown into that one look, upon the speaker of so untrue a thing, but still she answered him not a word—and then the evil man drew nearer and grasped her by the arm. I rose and put myself, as I could, between them, but he held by Grace and thrust me away.

“Sir,” said my Grace, in her firm voice, “consider what you do. I *will not* go with you, and if you endeavour to use force, it can only bring shame upon your own head. We are not alone, and I am not a stranger here; I have but to ask help, and there is not a man in Burrowstoun who would refuse it. For myself, I do not fear you; for your own self, beware what you do.”

The two looked at one another face to face, the father with the traces of all evil things burning upon his countenance, the bairn with the high and fearless nature of her, looking through her deep eyes. The man's hand loosed upon the young thing's arm. It might be the bold words, but it's my thought it was the look that daunted him, for ill is ever a coward thing.

"Grace," he said, in a calmer way, "what is the use of all this sentimental folly? Is not a girl's first duty obedience? Come, we have had enough of it. Recall your senses, and return quietly to your natural guardians, and all shall be forgiven."

"I have made my election, sir," said Grace, in her firm way, standing aye still, with her hand upon the back of my chair.

And the storm got up and raged again; and the ill man took the name of his Maker in vain.

"Oh, sir!" said I, in my extremity, for my

spirit trembled within me to hear such speech, "whatever you may be, waste not your own soul with the like of that unprofitable sin. It cannot better an ill cause, and it would make a good one evil. Oh! mind that the Lord our God is a jealous God, and bring not down wrath on an innocent household."

The tall gentleman stared at me, burst out into a laugh, and called me at the same time divers ill names, though truly I heeded not that—and how it might have ended I know not, when glancing out at the window, my heart grew joyful within me to see Mr. Allan coming in at the gate.

"My dear bairn," said I, "fear not; I see Mr. Allan Elphinstone of Lilliesleaf coming in."

The bairn's face changed in a moment, from the white firmness and composedness that had been upon it, to a look almost of mirth—and the two, the lady and the gentleman, glanced at one another, and looked as if they knew not what to do.

“There is no necessity that our friend, who is about to join us, should be made acquainted with these passages,” said Grace, with a kind of disdainful politeness. “May I beg you to resume your seats. Mr. Elphinstone of Lilliesleaf is a person of consideration; a gentleman interested, too, in all who have the honour of being connected with my aunt’s family—and there are two ways of telling this story, as well as all others. Aunt, may I beg you to overlook the offence offered to you?”

I had scarce time to speak, when Mr. Allan came in. And truly, for five minutes after that, I think not there could be, in the whole length of the land, a more constrained or confused like company. There are aye some remnants of the storm lingering in the air after it has passed away itself—and Mr. Allan coming in, without knowing anything of it, and finding himself among strangers, had doubtless a feeling in no manner pleasant or at ease; but at last Mrs. Lennox and Grace’s

father departed, and went to their carriage in a haughty way, without saying any more about Grace's going with them ; but clearly to me—though it was wonderful the skill they had in keeping it hidden—just in a terrible degree angered, and in a rage against the bairn.

“ I am afraid I intruded at an unseasonable time, Miss Grace,” said Mr. Allan ; “ Mary would say I had a knack of that—but I am sure you will clear me of the intention.”

My Grace smiled, though truly I marvelled she could keep herself up at all, after the trial of her strength she had come through—and said she :

“ Never benevolent spirit made his appearance more opportunely, Mr. Elphinstone. I am half afraid my aunt might have been left alone again, but for your most seasonable visit.”

“ *My* aunt left alone again !” said Mr. Allan, turning his blythe face round to me, and shaking

hands with me. "I don't admire your taste, Miss Grace; were you really going away?"

The bairn was still in a measure of excitement, though, to be agitation and trouble, it was just in a wonderful manner quiet. So she gave Mr. Allan an inkling of the story; no telling all about it, but just like drawing an outline, whereby he might guess at the rest, for the bairn liked not (and truly I was blythe she had the right feeling), to publish the ill of them, who, for all they had done to her, were yet her own kin. Mr. Allan was greatly concerned, but it seemed as if a good thought struck him.

"Why not come to Lilliesleaf?" he said, "and then instead of my aunt alone (and the young man glanced to me, and said, 'you will permit the title now, will you not?') you might have a whole phalanx of defenders. Ah, Miss Grace! and you might do me a very particular favour by the way—for who knows but even Mary

herself might venture into Lilliesleaf if you were there—while at present she shuns its very outskirts, as she would a plague—would not even walk on my land, I believe, if she could help herself. We are about to be nearly related, you know—do, aunt, come to Lilliesleaf.”

“ I think not Grace will be in any measure or danger at Sunnyside, Mr. Allan,” said I, “ and truly to a woman in years like me, home is aye the best place.”

“ We shall not let that excuse serve you by and bye, aunt,” said Mr. Allan, smiling in his happy way ; “ but what if your ward should be stolen from you ?”

“ I do not fear that either,” said Grace. “ Remember, that I myself, am not altogether unknown in Burrowstoun, and might almost raise a bodyguard if need were—James Laidlaw, Willie Lightfoot—aunt, do you not think there are one or two kindly arms in Burrows-

toun that would interfere to protect poor Grace?"

The bairn's eyes were growing full—her strength had been sorely tried.

"There is little doubt of that, Grace, my dear," said I, "but truly I am feared you are worn out for one night."

So she was, poor young thing, and Mr. Allan abode not long after that.

"Aunt," said Grace to me, when the night had worn far on, and we were quiet, and sitting by the fire, "how strangely Providence works! One can hardly wonder that people speak of blind chance and uncertain fortune. How supremely happy at this moment would Harriet Lennox consider herself, if Oakenshaw were her own, while to me it is the source of all troubles."

"Whisht, Grace," said I; "it becomes us not to think we have gotten to the inmost of the clue, while the thread is but unravelling; it

will be clear sometime, and then we will see how good it all was."

Grace gave a sigh.

"Do not be angry, aunt," she said; "but what is Oakenshaw or its revenues to me? How much happier my lot, had I been in blood, as I trust I am in affection, a child of Sunnyside, a child of the Manse!"

"My dear," said I, "it is not right to lightly what comes to us from the full hand of Providence, and it will be shown you, I doubt not, Grace, how you may glorify the Giver, out of the abundance of his gifts."

"And Mary," said Grace, in a meditative way, as if she heard me not, "had this young man been the minister of some quiet adjacent parish, rich in godliness and faith, but nothing more, Mary too, aunt, would have been happier, for no distrust would have mingled with her hopefulness then."

"My dear bairn," said I, "it is an ill way of speaking, that. Think you that you are

wiser than Him that has the ordering of all things?"

Grace was quiet for a long time, and then she bent down her head, and spoke low :

" No, aunt, the way—my way—is very dark. I cannot see it, but it is in His hand : I will not fear."

CHAPTER VII.

THE winter that past, after that, was a most quiet and pleasant season—a lown and sunny time after the storm, just sent, as it seemed to me, that we might get a rest and be refreshed in our spirits, before new things came of a troublous nature ; for truly, joy, in a manner, is troublous, as well as affliction, and sometimes wearies folk more.

There were various threats put out by Grace's father and her aunt, about having her brought back to them. Also Mr. Monteith wrote to Grace, saying that Sir William Martyn

had asked his leave to pay his attentions to my bairn ; nevertheless, we were not moved with any of these things, for Grace had written to Mr. Monteith about the visit of her father and Mrs. Lennox, and Mr. Monteith had signified to them, that if they meddled with the bairn, it would be a needful thing for him to let the world know their ill deeds concerning the siller. So we were freed from the fear of them, and abode peacefully in our own house, Grace and me, as we had done before there was any word of these changes.

And for the family at the Manse, they also were dwelling for a season in quietness, for greatly against Mr. Allan's will, the marriage was put off to the spring of the year, both as being a more seasonable time, and in tenderness to the trembling of the bairn Mary, who had a measure of fear concerning it, that it troubled me to see. I know not what spirit could have hardened itself against Mr. Allan, seeing the way that he laboured, no to win

the bairn's confidence only, but to abound in good works, as became one that the Master of us all had gifted with many good gifts; and truly, it was a joy to behold the blytheness that was upon the young man's countenance. The young folk about, who had a knowledge concerning the matter, that is, the Bourtree bairns, and sometimes even Grace herself, would uphold with me, that the cause of his blytheness was altogether Mary. But although it's no to be denied that Mary, seeing she was a most pleasant bairn, might be the occasion of a reasonable measure of rejoicing, yet it was my thought that the young man's heart was also glad within him, in that his feet were, in a manner, clear of the snares and perils of the ill road, and his steps were being directed in the ways of godliness. For, oh! that young folk would but aye mind and understand the pleasantness of that one right way, wherein He has gone before us, who is the Wisdom and the Power of God.

From the young man, my nephew, Claud, we aye heard, now and then ; indeed, I think not but after Grace came, his letters were more frequent to me ; and it was clear he was in but a dull frame of mind, being far away, and alone.

The young lady, Grace's cousin, was also still living at Oakenshaw, and Claud had seen her, and been in the house ; but seeing they were in no manner like him, either in disposition or up-bringing, it was not to be expected that there could be much friendship among them. So, as I was saying, in a peaceable and quiet manner, the winter went by.

It was a serious season that, and one of much thought and many consultations in most of the Manses in Scotland, and in ours, no less than the rest. For it was not to be thought that my brother, Claud, having the godly name of our forbears for his heritage, and being filled with a right fear and reverence towards his King and Master, who had dealt so bountifully

with him, was like to be found lingering among the faint-hearted, or building upon a carnal and worldly principle, like them that gainsay the government of the only Head of the Kirk.

I think not that it is in any manner needful for me to write down any history of the Kirk's trials here. Truly, it is an old story in our country of Scotland; and if there should be folk of another land reading this, doubtless they may learn concerning the matter, from many books and histories, in especial from some, most pleasant to read, which have been written by two ministers (father and son) of that people, who in my young days were called Old Light Burghers—a history, the reading of which, I doubt not, will be to edification, to such as, by reason of belonging to another nation, or by reason of neglect in their up-bringing, may want a sufficiency of knowledge to distinguish between the old and stedfast Kirk herself, and them that do sometimes iniquitously bear her name.

But it is not my thought to meddle with the deep things of the Kirk in a simple history like this, more than just to say, that it was very greatly in our minds that winter, seeing that no mortal, abiding in the flesh, and having carnal wants like all humankind, could lay by the temporal providing of Kirk and Manse, and Stipend, without a thought of anxiety; far less, that a minister of the ancient and pure Kirk of Scotland should look forward, and think of a time, when maybe her holy places would be made desolate, without lifting up his voice to the Lord, with tears and supplications, crying out for the peace of Jerusalem.

So the satisfaction wherewith we regarded the prosperity that was like to be the lot of the two bairns, Grace and Mary, was tempered with trouble regarding the Kirk, and also the thought of private mishaps and hardships that might maybe befall ourselves, for I knew the minister, my brother, would struggle sore, before he would be indebted either to Mr. Allan, who

was to be his son-in-law, or to my bairn, Grace.

So we had settled it between us, Grace and me, that if the worst did come, the minister and Mary, my sister—who would come straight to Sunnyside whenever they left the Manse, seeing we had ever been of one spirit, and they knew well that what was mine was theirs also—should be eased in divers manners, hidelins, as it were, that they might feel the change as light as possible. It was settled likewise that our Mary, poor bairn, was to be married upon Mr. Allan, in the end of April, or the beginning of May.

So upon the second day of April, just when the sun was getting a measure of brightness, and the country growing green, Grace, and Mary, and me went away together to see the house of Oakenshaw. It had been a visit long spoken about, only there had come in first one cause of delay, and then another, though I am necessitated to say, they were mostly of

Mr. Allan's making, because Mary would not hear of him going with us, till Grace would not be put off any longer, seeing it was clear that if we did not get Mary then, we were not like to get her again.

So Grace wrote to her cousin, young Mrs. Bellendean, saying we were coming, and Mr. Monteith, (for she told him also), sent his carriage to take us. We left Sunnyside early, and got to Oakenshaw, without any uncommon hurrying, in the darkening of the same night; and, upon the road, just before we came to the gate of the house, the two young things cried out to me, that there was Claud walking upon the footpath; and truly it was Claud, though, being in the dark, I would not have known him.

The house of Oakenshaw was bright with light, when we came to it, and there were servants going about, and all the signs of a party of strange folk being in the house; and though the housekeeper (a very sober and

discreet-looking woman of years—maybe as many as my own), and a servant-maid were waiting to receive us at the door, I think not that any stranger could have fancied that it was the mistress of the house that was coming to it so, and that the folk who were feasting within were but dwelling there at her pleasure.

So the housekeeper took us into a plain room, very little either bigger or finer than my own parlour, and upon the wall of it, was the picture of Grace's mother, that Claud and Mary both said was so like the bairn herself. And truly so it was—to be a painted picture, I never saw the like of it. So Claud stayed with us till the night was far on. Woes me! but the young man was grave, and thin, and white; it bid to be with living so far from home.

“I wish Claud was nearer Pasturelands, aunt,” said Mary, to me, when he was away. “How pale, and how grave he is now; I am

sure it would grieve my mother to see him looking so."

Grace was sitting with her face away from us.

"Truly I am pained for him also, Mary, my dear," said I. "He has been giving himself overmuch to thought and study, I am feared; but the while he is home with us, we must take good care of him."

Seeing it was to the wedding of the bairn he was coming home, that word of mine made her hold her peace; so, for a while, the converse turned on other things; but after, when I was speaking to Grace concerning her cousin, it seemed as though she had not been listening to me, for she said:

"I must ask Claud what ails him at me. If I have done anything to offend him, I shall submit to be rebuked; but is it not strange, aunt, that our Claud will not speak to me?"

"Wherefore would you say such a thing of the poor lad, bairn?" said I. "Unless it was

that he was greatly taken up with the picture, I know not that any in the room had more of his converse. It's my thought the lad was dreaming."

"Poor Claud!" said Mary, speaking low, and she gave a sigh.

So there was little more said concerning him at that time. Truly we have all our own troubles.

We did not see the young lady, Mrs. Bellen-dean, that night; but the next morning, long after we had gotten our breakfast in the plain parlour, that had been Grace's mother's room, she came to us. She was a young lady of a beautiful countenance, but with a light and gay manner that I liked not; and truly her demeanour towards my Grace and us was liker as if we had been poor visitors of her own, than anything else. However, Grace, in her quiet way, soon let the lady see how she esteemed us, and also that she was in no degree

inclined to be made a stranger in her own house.

Young Mrs. Bellendean had a grand and haughty look with her, like her mother, and my Grace, for all her stateliness, was ever as simple as a bairn : nevertheless, it was no hard thing to say beforehand which was most likely to command the other. The young man upon whom Grace's cousin was married, had a measure of outward good looks, but, as it seemed to me, uncommonly little within. Truly it was a matter of wonder to us all what the young lady could have seen in him, to make her do as she did, only there is aye much truth in the old word—it is good gear that pleases the merchant.

We abode, I think, a fortnight at Oaken-shaw, keeping mostly, when we were in the house, in the plain room, and leaving the rest to the young stranger folk, upon whom there seemed to have fallen a kind of bondage, be-

cause of us, though none of us meddled either with them or their visitors. So, by reason of that, Grace thought it would be best to leave the place soon, seeing it was by her will her cousin had come to it, and they could have little of what they, poor things! called pleasure, the time that we, a quiet and content family, abode under the same roof; and, besides that, there was another reason for hurrying.

There is an old freit in the countryside that ill fortune ever follows them that are married in May, the which Mr. Allan had got into his head, and so gave the minister, my brother, no peace, till he got him to write to us about having the day set in the month of April—no that I think the young man, Mr. Allan, believed the old word of the country, but just it was an excuse for bringing us back the sooner. So, in a fortnight, we began to make our preparations for returning to Sunnyside.

It happened that my nephew, Claud, and me, were walking down by the Dour Water,

within the grounds of Oakenshaw, communing our lane concerning the things that had come to pass in the family, just the day before we were to travel home. "I don't know if I will continue in Dourhills, aunt," said Claud to me, in a downcast way.

"Dear me, Claud," said I, "I thought you liked the parish."

"The parish is very well," said Claud, "I have no fault to find with it, but—" and the young man stopped suddenly.

"Claud," said I, "will you be doing your right duty to your Master and to the Kirk, by loosing so soon the bond that has been made between you and the people of Dourhills?"

Claud gave himself a quick turn, as if that view of it pained him sore, and he said to me, in a troubled way, "If the event comes which we expect, aunt, the bond will be broken, whether I will or not."

"I understand you not, Claud Maitland," said I. "If it's your meaning that the stipend

will stop, and men will no more call you Mr. Smail's helper, then you will say true—but it's no my thought that you took your ordination from the heritors, or that you are the less a minister of the pure Kirk, that your forbears lived and died in, because you are no to get Mr. Smail's siller any more."

"I do not mean so, aunt," said my nephew, Claud, "in the slightest degree. Certainly I hold leaving the church, and leaving the establishment, to be two very different things; but the servants of the church are not confined to one locality. I may serve my Master as well in another place."

I looked into the countenance of the young man, upon which there was a shadow of perplexity and trouble.

"Is it because it is so far away from home, Claud?" said I.

Claud did not turn to me, nor meet my look, but he said, low :

“ No, aunt, I can scarcely hope to have my choice in that particular—but I do not need to hide it from you. It were most unwise, most fatal to myself; how could I, aunt, remain in Dourhills, and Grace in Oakenshaw ?”

We came to a turn of the road at that moment, and her name was not off his lips when my bairn herself stood before us, very white in the face, yet with the shadow as of some ruddy light trembling and moving upon it.

“ Claud,” she said, in a strange, low, feared voice, “ why must you leave Dourhills, because Grace is in Oakenshaw ?” The young man made a motion with his hands in a beseeching way, as if he was in a despair, and durst not answer, and the bairn looked at him, and put up her hand to her cheek that we might not see how it was beginning to burn, and then she tried to put on a look as if she did not care, and cried to me to come and see about the sorting of my things

for our homegoing. And so we left the young man, and I had no more converse with him at that time.

And upon the next morning, we took our departure from Oakenshaw, Claud being with us. It was an uncommon quiet travel, for though Grace started now and then out of her own thoughts, and spoke for a while in a mirthful way, it was clear her mind was taken up otherwise — and Claud, who was sitting opposite to her in the carriage, durst not lift his eyes, as it seemed, but sat leaning back into the corner, with a dowie and melancholy face; and Mary, besides being much taken up about her brother, had also doubtless her own bits of cogitations — and I was greatly concerned about them all.

We would be near ten miles from the Manse, (for Grace and me were to abide there till after the marriage), and night was drawing on, when I saw Mary start in her corner, though she did not speak. And truly, in a

moment after, there was Mr. Allan at the side of the carriage, who had come out so far, to convoy us to the Manse. So for the further part of the way, there was some converse between him and me, and the bairns got the time in quietness for their own divers thoughts.

It was upon a Tuesday that we came home, and that day week was fixed for the bridal of the bairn, Mary, seeing it was little use putting it off when we knew it bid to be.

I forgot to say at the right place, that we had been in, two or three times, to Edinburgh, the while we were dwelling at Oakenshaw, getting the needful things; and nothing would please Grace, but that Mary's wedding-gown, poor bairn, should be a present from her—and a very fine gown it was, of rich white silk, and made in the best way, by a high Edinburgh mantua-maker. Truly, it was a most beautiful and suitable apparel for such a season, though I was mostly feared within myself that it was

too fine for the daughter of a plain country minister, even though she was going to be married upon a Laird—only, for all that it was so rich and delicate, it was as simple as the garments of any bairn ; and so I was content.

Upon the night before Mary was to be married, it chanced that, all things being sorted and ready, we were all sitting together in the Manse parlour, Claud being at a table by himself, pretending to pick out a sermon from many that were before him, to preach upon the Sabbath day. I was sitting upon a chair near him, and Mary and Grace came together to his table, seeing the bairns wanted to slip away cannily to their own chamber, for we could not get Mr. Allan out of the house. So Mary leaned over Claud's shoulder, and began to turn over his sermons also, and suddenly I heard her say, reading like from some paper before her :

“ ‘ My dear Grace.’ Grace, there is a letter for you.”

Claud started, crushed up a paper in his hand, and turned very red, saying between his teeth : “ I did not know that was there.”

I looked at Grace, wondering what she would do, and Mr. Allan having by this time come beside Mary, the other two were in a manner alone. So Grace looked at Claud in a grave manner, and laid her hand upon his hand wherein the paper was, and said :

“ Is it for me, Claud ?”

The young man muttered something, I heard not right what, about “ an old madness,” and straightway Grace opened his fingers, (truly, I thought the lad was in no manner unwilling,) and took out the paper, and then she drew Mary’s arm within her own, and, though Mr. Allan resisted that, the two went quietly away.

So the day came, at last. It’s no in my power

to say that there was any bye-ordinary cheerfulness in the family upon the occasion, for it was a heavy thought to us all, that the bairn was going forth out of the midst of us, to be henceforth, in a measure, a stranger to the house of her fathers ; but there were the young Elders, that had no such thought, and Mr. Allan, who was full of rejoicing, and the other young folk that were with him, the blytheness of them causing that our mingling of a quiet lamentation should not be noticed.

So we got the ceremony over. My Grace, and Janet Elder, and Marion Blythe, and a young lady, a cousin of Mr. Allan's, from the East country, who had come to Lilliesleaf for the occasion, being all bridesmaids. And when it was done, the two went away in a new carriage, and before I could think of anything but the white face of the dear bairn, they were far away on the road to the old house of Lochlee, which had been sorted for them—no the one Mrs. Graeme abode in, which was a

dull place near at hand, but an old dwelling upon the banks of the Loch, from which the land got its name, which was about twenty miles away, and situated in a most pleasant country.

And truly, I had a sore drither concerning the matter, when the bairn went away; for the like of that, though it may well be a cause of joy and rejoicing to young folk, that care only about the ploy, yet it has tribulation in it likewise, to such as the Minister, and Mary, my sister, and me. For it is a sore thing to think of the bits of bairns, that you have carried in your arms, and watched in their cradles, going forth to enter upon the tuiizie of this world, and be mixed in with its troubles for their own hand, in especial when the bairn is a bairn of a delicate and easy moved spirit!

I have often marvelled within myself, to hear of young things leaving kin and home, and going far away, over the great and broad sea, by reason of being wedded to a stranger

man. Truly, it has ever been a matter of wonder to me, what manner of spirit they were of, that had strength to do the like of that, or what was the thought concerning it of the friends at home, that were wearing up into years like me, when the ship sailed over the great waters, and they found the bairn gone! There was pain to us, in seeing the dear bairn, Mary, go forth in prosperity and hope to a near habitation, but if such a weird as that had been appointed for us, I know not how we could have borne it, at all.

But I had to rouse myself out of my meditation, by reason of there being many folk in the Manse, and truly, in such a youthful company, it was not easy to keep in a quiet way of thinking. There were the Elders, and the Blythes, and the Forrests, of Woodlands, and various more, whom it is not needful to mention, a blythe company, in which I needed to put in my word, seeing that Mary, my

sister, had gone up the stair to be her lane awhile, and Grace and Claud, both of them, I know not how, had disappeared out of the room.

They went to the door to see Mary away, and, doubtless, were looking out upon the road after her, as was but natural. Mrs. Elphinstone also was at the Manse, among the rest of the folk, and blythe and well pleased she looked, which was a great comfort to me.

It so happened that Grace and me, being to sleep in one room, fell into a converse that night. I was laying by my gown (it was silk, of a silvery gray colour, like the bark of a beech tree, and was the same as Mary, my sister's—we had both got them from Edinburgh for the occasion, and they also were a present from Grace), and folding it up carefully, that it might get no scathe from being put into small buik.

“Grace,” said I, “when think you I will

wear this fine gown again? No till you yourself go away from us, even as the bairn, Mary, has done!"

Grace did not answer me.

"Do you no hear what I say Grace, my dear?" said I, looking about to her.

The bairn had loosed down her hair, and it was all hanging loose about her face, and hiding it from me.

"No, aunt," she said, "I did not hear."

"Will I say it over again, Grace?" said I.

"No, aunt," said Grace again, "I will not trouble you. I have heard so much to-day, that my brain is bewildered."

"Of what, Grace?" said I.

The bairn gave a glance through her hair, and played with it about her face, so that I could see nothing but the long dark veil that it made, and the eyes through it, shining half out, like stars among clouds: and then she said, speaking low,

"Divers things, aunt — so many, that I

could not tell you all. Aunt, will you tell me one thing. Why did Claud think it needful to leave Dourhills because I was in Oaken-shaw ?”

“ Truly, Grace,” said I, “ that is just the one question, above all others, that it’s no in my power to answer you.”

“ Claud never told you, then,” said Grace. “ But, aunt, have you no idea? I wish very much you would tell me.”

“ My bairn,” said I, “ there are some things that it is far best no to inquire into the inmost of. Claud never said a word to me. And, truly, seeing I am a quiet woman, and have little experience of the private thoughts of the like of him, it’s not to be expected that I could find it out for my own hand.”

So, after that, we fell into converse about Mary, and Claud was not mentioned again : neither did the bairn say a word to me about the letter she had taken from him the night before. And, truly, there was a measure of

restraint upon my spirit, so that I liked not to ask her about it.

In the end of the same week, we went home again, Grace and me, to Sunnyside: and also the young man, Claud, my nephew, went back to Dourhills. I think not but the short sojourn in the Manse had been blessed to Claud, for, without doubt, there was far more of his old blythe look in his face, when he went away, than when he came with us from Oaken-shaw.

It might be the solemnities of his work as an ordained minister of the Word, that made him so douce, though truly, I was in no manner pleased to see it, for it's ever my thought that the most God-fearing man should be the most blythe man. However, I was not without my hopes, that in one way or other, the cloud would pass from him.

So the summer time drew on, and that May season passed away. Truly, it was a season to be held in great remembrance; but, as I have

before said, it is not my purpose to speak of the solemn and great things of the Kirk in a simple history like this, pertaining only to our own family and folk. But my brother, the minister, and Claud, my nephew, and many of their brethren—as is known to the world—left their temporal providing at the appointed time, and came out with the pure and free Kirk into the wilderness; for who would heed to green pastures and still waters, if the light of the Lord's countenance was lifted away?

So, having left the Manse, and made a provision for the meeting of the folk upon the Sabbath day, the minister, and Mary, my sister, came down, and took up their abode at Sunnyside, promising to stay with us there, until, in the reasonable course of things, there could be a new abode builded for them, in the bounds of their own parish; for it very soon became a clear thing to us, that the Head of the Kirk purposed not to remove the candlestick from our land of Scotland, at that time; but rather

that he would have the light shine more clearly, and for that end, had poured out a spirit of liberality upon the folk, the like of which was never seen, and which made men stand still to wonder, at the great things that the Lord was bringing to pass among us.

It behoved that the pulpit of the vacant kirk, that my brother Claud had left (for truly, vacant was the only right word, seeing it wanted both a minister to preach and a people to hear) should be filled, and the presentation was the Earl's. So it was natural that we should have an interest in hearing who was to get it; and it may well be thought the wonder we were thrown into, when my brother, Claud, came in one day, and told us that the presentee to the kirk and parish of Pasturelands, was the old Dominie, Reuben Reid.

He could not get us to believe it was possible, for even if it had been pride, and no better thing, they might have laboured to get as right a successor to the minister as they could, and

truly, though I say it, that maybe should not, they might have looked far before they got a man like Claud Maitland, of Pasturelands. But the like of Reuben Reid!—I never heard of so unwise a thing.

Nevertheless, it was not to be disputed; Reuben was the presentee, and in process of time, he got through his trials (I marvel the old man thought not shame!) and was ordained in a profane manner by candle-light, as I have heard folk say, that he might be in time for the half year's stipend—the Presbytery of Burrowstoun (there were but two or three left of them) having just a race from place to place, ordaining and inducting the new men, in time to get the siller they had no right to.

It was the month of September when Reuben was ordained, and it so happened that I was sitting my lane in my own parlour, for the minister was up at Pasturelands, labouring among his folk, as was his wont, especially at that season of the year, when the Sacrament

was drawing on, and he had many young folk to prepare for the Occasion. And Mary, my sister, and Grace, were up at Lilliesleaf with Mary—young Mrs. Elphinstone, as it was needful to call the innocent bairn now! I had been trysted to go, too, but was not well in my health, being troubled with some bit ailment, I mind not what; and so it was, that I happened to be in the house my lane. And greatly to my amazement, when I was sitting quiet, reading a book, in came Jenny, with a red and wrathful face.

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

“Matter, Miss Marget!” said Jenny with a kind of bit short sound, like what the pony Donald might have made, if the poor dumb beast had had reason enough to be so greatly angered. “Think ye, I will hae strength gien me to keep my hands aff him! There’s ane coming up the brae, keeping the road clear for our door, that if he had the sense of a puddock,

wadna daur to pit his feet within ten mile o' the dwelling o' the minister! Will you gang into the garden, Miss Marget, that I may say to him, (grant me patience no to fyle my fingers on him!) that you're no in, without telling a lee!"

"Who is it, Jenny?" said I, being in great wonder concerning Jenny's wrath.

"It's Reuben Reid, Miss Marget," said Jenny, "the silly clavering Dominie body, that they have putten into our Kirk—atweel and it's an honour to the Earl and a' belonging till't to set up the powkit atomy and his tawse in the place o' our minister—but an ye dinna gang to the garden, Miss Marget, I'm no clear in my conscience to tell a lee."

"At no hand, Jenny," said I, "it would be little better than falset, even if I was going in to the garden, so you will just bring Reuben here."

Jenny turned round to me as if she thought I was not wise—but Reuben by that time was at the door. So she behoved to answer it, and

the body came in. It's no to be thought that I could just be as friendly with him as I had been in old days; and so at first, neither him nor me had much to say—at last the body seemed to take courage, and began :

“ It is a wonderful time this, Miss Marget,” said Reuben, “ a time of uncommon and great changes. Truly, as I was enabled to say in my sermon upon the last Sabbath, we are favoured to see strange manifestations of the mutable, especially in the respect of temporalities and dignities of this unchancy world. I hae been whomled by Providence into a warm seat—for though it is the overword of the dyvours of this generation, that the nobles of the earth are no mindful of merit; it's my fortune to be a shining exemplar to the contrary. It's a bien downsitting; Miss Marget, the Kirk and parish of Pasturelands.”

“ Truly, I doubt it not, Mr. Reuben,” said I, “ but it's no to be thought, that can be a bye-ordinary pleasant subject to me, seeing who it is that has laid down the same, for the sake

of Him that is a better heritage than houses or lands.”

“Doubtless—doubtless, Miss Marget,” said the body Reuben, in a perturbed way; “and that’s no what I came to speak about. It’s a pleasure to be in a way of doing a kindly thing, and I came with your leave, Miss Marget, to make a bit proposition.”

I knew not how to look at the body, for truly I had not the least perception of what he could have come to speak to me about.

“You see, Miss Marget,” said Reuben, “it’s a heartsome bield, the Manse of Pasturlands, and truly I have occasion to lift up my song and say, that the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places—in especial as I was in the capacity, as might be said, of a cripple man, and if they had not fa’en at my feet, was not yaul enough to have climbed and grippit them; and seeing the minister has had his dwelling there a’ his days, I wad not marvel, Miss Marget, if he was sore cast down with the loss thereof.”

“ Truly, Mr. Reuben,” said I, “ it’s my thought you have forgotten that the minister, my brother, is dwelling in this house of Sunnyside—and I think not that we have ever made a moan in the ears of strangers concerning the Manse, which he parted with freely.”

“ At no hand, Miss Marget,” said Reuben. “ There’s naething further from my mind than a wish to offend; but my thought was, in a sympathizing way, that the minister and Mrs. Maitland would take long before they were used to another habitation than the Manse.”

“ They counted the cost, Mr. Reuben,” said I, “ and came from it freely, of their own will. No man had the power to take it from them, so there is the less need of lamentation.”

“ But it’s a pleasant habitation, Miss Marget,” said Reuben, “ and I have heard the minister say himsel, that he never saw flowers so bonnie as the flowers in the Manse garden—and that he never thought the sky so grand, as when he looked up from the knowe, and the light of his

ain fireside close at his hand. It's a big house, Miss Marget, forbye, and at the present time, I'm a single lone man, no like to take up much room—wherefore, as I was saying, I may come to my bit proposition."

The body moved upon his seat in an uneasy manner, and then he began again.

"Ye see, Miss Marget, it's a sore thing to be borne down with scrimp means, in the season of youth, for at the maist suitable and convenient time for thinking about matrimonials, I was, as ye ken, enduring captivity, baith of body and mind, in that schule at Sedgie Burn, the bonds of which I have now happily broken, upon a sma' maintenance of twenty pound in the year, forbye the fees, the which promised nae great routh for my very sel, let alane a leddy, and maybe, smouts of weans, for which reason, Miss Marget, I put on a stedfast heart and denied mysel; but now, seeing that in a good hour I have entered upon the green pastures, I see no further occasion. We're

come to discreet years, Miss Marget, baith you and me, and truly, I see not what you could do better, than just come your ways up to the Manse, and put up wi' your auld joe, Reuben Reid, for lack o' a better ane."

"Me, Mr. Reuben!" said I.

"And what for no, my doo?" said the body. "There's brawer lads in the toun, Miss Marget, and doubtless, bonnier, though I have been ca'ed no that ill-faured in my day, by folk of discrimination; but the like of that is neither here nor there, between you and me; and the position of a minister's wife is an honourable position, Miss Marget, as you weel ken, and there's routh of comfort in the Manse, solace to the body and solace to the mind; and as for the pecuniars—ye ken them better than me. There's three clear hunder in the year, and they say in a dear season, its been up to fifty mair, and what could mortal desire aboon the like of that?"

I knew not well whether to be angry or

laugh at the poor witless body, but what would have been the use of flyting upon him.

“ Truly, Mr. Reuben,” said I, “ I doubt not but you will find many folk in the world to say with you ; but to change my manner of life is no a thing I would ever think of, seeing I have arrived at sober and grave years.”

“ But matrimony is an honourable estate, Miss Marget,” said Reuben ; “ in especial with a licentiate—I am meaning, with a placed minister of the Kirk. The leddy of a minister may haud up her head with any leddy in the land, and you ken it is far otherwise with a single woman, living her lee-lane in the world : and a’ the comfort and the routh, Miss Marget, the bein and pleasant Manse, and the sure portion of worldly substance, forbye the satisfaction of hearing a sound word of doctrine every Sabbath day, from your ain gudeman.”

“ Mr. Reuben,” said I, “ you will mind who I am, and who you are. I would not have

abode still to hear all this so long, if you had not been an old acquaintance. The Minister will be in soon, and it's no my thought that you would like to meet him."

"But Miss Marget—Miss Marget," said the body, in an alarmed way, "ye haena heard the half of what I had to say. There's the Minister himsel, he's out o' the Kirk, and by the guid hand of Providence, and the presentation of the Earl, I'm in ; but there's nae difference—there's a hantle to be said on baith sides, Miss Marget, but there's no a hair o' difference atween us. If you came to the Kirk, you would hear that I aye gie out the Minister's ain very psalms, and the chapters he likit best, (it's a help to mysel in exposition, for I've a grand memory,) and I see no manner of reason, (aye if it should please you to be my Mrs. Reid—you may think on't, Miss Marget, it's a weelsounding name,) wherefore the Minister and Mrs. Maitland shouldna come back to the Manse. There's plenty of room : it might haud us a' brawly,

and if the folk persisted in hauding by the Minister, and biding away from the Kirk, (though I am writing a grand series of discourses, the which, in my poor opinion, canna fail to shake the parish,) at ony rate it'll be less odds, for if they're no hearing me, they're hearing my guid brither. I am sure, Miss Marget, if ye would but look at it right, you would see it was a most wise and weel considered plan."

"I doubt it not, Mr. Reuben," said I, "only, it's no a thing that would be in any manner suitable for either my brother Claud or me."

The body looked up in my face, in a disconsolate way.

"You're no meaning to say, Miss Marget," he said, "in right earnest, and once for a', that you'll no tak me?"

"Indeed, I am, Mr. Reuben," said I: "it's no a thing I would think of for a moment."

"And that's just the reason," cried out

Reuben, "you winna look at it right. Oh! Miss Marget, there's the Mansé, and the stipend, and the Kirk, and I have a grand series of discourses—naebody kens the power I have in that way—and there's a hame for the Minister and the family—and what would ye hae, Miss Marget Maitland? Is't because I'm no braw enough, or weelfaured enough, or haena a sufficiency of the manners and breeding of this world? Woman, I'll learn! There'll no be a better man in the whole country side; and think ye it's naething to hae a house, and a guidman, o' your ain, instead of being a single woman, dwelling lone in the world?"

"Truly, Mr. Reuben," said I, "I am getting wearied, and the Minister will be in. It's my desire that you should take your answer. I would not flit into a strange man's house, out of my own, if he was the greatest man that ever had his habitation upon the earth."

The Dominie sat for a space, and looked at

me, with his e'en round and big, (they were grey ones, and in no manner bonnie), and at last he lifted up his hands.

“Eh me!” cried out the body, mostly like to fall down with wonder and astonishment, “but I thought a' womenfolk wanted to be marriet!”

The confident body! as if any gentleman was ever like to have looked at him. Truly, I was in a manner angered, though no mortal could have seen him at that time, without being moved to laughter.

But when they all came in, and I told them, it's my thought I never heard such a sound of mirthfulness in my house of Sunnyside before. My sister, Mary, was a thought ill-pleased, like myself; but as for the minister, and the bairn Grace, they laughed till they were wearied, and Grace in especial, seemed as if she could not get it out of her head. Also upon the next day Mr. Allan and Mary came down from Lilliesleaf,

having heard that I was not well; and Mr. Allan was like to go out of himself at the hearing of it, with mirth.

“Poor Reuben!” said Mr. Allan, “who could have thought that he had been suffering all this time the pangs of unrequited—Mary! Grace! make haste, there is a sight for you—my aunt is frowning!”

“And think you, they never saw me frowning before, Mr. Allan?” said I.

“No,” said Mr. Allan; “it is an impossibility, aunt. Nothing but my unparalleled impertinence could have produced it. It is a singular effect, as Hume calls the world.”

“Don’t be angry with Allan, aunt,” said Mary to me. “Allan is wild. Nobody at Lilliesleaf has been able to manage him, since Dr. Ingham opened the new church at Cruive End. When Grace asks us to Oakenshaw, we must have him to take lessons from Claud.”

It is wonderful what a little time will do.

Six months before, Mary could not have looked into my face, just to say the word Lilliesleaf; and to hear her now!

“Claud may be away from Dourhills though, Mary,” said Mr. Allan, “before Grace gives us that invitation. I have heard a rumour to the effect that the inhabitants of the town of Thrums ‘being assured of the learning, piety, and prudence of Mr. Claud Maitland, preacher of the Gospel at Dourhills, have resolved to call, invite, and entreat him to undertake the office of pastor among them, and the charge of their souls.’ What do you think, Aunt Margaret, have I not been studying the Styles of Procedure in church courts to some purpose?”

“Our Claud called to Thrums!” we all cried out, and then there arose converse concerning that matter, seeing none of us had heard the news before; but Grace, though she started when she heard of it, scarcely spoke a word, at which I wondered.

And in a while, Mary drew me into a corner, and said she, "Aunt, do you know anything about Claud and Grace? Are they *friends*?"

"Truly I know not, Mary, my dear," said I. "Grace says little to me concerning him, but doubtless they are friends; wherefore should they be anything else?"

Mary turned about with a kind of sigh.

"She might tell me," she said, as if she was speaking to herself, "if I was not his sister. Poor Claud! Oh, aunt! if our Grace had only been anything but an heiress!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It happened, on the next morning, that my brother, the minister, was away early to a neighbouring parish, to preach for one of the brethren, it being the Fast-day before his Sacrament, and the letters from the east country came to us while he was away.

There was one to Mary, my sister, from Claud, and also a big and thick one addressed to "Miss Grace Maitland, of Oakenshaw," which I had a clear perception was either in Claud's hand also, or just in a wonderful degree like it; and the moment Grace got it into

her hand, she went away quietly up the stair, seeing that Mary and me were taken up about the other letter.

I think not that I have room to put here what Claud said in his letter, but it was telling us about the call from Thrums, and that he was troubled in his mind concerning it, as to what it was best to do. We had converse about it also, Mary and me, and both of us agreed together, that it was scarce the young man's duty to leave a place, where his Master had opened to him a large door, (for the folk of Dourhills had all come out with him, and were uncommonly fond of him), even to go to the town of Thrums, though truly there bid to be a great field there also. And after a while Mary, my sister, went out of the room, having some errands to send Betty.

So I was sitting my lane, meditating upon all these things, when Grace came back again, and sat down upon her seat, without saying a word about Claud's letter, which was a strange

thing. I know not what it was that confined me, but I was in a kind of constraint, and asked her not, till, at last, the bairn gave a feared look at the door, and then she said :

“Aunt, I know now why Claud desired to leave Dourhills.”

“Do you, Grace, my dear?” said I, “and what was the reason, then?”

The bairn drooped her head low, and made no answer.

“And have you just new found it out, Grace?” said I.

Grace gave a glance up at me.

“Not altogether, aunt,” she said, “I attained to a kind of glimmering of it the day Mary was married ; but now—”

“I am sure, Grace,” said I, “it’s no like you to hesitate in such a manner as that, when it’s only me you are speaking to.”

Grace gave a kind of strange laugh, and opened the desk that stood upon the little table in the window.

“Are you going to write to Claud, my dear?”
said I.

The bairn nodded her head, and a moment after, she came round to me, and put her letter in my hand, and stood herself beside me, leaning upon my shoulder. It was a bit small sheet of paper, and upon it were just the words :

“Dear Claud,

“Come to Sunnyside.”

“GRACE MAITLAND.”

“Dear me, bairn !” said I, “is that all you are going to write to the young man ?”

“What more would you have me to say, aunt ?” said Grace.

“Truly, bairn,” said I, “you have taken effectual means that I should not know what more you might say. Think you it is right, Grace, to let me be this way in the dark ?”

Grace leaned down her head on my shoulder.

“And what can I tell you, aunt,” she said, in a low and troubled voice, “but just that I suppose it must—that there is no other thing for it.”

“For what, my bairn?” said I.

“You are strangely slow of apprehension to-day, aunt,” said Grace, without lifting up her face. “Has no one been able then to guess Claud’s secret—not even you?”

“Truly, Grace, my dear,” said I, “it is long since I saw that the spirit of the young man was sorely troubled within him—and it was no hard thing to divine the cause, and more folk than me divined it, but it was not like that I should tell you that. Oh! Grace, my dear bairn, if it had not been for that weary Oakenshaw!”

“Ay, aunt,” said Grace, in a mocking grave way, “it is a sad thing, that Mammon of unrighteousness. To think of even Claud himself wanting Oakenshaw!”

“Grace Maitland!” said I; “it’s no possible that any mortal could know him so long, and have such a thought as that.”

The bairn bended her knee on my footstool, and looked up into my face—being for the moment too earnest and grave even to think shame.

“No, aunt,” she said, “it is not possible—be thankful for me—that no mortal could know Claud Maitland so long, and not trust to him with implicit confidence—as I do.”

And, with that, the bairn laid down her cheek upon my hand, and there was a long silence. Truly, my mind was filled with a secret and silent thanksgiving, for was not the Lord dealing bountifully with *all* the bairns.

But, by and bye, I felt a tremble in the frame of my Grace, and I thought it was not right to let her remain quiet so long, and it such a troublous moment, for the bairn’s spirit was stirred within her, and so was mine. So

I said, though all the time I was liker greeting than laughing my own self, "And I am misdoubting, Grace, my dear, that my new silver-grey gown will not get leave to stay quiet in the press many days."

The bairn raised her head at that, and went and sealed her bit note in a wonderful composed and quiet manner, for deep waters are ever still—and my heart began freely to rejoice within me.

So, after that, I asked her if the letter she had taken out of Claud's hand the night before Mary was married, had anything to do with this. And the bairn, doubtless thinking shame, as was but natural, to speak much of these matters, let me see a bit of the paper which Claud had been so feared about her getting. And what should it be but a letter written when Grace was in her tribulation in Edinburgh, in the house of Mrs. Lennox, asking her—but truly, I am no going to write down all the daft-like words that young things

say to one another—to let him go and speak to her father, because he was sure she did not care about Oakenshaw for its own self—and saying that he was now placed, and had a dwelling of his own, and how his heart would rejoice within him if she was there—and much more of the same kind.

The date upon it was a while before Grace came home—and either the young man had been feared, or she had come to Oakenshaw before he could get it sent away. And no wonder that he looked sore grieved and disappointed then, when the wealth and the great lands of Grace came in between the bairns—and so they might have been sun-dered all their days, if that letter had not got in among Claud's sermons, and so come into Mary's hands. Truly it is wonderful to notice how folk's whole life will whiles turn upon as little a thing.

“Must I no tell them, Grace,” said I,
“Doubtless they have all been sore vexed about

Claud, poor man. Will you no let me tell them ?”

“ No, no, aunt,” said Grace, “ not till Claud comes.”

I did not say nay to the bairn, but for all that I made a paction with myself to take no vows upon me, anent the matter.

And it was not long till Claud came. I cannot say that we were altogether without preparation for him at Sunnyside, nor that the minister, and Mary, my sister, were greatly astonished when Jenny gave a skreigh at the door, and the blythe face of the young man looked in upon us.

Truly it was a pleasure to look upon him, for it has ever been a distinguishment of our family (I am meaning, the men of us), to have a look and a manner out of the common, there being ever (for we have pictures of many of our forbears, since the time of the Glasgow Assembly; and for my father, and my brother, and Claud, my nephew, I could

judge of them with my own eyes), more of the spirit in the face, than is ordinary among men.

So, after that, the secret was kept no more; and, in due season, every thing was settled. But seeing Grace wanted eight months of the years that are recognised by the law, as of discretion, and it was her desire that nothing should be done till then, the young man, Claud, departed again for his parish, and we had another short season of quietness.

I understood well, that one reason for my dear bairn wanting to be complete mistress of herself, before that came to pass, was a thought, that neither Claud, my brother, nor me, would like to have much troke with her guardian. However, I thought it was right that he should be told, and after much converse with the minister, my brother, he consented at last to write to him.

I think not it is needful in any way, now, when we are both old, to enter into a forgotten

history about Harry Monteith and myself; but Claud, my brother, had aye regarded him with a measure of anger, the which had never been in my mind, for the sore grief I was in, concerning his fall and temptation, was no of a kind to suffer wrath mingling with it. So Claud wrote at last, and got back a letter written in a spirit of humbleness, the like of which I never thought Harry Monteith could have been subdued to, and which made my heart (an old fule-woman as I am, that should have known better) swell within me. Something he said of old days, and what had been his own weird sinsyne, and that it would ill set him, of all men, to think little of a son of Pasturelands; and there was much praise of Claud, whom he had seen at Dourhills—and a word at the end, saying how it would gladden him to see us, if we could forget the past so far. Forget it! truly it needed not that.

There was no word of Claud going to Thrums, after the matter was settled between

Grace and him, for he had but the one thing that made him desire to leave his own parish, and that was now changed into a great and strong reason for staying; and William Elder told me no long after, that the people of Thrums, finding that they could not get Claud, were going to call Mr. Shepherd of Rures, and that Mr. Shepherd had made up his mind to go, seeing, as the mischievous lad, Willie said, he was ill with disease of the heart, which, being the occasion of some mirth to the young folk, and various looks at Mary, I understood to mean some bit touch of disappointment, and no a serious bodily disease; for the bairns were good-natured bairns, and would not have laughed at the like of that.

It would but weary a stranger if I was going over all that happened in our household through that winter. Truly, it was a most quiet season, and I mind not that there was much in it, past just the common life of a douce and sober family.

But the summer came at last, and the appointed season when the bairn, Grace, and the young man, Claud, were to cast in their lot together. All that winter, the young lady, Mrs. Bellendean, and her good man were abiding still at Oakenshaw, but when it came near the time when Grace was like to need the dwelling herself, the bairn was troubled about it, seeing that the two families could have little comfort dwelling under the same roof.

So Grace's guardian behoved to be consulted again, and after various letters back and forward (for Harry had never ventured the length of Sunnyside), there was a plan fallen upon at last, and that was, by means of Grace's siller, to make an arrangement with the gentlemen that were trustees upon the property of the young man, Mr. Frederic Bellendean, that he might get his own house to abide in. For Grace said truly, that the income of Oakenshaw

was more than enough for Claud and her, and that the lying siller might well be employed so. And in that manner it was done.

Mr. Bellendean and his young lady flitted away out of Oakenshaw, a month, I think, before Grace's birthday, and just one week before she was married. And during that seven days there were divers things done to the house, and much new furniture put in, to sort it for the young folk, who were like to have their abode there for all the rest of their lives.

And so my dear bairn Grace was married—and seeing I have had occasion, no long since, to speak of the bridal of Mary, I see little need for going over it again. Truly, it is to be thought that having two marriages in the family with little more than a twelvemonth between them, would make much stir among us, being, as we were, a most quiet people. When the Elder bairns once begin, I wot well there will be little peace in Bourtree for a long

season, seeing there are so many of them, and we are thinking to hear of Janet every day. And so all the bairns were away—wearing on that changeable time, that I should say so! I think not we were ever so blythe as when they were all playing about the fire-side.

And Harry was at the wedding! I knew well, myself, that I was old, and wearing on to the end of all troubles, but truly, it is a sore shock to be keeping aye a young appearance in your memory, and when you look upon the person with your own eyes to find him gray-headed, and laden with years. No that he was so old-like either, but only there was a great change.

I think we scarce spoke the one to the other, for, besides that my spirit was greatly moved at the sight of him, and at the sound of his voice, (for in it there was little odds), I was also much taken up with Grace, and when the young folk went away, Harry abode not long after them.

I saw it was not what he wished, that him and me should meet after so long a space, in the midst of blythe bairns of another generation ; and I thought, by his look, that their mirthfulness was mostly a pain to him, and so he went away.

Doubtless it has been a blessing to me oftentimes, that I could not get away out from among other folk, and be my lane ; and wheresoever there are bairns, it is a marvellous thing how they will ever have me, a douce eldern gentlewoman, in the midst of them. So I did not get much space, at that time, to give my thoughts to the meeting we had had.

There had been a paction made between Grace and us, that we were all to go to Oaken-shaw, three weeks after that, to be at the rejoicings on occasion of her coming to years, and I was to abide there, at least, for a season ; which Jenny, my maid, was in no manner pleased with, seeing she liked not that I should leave my own house for long. Only we made

her better content by telling her she might bring in Lilly Robb, the daughter of her sister, who had been left a widow, with a heavy handful of young bairns, to help her in the house, and, indeed, to be, in a manner, a maid-servant to her, seeing that Jenny, like myself, was wearing into years, and both the bairns and me were desirous that she should have a measure of comfort in her evening-time—no that she would ever be content with idleset, but it would aye be a pleasure to her to learn Lilly, how to go right about the work of the house.

It happened, two days before we were to go to Oakenshaw, that Mary, my sister, had a necessity for some small articles out of James Selvage's shop, and we went out in the afternoon to get them.

We were not half down the brae, when we met with Mr. Allan and a stranger man with him, and so, as was natural, we stopped, and fell into converse. Mr. Allan asked if the

minister was in, and gave a kind of disappointed look, when he heard he was up in the parish, visiting his folk.

“For,” said Mr. Allan, “I wanted to have a family consultation on the subject of Cruive End, and that we can hardly have without our Moderator; but what are your arrangements for our journey of Wednesday?”

“I suppose we will go by the coach,” said Mary, my sister, “it is too long a journey for a gig.”

“That was part of my errand to Sunnyside to-day,” said Mr. Allan. “We forgot to speak of it before. You will come to Lilliesleaf—nay, I shall never be able to face Mary again, if I take a denial—to-morrow, and we have horse power amply sufficient to convey the whole family of us to Oakenshaw. See what good society does, aunt; I am quite commercial in my language already.”

“And what is making you commercial, Mr. Allan?” said I.

“ Oh! Mr. Bogle will expound my last and grandest scheme to you to-morrow, aunt,” said Mr. Allan, with a motion of his head towards his companion, who was a man of a douce and sensible aspect. “ I am about to commence business, in behoof of myself and my respectable tenantry of Cruive End, as—don’t be horrified—a cotton spinner !”

“ A cotton spinner !” cried out both Mary my sister and me, in one breath.

“ Verily,” said Mr. Allan, laughing, “ nothing less. And this water of ours, which, like myself, has been idling all its life, must, like myself also, learn to be useful in its maturer years. I am perfectly serious, aunt. Mr. Bogle is the apostle of a system of reform, as different as possible from that of Novimundy; a system which does not undertake to make our Cruive End idlers, sentimental florists and makers of poetry, but, if they choose, independent men.”

“ Mr. Elphinstone elevates my office,” said

Mr. Bogle, in a modest way. He was a man of slow speech and diffidence, but had the manner of one who knew well what he was speaking about. "It's easy to see that idleness is the mother of much ill, and all that I would seek to do, would be to give the folk work, and the means of eating honest bread."

"Is your plan at Malcolm's Moss no thriving, then, Mr. Allan?" said I.

"Thriving!" cried out Mr. Allan, "most certainly it is. Does not John Delvie, my first colonist, (decidedly the leading man in the village of Mary's Knowe, I can tell you, aunt,) threaten to reap a patch of oats this year, finer and more abundant than Simon Murray's pet field. But we must work with both hands, before Cruive End redeems itself. We are on our way now to examine into the capabilities of the water, and shall be better able to lay our plans before you to-morrow."

So we parted. And Mr. Allan and his new acquaintance, Mr. Bogle, went on their way.

So, on the next day, being all ready for our journey, we went to Lilliesleaf, seeing that the mindful young man, Mr. Allan, had a carriage down for us early in the afternoon, and a blythe welcome we got. Truly, it would have been a pleasure to the greatest stranger, to have seen how the invalid lady, Mrs. Elphinstone, had brightened with the company and tendance of my niece Mary. The bairn had carried in a new air with her into the house, and it seemed to me that the restless, and discontented, and worldly spirit, had, in a measure, departed out of the breast of the friend of my youth, and without doubt, it was aye my prayer, that the spirit of peace and of godliness might ever be dwelling about her.

So, at the dinner, the Glasgow gentleman, Mr. Mungo Bogle, was with us, and though he was a thought shame-faced, and looked, maybe,

as if he were not used to be in such a house as Lilliesleaf, yet it was clear to see that he was a man of judgment, and with wonderful little of what was vulgar about him, considering that he was a West country man. So we got Mr. Allan's grand plan, (blessings on him ! the kind heart was aye shining through all his purposes,) which was to cause build a big cotton mill, by the water side, that the idle folk of Cruive End might have work.

As I have said before, they were a tribe of dyvours, and such have ever many bairns ; and the new generation, as was but natural, seeing they were left to grow up in idleset, and to follow the pleasure of their own will, was like to be worse than the old one. So Mr. Allan had the thought, (it was in a converse with James Laidlaw, the carter, that it first came into his head—besides the pleasure of seeing the half dozen families at Malcolm's Moss thriving so well), that to get them set to daily labour was the best thing he could do, for there

was want among them oftentimes idleset and wastry being near friends; and he had found ont that just giving them siller in the way of an awmous, was destroying the little good that there was among the folk, even the natural striving to maintain their bairns in the sweat of of their brow.

I know not where Mr. Allan had fallen in with Mr. Bogle, but truly, having devised that plan, it was a good Providence that sent into his way one that both knew about the labour, and would make conscience of carrying it right out. It was also a good Providence for Mr. Bogle himself, who was a young man, with a small family. He had given up a situation he had, as manager of some great mill about Glasgow, to begin for his own hand, him and another such like as himself, with maybe plenty of skill between them, but little siller, and so, in the natural process of time (doubtless, there was little else to be expected) the two failed. Mr. Bogle's partner was away to America, that city

of refuge for dyvours and broken men, and the young man himself, with a delicate wife, and three or four small bairns, was just thinking, with a sore heart, that he bid to go there too, when Mr. Allan fell in with him, which, as I have before said, was a good Providence for them both.

So we had much converse about it.

“And Mr. Allan,” said I, “it’s my hope you will not be led into doing, what I have read in books is done in the like of these places—that is, shutting in the poor bairns to labour for a whole day, when they are no at an age fit for it. I would like ill to see the bits of faces, white and shilpit, as I read they are in the great towns.”

“And the girls,” said Mary, my sister, “I am afraid they will be but indifferent managers of household matters, if they spend their youth labouring there.”

“And that is a very important consideration, Allan,” said Mrs. Elphinstone. “The crowded

mill will be a worse place for the daughters of Cruive End than the cottages of Mary's Knowe."

"I have heard that the workmen of these Glasgow factories are not the best people in the world for improving a country place, Mr. Bogle," said the minister, my brother. "Shall we reform them, think you, Lilliesleaf, or will they corrupt us?"

"One at a time—one at a time," said Mr. Allan, laughing, and looking round upon us. "Upon my word, this is dreadful! A perfect avalanche of objections. Mr. Bogle, discretion is the better part of valour. Shall we fly?"

"Defend yourself, Allan," said Mary.

"Our mill shall be a model mill," said Mr. Allan, blythely. "Good our aunt, to answer your objection, we shall eschew children. Mothers both, we shall endeavour, so far as it is practicable, to do without what Reuben Reid calls, the unstable sect of young woman-

kind—and most honoured father, Mr. Bogle, undertakes to choose his nucleus of good workmen for their morals and conduct, as well as for their skill. So now I have discomfited you all—I protest, ladies and gentlemen, that our mill shall be a model mill.”

Mr. Bogle shook his head, and put in his word in a modest manner.

“I am greatly doubtful, Mr. Elphinstone, if you are going to make an amateur concern of it, whether it is likely to pay.”

“Out upon the mercenary objection,” cried Mr. Allan. “We will try, Mr. Bogle—we will try; and then, whatever accusations may be brought against me, Allan Elphinstone, of Lilliesleaf—no malicious tongue shall be able to say, that I have not made a kirk and a mill of Cruive End!”

So upon the next morning we departed from Lilliesleaf to go to Oakenshaw, being in two carriages—Mary, my sister, and the mi-

nister and me in one, and Mr. Allan and Mary, (young Mrs. Elphinstone, as I should call the bairn — only I never can mind), and Janet Elder in the other, and got over the journey in a comfortable manner. It was Mrs. Elphinstone's desire to abide at home at that time, though she had promised Grace for another season, seeing it was the purpose of the family to dwell part of the incoming winter in Edinburgh. So the young lady from the east country, Mr. Allan's cousin, who had been at Lilliesleaf upon a visit, was to stay till Mary and Mr. Allan returned, that Mrs. Elphinstone might not be so solitary as otherwise she would have been.

It was a mild lown summer night when we came to Oakenshaw—the clouds being still red over the hills in the west, while the white face of the moon (and truly, the sky itself was so light, that you would have thought there was little need of her) was glinting in

the blue East in a modest and quiet way, like the incoming of a diffident bairn.

The country was in a bye-ordinary manner hushed and still, and the lights of Oakenshaw, as we drew near, glanced out among the thick leaves, as though they had been put in many windows, to throw our welcome further out upon the road than a voice could have done. And when we came to the gate—though there is a long road from it, through the grounds, before you come to the house—I saw two folk standing together below a tree, just past the door of the lodge, now kept by Jessie Gray's brother, and looking out for us.

It was Claud and Grace—the possessors of the grand house, and the fair land that lay about us in the calm of the summer night—our own bairns!

And truly, it's my hope that it will not be counted to us—Mary, my sister, and the minister and me—if a swelling of pride rose up within our spirits that night—no pride

of the worldly comforts and good things that were about us—the great and fine house, with its bright lights and adornments, nor yet the riches and wealth that had so strangely fallen to the lot of the bairns—but of the four young things themselves, with their inheritance of hope and strength, and joyfulness, ever girdling us about with the leal and kindly outgoing of their full hearts.

It is an ill thing, pride, and far be it from me to call it better than it is—but I think when a spirit that has watched the upgrowing of pleasant bairns, yearning over them in their bits of backslidings, and being troubled in their tribulations, sees them at last delivered by the Lord's hand, and set in a pleasant and a good place—oh! I think not that the swelling of exultation can be a sinful thing, when it has ever a right mingling of thanksgiving and of praise. And to see the light shining in the blythe young faces, and the sunny and peaceful road that seemed to be spread

before them—truly, I could have risen like the mother in Israel, in the old times, and lifted up my voice with gladness and with singing, rejoicing before the Lord.

So the next day there were great festivities and rejoicings, both of poor folk and of rich; for besides the great party we ourselves had in Oakenshaw—there was a dinner in the little town of Westergate, which was near-hand, of the tenants of Grace's estate, and divers others, that either had an interest in the family, or liked a ploy. And the health of the young folk, Mr. and Mrs. Maitland of Oakenshaw, was drunk oftener, I am feared, that we would be pleased to hear of.

And in the house, as I have said, we had likewise a great party of the gentry in the neighbourhood, the Kirkmans and the folk of their degree; and Harry Monteith was there, though being again in the middle of a full company, it was not like we could have much converse; only at divers times I could

see him watching me, and to tell the truth, when I had not otherwise my hands full, it was not aye in my power to keep my own very eyes from wandering where he was. Woes me! among all the changefulness of this unstable world, how steadfast some things are!

When the rest of the company went away that night, Harry went not with them—and when we were gathered to the worship, and Claud, my brother, sitting among his bairns, with the prime of his own strength and manliness hardly by, took the Book to begin, Harry gave a glance round them all, and then he looked at me. Yea, truly, I could not deny that there *was* a sorrowful odds between my brother Claud and him—but the blame was not mine!

And on the next day we had converse together for the first time for six-and-twenty years, and though it was painful at first, we came in time to commune with one another, as old friends, that had been long parted, no

venturing to turn back that past leaf of our lives in which we had intercourse before, though doubtless both his mind and mine were full of little else. And the way we got into particular converse was this:—

We were all, in the forenoon, in a big and pleasant room, looking down upon the water of Dour, (the bairn Grace had caused that the trees should be cleared in a degree there, because the little house where Claud had had his abode, was visible from the window, standing in a bend of the water), the which was a favourite room with Grace and Claud. And the young things, all of them, were busy speaking the one to the other, about places and folk they wanted to see, the time Mary and Mr. Allan abode in Oakenshaw. And seeing I had a troublous feeling in my own spirit, by reason of feeling the eye of Harry upon me, I had been sitting for maybe half an hour by a table, my lane, reading a book which is just

uncommon pleasant reading, although it is written upon a science, the which I know not much about, neither is it like to have much attraction for such as me, being more in the way of an adventurous and stirring man, with a sprit of travel.

So at last, I was roused by hearing Mr. Allan's blythe voice say, "Claud, what book is that my aunt is studying so intently?"

And with that, Claud rose, and looked over my shoulder.

"The old Red Sandstone," said Claud. "A delightful book, is it not, aunt? worthy of the poet of Geology."

"I never heard that he was a poet, Claud," said I; "and truly, this book is not written in verse."

Claud gave a smile. "Poets have given up writing in verse now, aunt," he said.

"Yes, aunt," said Grace, "it is very melan-

choly, is it not? Even Claud himself is confined to prose—dull prose.”

And, with that, there was some laughing among the young folk, seeing that Claud, in his student time, had written a song upon the Sedgie Burn.

“It must be a very fascinating science,” said Claud, my brother, “and if our young men at college are not smitten with a love for ichthyolites and stratifications, they must be very unimpressionable. There is Willie Elder—”

“But he is a great conglomerate, uncle,” said Janet. “That is what we call him at home.”

“Ay, it’s all very well for our young men to go hammering among the rocks,” said Harry, “and even for our young ladies to make acquaintance with the science, but for us—for us, Miss Maitland, (he had never spoken my name before) who are travelling

down, and not up the hill, how little attraction can even fascinating science have! I fear myself, to enter upon new pursuits, however trifling."

The bairns were all looking on, and Harry's face was turned to me.

"Truly," said I, "it is not like that I should heed much to the studying of such a thing as this, only I think not that being in years is a right reason for no seeking a measure of knowledge, concerning things that other folk know. I have heard of great men learning like bairns, when they were far on in age, and wherefore should not we? and also I see not wherefore our latter days should be slothful. Truly, Sir," for I feared to call him by his name, "it's no my thought that the pure and good country wherein the Lord himself is dwelling for ever, will be; but, according to the imaginings of some folk, a place of holy idleset, and so I think it is meet to gather up all manner of right things, even

the time we are travelling fast towards a better place, and yearning to win there."

So, when I had said that, Harry drew nearer me, and we had more converse, and bye and bye, when the bairns had returned to their former cracks, we had communings concerning them, and when we parted that night, a stranger would have thought we were good friends, to have been so short a time acquaint. So ill is it to judge by the appearance, and so skilled as folk are in covering the inmost heart.

I might say much of what came to pass in that first season of my sojourn at Oaken-shaw, but it needs not at this time; only that Harry Monteith and me, (he is a man of years now, and I ever call him *Mr.* Monteith, when I speak to him, but I know not how it is, the old name will aye come back upon me,) have had many communings together, and I hear the bairns say, that he has grown a more content and open-hearted man.

Truly, I see little trace upon him of the mocking way, that Grace gave him the name of at first, and, without doubt, it must be a great and pleasant odds to him, to come out of a lone house to the like of such blythe firesides as Oakenshaw or Lilliesleaf. But aye when the Minister and Mary, my sister, are in the midst of the bairns, it is Harry's wont to give woeful looks at me. I would not say, even, but what it may have been sorer to him than to me, for a woman person, when there are bairns in the family, or near hand, is never so lone as a man—but that is all past now.

I doubt not folk will wonder that I speak aye of Oakenshaw, and not of my house of Sunnyside, but truly, Grace is just an uncommon bairn for having her own will, and between Claud and her, I am keeped that I scarce have the freedom of my own outgoings or incomings, for they will at no hand hear of me going away, except whiles for a short season

to comfort the heart of Jenny, my maid, or to abide at Lilliesleaf, or the Manse. For the minister and my sister, Mary, have now flitted into the new Manse, which is a bye-ordinary convenient and pleasant habitation, as good as the old one, seeing that *it* was sorely in want of repair, and all the heritors were sward, but Mr. Allan, and by reason of his connection with the family, the minister would never let the necessities of the Manse be spoken of before him.

It is a matter of thankfulness to me, to say here, that the mill in Cruive End has thriven in an uncommon manner, and the new generation give glints of a better disposition, and at least, in an outward and carnal way, are like to live a more creditable life than their forbears, besides that the Kirk among them is well attended, and I doubt not, the sowing of the good seed will be blessed. Mr. Bogle is still in his place, and in a prosperous way, having got, if I mind

right, three more bairns, which makes seven of a family, and seeing he has a sufficiency for them all, I doubt not that it is a matter of rejoicing to him that his quiver is filled so well.

Also Mr. Allan's trial in the way of bringing harvests out of Malcolm's Moss has been by-ordinary successful; and at this present time (for he has a necessity aye to be doing) he is more taken up, I think, with that plan than with the mill.

The body Reuben Reid, whom the Earl made minister of Pasturelands, was married upon his lass, Nannie—it might be two months after I went to Oakenshaw. The confident body! it is just the speech of the countryside, that he offered himself to many gentlewomen; and Nannie being an orphan, poor thing, was, doubtless, overcome with the great temptation of being mistress of a house like the Manse.

And so I mind not that I have any more to say concerning the folk I have mentioned here. Doubtless, I might speak much about the bairns, but seeing they are all in a good and prosperous way, I think not that stranger folk would heed about all the outs and ins of their pleasant and quiet manner of life—though, without doubt, it is of great import to ourselves. Truly, I often find myself falling into a meditation when I am sitting in my own room at Oakenshaw, or in the room that Mary will also call mine at Lilliesleaf, concerning the good hand of the Lord, as it has been visible among us. I have been young, and now I am old, and it is a burden on my spirit to speak a word of consolation to them that may be bowed down by reason of troublous providences. And, oh! it's my prayer for them, that they may never, in any temptation, mistrust Him, whose good will it is for a while to bruise them.

In my day I have had sore tribulations, both

in my own spirit, that no man could see, and outwardly, that might be visible to all. But who is there in the whole land, that has more occasion of rejoicing, seeing that the Lord has dealt so bountifully with me and with the bairns !

THE END.

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