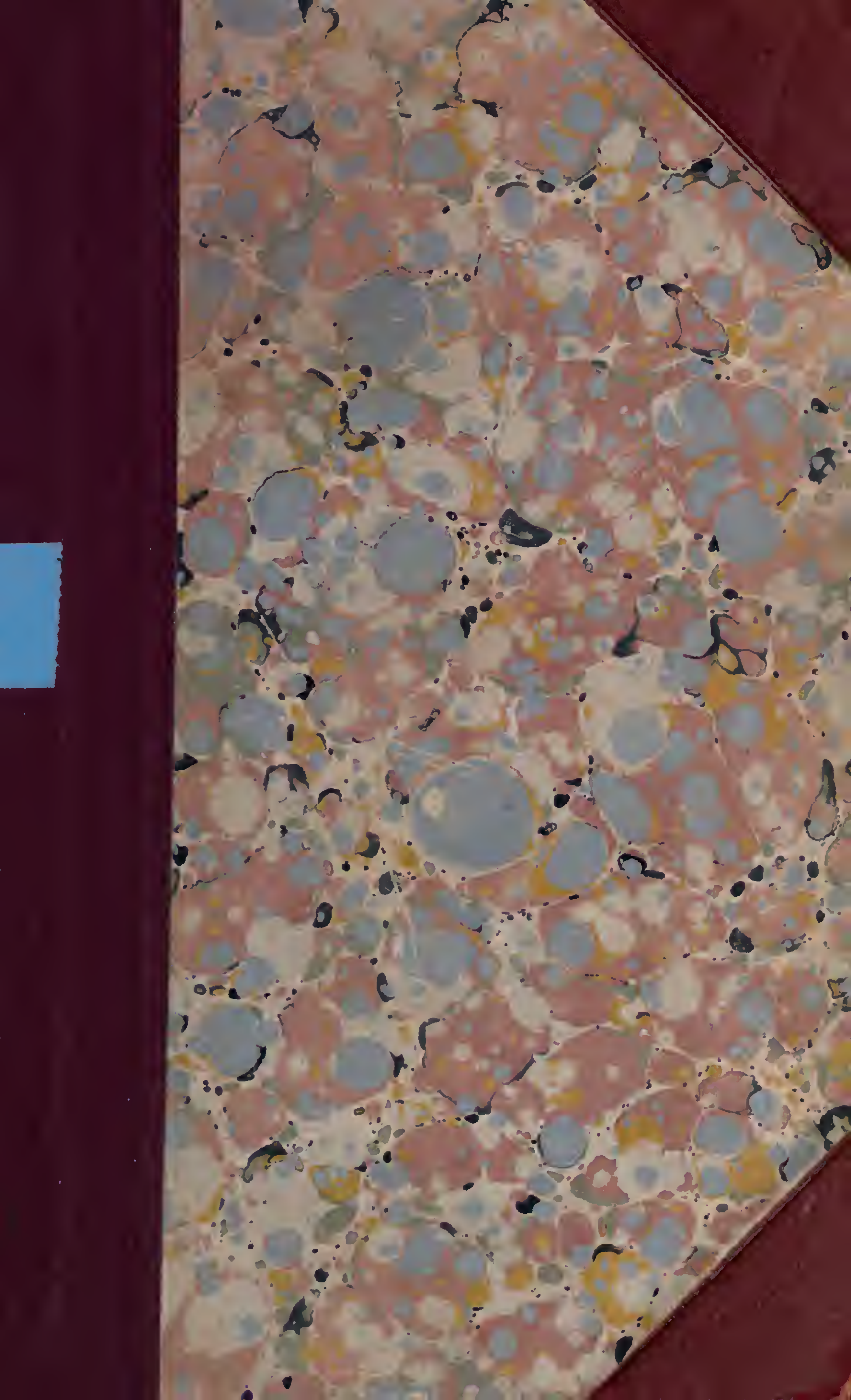

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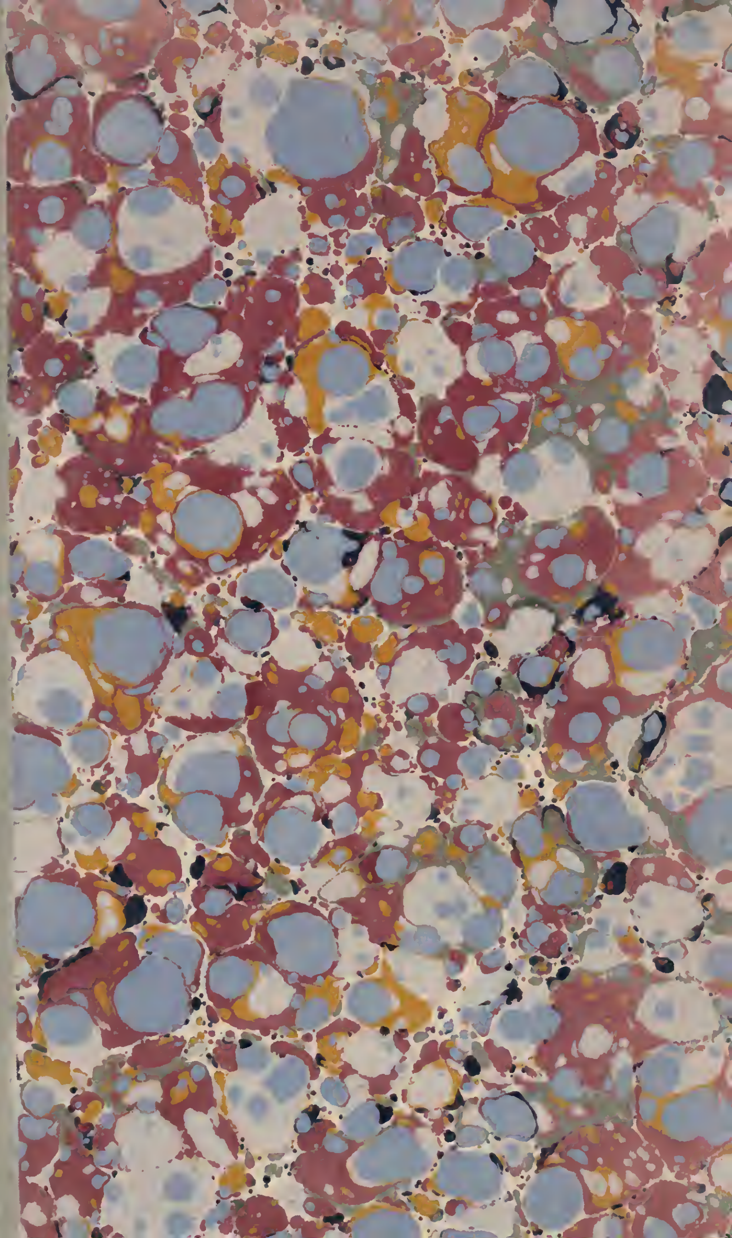

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# CASTLE WARLOCK

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

*EACH COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.*

MALCOLM.

THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE.

DONAL GRANT.

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ANNALS OF A QUIET NEIGHBOURHOOD.

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ST. GEORGE AND ST. MICHAEL.

HOME AGAIN.

THE ELECT LADY.

THERE AND BACK.

THE FLIGHT OF THE SHADOW.

LONDON: KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.

# CASTLE WARLOCK

## *A HOMELY ROMANCE*

BY

GEORGE MAC DONALD, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "MALCOLM," "THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE"
"ST. GEORGE AND ST. MICHAEL," ETC.

NEW EDITION

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.
DRYDEN HOUSE, GERRARD STREET, W.

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TO

# MRS. RUSSELL GURNEY:

A broken tale of endless things,
  Take, lady: thou art not of those
Who in what vale a fountain springs
  Would have its journey close.

Countless beginnings, fair first parts,
  Leap to the light, and shining flow;
All broken things, or toys or hearts,
  Are mended where they go.

Then down thy stream, with hope-filled sail,
  Float faithful, fearless on, loved friend;
'Tis God that has begun the tale,
  And does not mean to end.

G. M. D.

BORDIGHERA, *March*, 1882.

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# CASTLE WARLOCK.

## CHAPTER I.

### CASTLE WARLOCK.

A ROUGH, wild glen it was, to which, far back in times unknown to its annals, the family of Warlock had given its name, sharing in return no small portion of its history, and a good deal of the character of its inhabitants. Glenwarlock lay in debatable land between Highlands and Lowlands; most of its people spoke both Scotch and Gaelic, and there was in them a notable mingling of the chief characteristics of the widely differing Celt and Goth. The country produced more barley than wheat, more oats than barley, more heather than oats, more boulders than trees, and more snow than anything. It was a thinly peopled region, consisting mostly of bare hills and partially cultivated glens, each glen with its small stream, on the banks of which grew here and there a silver birch, a mountain ash, or an alder tree; but the trees were small, and there was nothing capable of giving much shade or shelter, except cliffy banks and big stones. From many a spot you might look in all directions without seeing a sign of human or other habitation. Even then, however, you might, to be sure, most likely smell the perfume—to some nostrils it is nothing less than perfume—of a peat fire, although you might be long in finding out whence it came; for the houses, if indeed the dwellings could be called houses, were often so difficult to distinguish from the ground on which they were built, that except the smoke of fresh peats were coming pretty freely from the wide-mouthed chimney, it required an experienced eye to discover the human nest. The valleys that opened northward produced little; there in some years the snow might be seen lying on patches of oats yet

green, destined now only for fodder; but where the valley ran east and west, and any tolerable ground looked to the south, things put on a different aspect. There the graceful oats and the long-bearded barley would wave and rustle in the ripening wind; in the small gardens would be found potatoes and peas in their season; and there also would lurk for weeks a few cherished strawberries.

Upon a natural terrace of such a slope to the south stood Castle Warlock. But it turned no smiling face to the region whence came the warmth and the growth. A more grim, repellent, unlovely building would be hard to find; and yet, from its extreme simplicity, its utter indifference to its own looks, its repose, its weight, and its gray historical consciousness, no one who loved houses would have thought of calling it ugly. It was like the hard-featured face of a Scotch matron, with no end of story, of life, of character, holding a defensive if not defiant front to the world, but within warm, and tending carefully the fires of life. Summer and winter, from the chimneys of that desolate-looking house issued smoke; for though the country was inclement, and the people that lived in it were poor, the great, sullen, almost unhappy-looking hills held clasped to their bare cold bosoms exposed to the bitterness of freezing winds and summer hail, the warmth of household centuries: their peat-bogs were the store-closets and wine-cellars of the sun, for the hoarded elixir of physical life.

The House of Glenwarlock, as it was also sometimes called, consisted of three massive, narrow, tall blocks of building, which showed little connection with each other beyond juxtaposition, two of them standing end to end, with but a few feet of space between, and the third at right angles to the two. In the two which stood end to end, hardly a window was to be seen on the side towards the valley; while in the third, which, looking much of the same period, had all its upper part of later origin, were more windows, though none in the ground story. Narrow as were these buildings, and four stories high, they had a solid, ponderous look, suggesting a thickness of the walls such as to leave little of a hollow within for the occupiers; they were like the huge shell built for itself by a small mollusk. On the other side of them was a kind of court, completed by the stables and cow-houses, and towards this court were most of the windows, some of them small enough for a cottage. The court was now little better than a farmyard.

In the block that stood angle-wise to the other two was the kitchen, the door of which opened immediately on the court; and

behind the kitchen was the milk-cellar, as they called the dairy, and places for household storage. A rough causeway ran along the foot of the walls, connecting the doors in the different blocks. Of these the kitchen-door for the most part stood open. Sometimes the snow would be coming fast down the wide chimney, with little soft hisses in the fire, and the business of the house going on without a thought of closing it, even when you could not have seen from it across the yard for the falling flakes.

But at the time when my story opens, the summer held the old house and the older hills in its wide embrace. The sun was pouring torrents of light and heat into the valley, and the slopes of it were covered with green. The bees were about, contenting themselves with flowers while the heather was getting ready its bloom for them. And a boy of fourteen was sitting in the little garden that lay like a dropped girdle about the feet of the grim old walls, parting the house from the slope where the corn stood now with the half-formed ear. He sat on a big stone, which once must have had some part in the house or its defences, but which he had never known except as a seat. His back leaned against the hoary wall, and he was in truth meditating, although he did not look as if he were.

He was already more than an incipient philosopher, though he could not yet have put into recognizable shape the things that were now passing through his mind. He thought how glad the bees would be when their crop of heather was ripe; then he thought how they preferred the heather to the flowers; then, that the one must taste nicer to them than the other; and next awoke the question whether their taste of sweet was the same as his own. "For," thought he, "if their honey is sweet to them with the same sweetness with which it is sweet to me, then there is something in the make of the bee that's the same with the make of me; and perhaps a man might some day, if he wanted, try the taste of being a bee all out." But to see him, nobody would have thought he was doing anything but basking in the sun. The scents of the flowers about his feet came borne on the eddies of the air, and paid my lord many a visit in the ante-chamber, his brain; the windy noises of the insects, the watery noises of the pigeons, the family noises from the poultry-yard, the rushing song of the mountain river, all visited him through the portals of his ears; but at the moment the boy seemed lost, not in thought as was the fact, but in the fundamental enjoyment of mere existence.

Neither, although broad summer was on the earth, and all the hill-tops and as much of the valleys as their shadows did not hide were bathed in sunlight, although the country was his native land,

and he loved it with the love of his country's poets, was the consciousness of the boy free from a certain trouble connected with, if not immediately arising from the landscape before him. A Celt through many of his ancesters, and his mother in particular, his soul, full of undefined emotion, was aware of an ever-recurring impulse to song—ever as it came, checked and broken, and thrown back upon itself. There were a few books in the house, amongst them certain volumes of verse—a copy of Cowley, whose notable invocation of Light he had instinctively blundered upon, Milton's poems, the translated Ossian, Thomson's Seasons, with a few more; and from the reading of these, among other results was this—that, in the midst of his enjoyment of the world around him, he sighed after a lovelier nature than he beheld. Then there were in the house one or two old engravings of forest, mountain, and ocean scenery, on which he looked with a strange, inexplicable reverence; and sometimes he would wake weeping from a dream of such or yet grander mountains, such trees, or such endless wilds of water. Once with his waking eyes he saw a mist, afar between the hills that ramparted the horizon, grow rosy in the upshot rays of the sunken sun, and his heart filled with the joy of a discovered loveliness. Around him, it was true, the waters rushed well from their hills, but their banks had little beauty. Not merely did their lack of trees distress him, but the nature of their channels: most of them, instead of rushing through rocks, as he would have had them, cut their way only through beds of rough gravel, and their bare surroundings were desolate without grandeur—almost mean to eyes that were not yet able to see the soul of them; nor had he yet learned to admire the lucent brown of the bog-waters. There seemed to be in the boy a strain of some race nursed in a richer home, while yet all the time the frozen regions drew his fancy more than the azure glories of the south.

His name was Cosmo, a name brought from Italy by one of the line who had lent for hire his arm and sword and fought for strangers. Not a few from the younger branches of the family had followed the same evil profession and taken foreign pay—chiefly from poverty and prejudice combined, but not a little in more than one case from the inborn love of fighting that seems to characterize the Celt. The last soldier of them had served the East India Company both by sea and land. Tradition plainly delivered that he had yet more served himself. For several generations the heads of the house had been the chief cultivators of their own property, drawing from it what to many farmers nowadays would seem but a scanty return. The estate had dwindled to the twentieth part of what it had been a few centuries

before, though even then it could never have made its proprietor rich in anything but the devotion of his retainers.

Finding it too hot between sun and wall, Cosmo rose, left the garden, and crossing a certain heave of grass, came upon one of the hitherto unfailing delights in his lot—a preacher whose voice, inarticulate it is true, had, ever since he was born, been at most times louder in his ear than any other. It was a mountain stream, which, unlike most of the rest, ran through a channel of rock, and went roaring, rushing, sometimes thundering, with an arrow-like, foamy swiftness, down to the river in the glen below. The rocks were dark, and the foam shone brilliant against them. From the hill-top came the stream, sloping steep from far. When you looked up, it seemed to come flowing from the horizon itself, and when you looked down, it seemed suddenly to find it could no more return to the regions it had left, and shoot headlong in dismay to the abyss. There was not much water in it now, though plenty to make a joyous white rush through the deep-worn brown of the rock, but in the autumn and spring it came down gloriously, dark and fierce, as if it sought the very centre, wild with greed after an absolute rest.

The boy stood and gazed, as was his custom. Always when he grew weary, or when the things about him put on a too ordinary look, he would seek this endless water. Let the aspect of this be what it might, it seemed still inspired and sent forth by some essential mystery, some endless possibility.

There was in him an unusual combination of the power to read the hieroglyphic aspect of things, and the scientific nature that bows before fact. He knew that the stream was neither in its first nor its second stage when it rose from the earth to rush to the river, that it was pumped from the great ocean up to the reservoirs of the sky, and thence descended in snows and rains to wander down and up through the veins of the earth; but until now his growing knowledge had never assailed his feeling of its mystery. The poetic nature was not merely predominant in him, but dominant, sending itself a pervading spirit through the science that else would have stifled him. For there is nothing in the outer fact by which man can live, any more than by bread; it needs the poetic eye, illuminating with polarized ray as it pierces, to reveal in the heart of fact its life, that is, its eternal relations.

But now he stood gazing in a mood different from any that had come to him before, for he had discovered something very sad about the stream. He had long vaguely known that what in the stream, from earliest childhood, drew him with an unfailing power, was the sense, for a long time an ever-growing one

of its *mystery*—the form the infinite first takes to the simplest and liveliest hearts. He loved it because it was *always* flowing, because it could not stop: whence it came was unknown to him, and he did not care to know. When he learned that it issued from the dark hard earth, the mystery had only grown. He imagined a wondrous cavity below, in black rock, where the water gathered and gathered, nobody could think how—not coming from anywhere else, but beginning just there. When, later on, he had to shift his idea of its source, and think of it as in the great sky, the marvel was no less marvellous, and more lovely; it bound closer the gentle earth and the awful withdrawing heavens. The sky was a region of endless hopes and ever recurrent despairs; that the beloved earthly thing should rise there, gave him one homely fact concerning the unknown and appalling. But from the sky he was sent back to the earth in yet farther pursuit; for whence came the rain, as his books told him, but from the sea? The sea he had read of, though never yet beheld, and he knew it magnificent; gladly, as he thought with himself under the wall, would he have hailed it an intermediate betwixt the sky and the earth, with the sky coming first, but, alas, the sea was before the sky in the order of the stream's genesis! And then, worse and worse! how was the ocean fed but from the torrent? How was the sky fed but from the ocean? How was the dark fountain fed but from the sky? How was the torrent fed but from the fountain? As he sat in the hot garden, leaning against the old gray castle, the nest of his family for countless generations, with the scent of the flowers in his nostrils, and the sound of the bees in his ears, he became aware that he had lost the stream of his childhood—the mysterious, infinite idea of endless, inexplicable, original birth, of outflowing because of essential existence within. There was no production any more, nothing but the merest rushing around, like the ring-sea of Saturn, in a never ending circle of formal change! Like a great dish, the mighty ocean was skimmed in particles invisible; these were gathered aloft into sponges all water and no sponge; and thence through many an airy, many an earthly channel, deflowered of its mystery, his ancient, self-producing fountain to a holy, merry river, was *fed*—only *fed!* It was but a cistern after all! He grew very sad, and well he might. Moved by the spring eternal in himself, whereof the love in his heart was a river-shape, he turned away from the deathened stream, and without knowing why, sought the humanity in the castle.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE KITCHEN.

He entered the wide kitchen, paved with large slabs of slate. One brilliant gray-blue spot of sunlight lay on the floor. It came through a small window to the east, and made the peat-fire glow red in contrast. Over the fire, from a great chain, hung a three-legged pot, in which something was slowly cooking. Between the fire and the sun-spot lay a cat, content with fate and the world. At the corner of the fire sat an old lady, in a chair high-backed, thick-padded, covered with striped stuff. She had her face to the window that looked into the court, and was knitting without regarding her needles. This was Cosmo's grandmother. The daughter of a small laird in the next parish, she had started in life with an overweening sense of her own importance through that of her family, nor, old as she was, had she lived long enough to get rid of it. I fancy she clung to it the more that from the time of her marriage nothing seemed to go well with the family into which she had married. She and her husband had struggled and striven, but to no seeming purpose; poverty had drawn its meshes closer and closer around them. They had but one son, the present laird, and when he succeeded, the estate was yet smaller and more heavily encumbered than before. In all likelihood he must leave it to Cosmo, if indeed he left it, in no better condition. Partly from the growing fear of its final loss, he loved the place more than any of his ancestors had loved it, and his attachment to it had come out yet stronger in his son.

But although Cosmo the elder fought and wrestled with encroaching poverty, gaining no real advantage, he never forgot small rights in anxiety to be rid of large claims. What man could, he did to keep his poverty from bearing hard on his dependents, and never master or landlord was more beloved.

Such being his character and the condition of his affairs, it is not surprising he should have reached middle age before thinking seriously of marriage. Nor did he then fall in love, in the ordinary sense of the phrase; he reflected with himself that it would be cowardice to yield so far to poverty as to run the boat of the Warlocks aground. He would not wilfully leave the scrag-ends of a property and a history without a man to take them up, and possibly bear them on to redemption; who could tell what life might be in the stock yet? Better leave an heir to take the

remnant in charge, and carry the name a generation farther, even should it be into yet deeper poverty. A Warlock could face his fate! Thereupon, with a sense of the fitness of things not always manifested on such an occasion, he paid his addresses to a woman of five and thirty, the only daughter of the minister of the parish, and was by her accepted with little hesitation. She was a capable and thoroughly brave woman, and, fully informed of the state of his affairs, married him partly in the hope of doing something to help him in his difficulties. A few pounds which she had saved up, and a trifle that her mother had left her, she placed unreservedly at his disposal, and he, in his abounding honesty, spent the money on his creditors. This bettered things for a time, and, which was of much more consequence, greatly relieved his mind, and gave the life in him a fresh start. Nor was this by any means the only or most operative mode in which the marriage aided his growth, and thus was of infinitely more salvation to the laird than if it had set him free from all his worldly embarrassments, for growth is the only final path out of oppression.

Whatever were the feelings with which the laird took his wife home, they were at least those of a gentleman; and it were a good thing indeed if, at the end of five years, the love of most pairs who marry for love were equal to that of Cosmo Warlock and his middle-aged wife. Now that she was gone, his reverence and love for her were surpassing. From the day almost of his marriage the miseries of life had lost half their bitterness, nor did that half return at her death. He had long instinctively known that outsiders, those even who respected him as an honest man, believed that, somehow or other, they could only conjecture how, he must be to blame for the circumstances he was in. That he was to blame, or that Providence did not take care of the just man, was indeed virtually the unuttered alternative conclusion of many who nevertheless accepted the Bible, the Book of Job included, and would have counted Glenwarlock's rare honesty, had they known it in its fulness, pride or fastidiousness or unjustifiable free-handedness. Whether to blame or only God-forsaken, they thought and spoke of him as a poor creature; and the man, from the keen sensitiveness of his nature, had become aware of the fact. But to the wound caused by the misprision of neighbours and friends came the faith and indignant confidence of his wife, closing and binding up and mollifying. The man was of a far finer nature than any of those who judged him, though some of them doubtless would have got rid of their difficulties sooner than he, for he was more honourable in debt than they were out of it: his wife, a woman of strong sense, with an undeveloped stratum

of poetry in the heart of it, was able to appreciate his moral delicacy, and she let him know it. This was strength and a lifting up of the head to the husband. And now, although since her death he had had to fight the wolf as constantly as ever, things retained the look she had helped to give them.

They had been five years married when she brought him an heir to his poverty, and she lived five years more to help train the child, then, after a short illness, departed, and left the now ageing man virtually alone with his son, a spark of fresh vitality amidst the ancient surroundings. This was the Cosmo who now, somewhat sore at heart from the result of his cogitations, entered the kitchen in search of his kind.

Just inside the door sat another woman on a three-legged stool, paring potatoes—throwing each, as she cut off what the old lady watching her judged a paring far too thick, into a bowl of water. She looked nearly as old as her mistress, though in reality ten years younger. She had come with the late mistress from her father's house, and had always taken, and still took her part against the opposing faction—namely, the grandmother.

A second seat of state—not over easy, but comfortable enough, being simply a wide armchair of elm, with a cushion covered in horse-hair—stood at the other corner of the fire. This was the laird's seat, at the moment, as generally all the morning till dinner-time, empty. Cosmo, not once looking up, walked to it straight from the door, seated himself in it, and there sat like one verily lost in thought. Now and then, as she pared, Grizzie would cast a keen glance at him out of her bright blue eyes, round whose fire the wrinkles had gathered like rippled ashes. Those eyes were sweet and pleasant, and the expression of her face was one of lovely devotion; otherwise she was far from beautiful. She gave a grim smile every time her look returned to her potatoes, seeming to say to herself she knew well what he was thinking, though no one else did. "He's 'maist a man a'ready!" she thought in her heart.

The old lady also now and then looked over her stocking at the boy, where he sat with his back to the white deal dresser, ornate with homely dishes.

"It'll be lang or ye fill that cheir, Cossie, my man!" she said at length—but not with the smile of play, rather with the severity of admonition, as if it was the boy's first duty to grow in breadth and fill the ancestral seat.

Cosmo looked up, but did not speak, and presently was lost again in the thoughts from which the voice of his grandmother had roused him as one on a journey is roused from a waking dream by a jolt of the carriage.

"What are ye thinkin' aboot, Cossie?" she said again, in a tone imperative.

Her speech was that of a gentlewoman of the old time, when the highest-born in Scotland spoke Scotch.

Not yet did Cosmo reply. Reverie is sometimes a traitor even to respect.

"Mph!" said his grandmother, offended at his silence, "ye'll hae to learn mainners afore ye're fit to be laird o' Glenwarlock, yoong Cosmo!"

A shadow of indignation passed over Grizzie's rippled, rather than wrinkled face, but she said nothing. There was a time to speak and a time to be silent; nor was Grizzie indebted to Solomon, but to her own experience and practice, for the wisdom of the saw. Only the potato next pared splashed loud in the water, and the old lady knew as well what that meant, as if the splash had been an articulate sound from the lips of the old partisan.

The boy rose, and coming forward like one walking in his sleep, stood up before his grandmother, and said absently—

"What was ye sayin', gran'mamma?"

"I was sayin' what ye wadna hearken till, an' that's eneuch," she answered, willing to show offence.

"Say't again, gran'mamma, gien ye please. I wasna noticin'."

"Na! I s' warran' ye frae noticin'! There ye winna gang, whaur yer ain fule fancy doesna lead the gait. Cosmo, ye gie ower muckle tether to wull (*wild*) thoucht; some day ye'll be laid i' the dub (*mire*), followin' what has naither sense intil't nor this warl's guid. What was ye thinkin' aboot the noo? Tell me that, an' I s' lat ye gang."

"I was thinkin' aboot the burnie, gran'mamma."

"It wad be tellin' ye to lat the burnie rin, an' stick to yer buik, laddie!"

"The burnie wull rin, gran'mamma, and the buik 'ill bide," returned Cosmo, perhaps not very clearly understanding himself.

"Ye're gettin' on to be a man, noo," said his grandmother, heedless of his defence, "an' ye maun learn to put awa' bairnly things. There's a heap depen'in' upo' ye, Cosmo. Ye'll be the fift laird o' the name i' the faimily, an' I'm some feart ye may be the last. It's but sma' honour, laddie, to ony man to be the last at onything; an' gien ye dinna gaither the wit ye hae, an' du the best ye can, ye're b'un' to be the last laird o' Glenwarlock. Gien it wasna for Grizzie there, wha has no richt to owerhear the affairs o' the faimily, I micht think the time had come for enlicht'nin' ye upo' things it's no shuitable ye sud gang ignorant o'. But we'll put it

aff till a mair convanient sizzon, 'atween oor ain twa lanes (*us two alone*)."

"An' a mair convanient spokesman, I houp, my leddy," said Grizzie, deeply offended.

"An' wha sud that be?" rejoined her mistress, bridling.

"Ow, wha but the laird himsel'?" answered Grizzie. "Wha daur come 'atween father an' son wi' licht upo' faimily-affairs? No even the yoong mistress hersel' wad hae prezhumt upo' that!"

"Keep your place, Grizzie," said the old lady with dignity.

And Grizzie, who had gone farther in the cause of propriety than propriety itself could justify, held her peace. Only the potatoes splashed yet louder in the bowl. Her mistress sat grimly silent, for though she had had the last word and been obeyed, she was rebuked in herself. Cosmo, judging the speciality of the interview over, turned and went back to his father's chair; but just as he was seating himself again, his father appeared in the doorway.

The form was that of a tall, thin man, a little bent at the knees and bowed in the back, who yet carried himself with no small dignity cloaked in an air of general apology—as if he would have said, "I am sorry my way is not yours, for I see very well how mistaken you must think it." He wore large strong shoes—I think a description should begin with the feet rather than the head—fit for boggy land; blue, ribbed, woollen stockings; knee-breeches of some home-made stuff; most of the cloth they wore was shorn from their own sheep, and spun, woven, and made at home; an old blue dress-coat with gilt buttons: a drab waistcoat which had once been yellow; and, to crown all, a red woollen nightcap, the top of which hung down on one side, and blossomed in a tassel.

"Weel, Grizzie!" he said, in a gentle, rather sad voice, as if the days of his mourning were not yet ended, "I'm ower sune the day."

He never passed Grizzie without greeting her, and Grizzie's devotion to him was like that of slave and that of sister combined.

"Laird," she answered, "ye can never be ower sune for yer fowk, though ye may be for yer stamack. But the taties winna be lang bilin' the day; they're some sma'."

"That's 'cause ye pare them sae near, Grizzie," said the grandmother.

"There's poosion (*poison*) i' the skins o' them," returned Grizzie.

The moment young Cosmo saw whose shadow darkened the doorway, he had risen in haste, and now stood with his hand

upon the arm of the chair, waiting for his father, as if it had been a horse he held for him. The laird acknowledged the attention with a smile, sat down, and looked like the last sitter grown suddenly old. He put out his hand to his boy across the low arm of the chair; the boy laid his hand in his father's, and so they remained, neither saying a word. The laird leaned back, and sat resting. All were silent.

Notwithstanding the oddity of his dress, no one with any knowledge of humanity could have failed to see in Cosmo Warlock the elder a high-bred gentleman. His face was small, and the skin of it was puckered into wrinkles innumerable; his mouth was sweet—none the less that he had lost his teeth, and the lips sank inward; his chin was large and strong; his blue eyes looked out from under his narrow high forehead with a softly piercing glance of great gentleness and benignity. A little gray hair clustered about his temples and the back of his head—the red nightcap hid what more there might be. There was three days' growth of gray beard on his chin, for *now that he had nobody*, he would say, he had not the heart to shave every morning.

For some time he sat looking straight before him, smiling to his mother's hands as they knitted, she casting on him now and then a look that seemed to express the consciousness of blame for not having borne him more of a man; for neither did his mother believe in him farther than that he had the best possible intentions. At the same time she never doubted he was more of a man than ever his son would be—their mothers were so different!

"Grizzie," said the laird, "hae ye a drappy o' soor milk? I'm some dry."

"Ay, that hae I, sir!" answered Grizzie with alacrity, and rising, hastened into the darker region behind the kitchen, whence presently she emerged with a white basin full of rich milk—half cream it was indeed. Without explanation or apology she handed it to her master, who received and drank it.

"Hoots, wuman!" he said, as he returned her the empty bowl, "ye wad hae me a shargar (*a skin-and-bone calf*)! That's no soor milk!"

"I'm vexed it's no to yer taste, laird!" returned Grizzie coolly, "but I hae nane better, an' what's guid for the shargar 's guid for the mairt (*beast fattening to be killed at Martinmas*)."

"Ye tellt me ye had soor milk!" insisted the laird—without a particle of offence, rather in the tone of apology for having made away with something too good for him.

"Weel, laird," replied Grizzie, "it's naething but the guidman's

milk (*the topmost after the skimming*); an' gien ye dinna ken what's guid for ye at your time o' life, it's weel there sud be anither 'at diz. What has the heid o' a faimily to du drinkin' soor milk—eneuch to lapper (*turn to curds*) a' i' the inside o' 'im! It's for me to luik efter ye, for divna I min' ye a sma' wean i' my leddy's airms there?—an'——"

"Ye may weel that!" interrupted her mistress.

"I wasna far intil my teens, my leddy!" returned Grizzie. "An' I'm sure," she added in revenge, "it wad ill become ony wuman to grudge a man o' the laird's stan'in' a drap o' the best milk in ony cellar—no to say his ain!"

"Wha spak o' grudgin'?" said her mistress angrily.

"Ye spak yersel' sic an' siclike," answered Grizzie.

"Hoots, Grizzie! haud yer tongue, my wuman," said the laird, in the gentlest tone, yet with reproof in it. "Ye ken weel it's no my mother wad grudge me the milk ye wad gie me! It was but mysel' 'at thoucht it ower guid, bein' it's no a week yet sin' bonny Hawkie de'ed!"

"An' wad ye hae the Lord's an'intit depen' upo' Hawkie?" cried Grizzie with indignation.

The contest ceased; Grizzie had had the best of it, none knew better than she. In a minute or two the laird rose and went out, and Cosmo went with him.

While Cosmo's mother was alive, old Mrs. Warlock would have been indignant at the idea of sitting in the kitchen, but things had since conspired to bring her to it. She found her state very lonely in the drawing-room; there, without a daughter-in-law to go and come, she learned little or nothing of what was doing about the place; and there few that came cared to seek her out, for she had never been a favourite with the humbler neighbours, and scarcely one of any worldly standing ever called. Besides, as money grew scarcer, it became yet more necessary to economize light in the winter. Also, the drawing-room could not be made so warm as the kitchen, and with growing age the old lady grew colder. There was no lack of firing, for, as long as there were horses on the farm, peats were to be had in plenty; but for light, even for train-oil, money had to be paid, and money was of all ordinary things the seldomest seen at Castle Warlock.

The second winter, therefore, after the death of the young mistress, as she had been called, the old lady, for the sake of company, of warmth, of economy, had a chair placed for her in the kitchen; and the change once made, custom crept in, and there she sat throughout the year; for she who had laid aside her dignity in the winter, could hardly without additional loss attempt

to resume it in the summer. To the laird it was a matter of no consequence where he sat, ate, or slept. While his wife was alive, wherever she was, that was the place of his choice; when she was gone, all places were alike to him. There was, besides, that in the disposition of the man which tended to the homely—a homely graciousness characterized his whole behaviour. Hence, and from other causes evident enough, it came that not a few of the rooms of the house were by this time partially neglected. Both the dining-room and drawing-room had grown very cold, cold as with the coldness of what is dead; and though the young laird slept in the same part of the house, not often did he enter either. But he associated with them an idea of vastness and grandeur, and attributed to the latter in particular a vague sanctity, whose origin it is not quite easy to arrive at. I think, however, such childish veneration must have the same root with all veneration for place: if there were not a natural inborn reason in such veneration, would any after influence make men capable of it? I think we shall come at length to feel all places, with all times and all spaces, venerable as the outcome of the eternal nature and the eternal thought.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DRAWING-ROOM.

As soon as they were out of the kitchen, the boy pushed his hand into his father's; the father's grasped the boy's, and without a word spoken, they walked on. They would often be half a day together without a word passing between them. To be near, each to the other, was for the time enough.

Cosmo had thought his father was going somewhere about the farm, but instead of crossing to the other side of the court where stood the sheds and stables, etc., or leaving it by the gate on the right, the laird turned to the left, and led the way to a door at the farther end of the next block. It was a heavy oak door, studded with great broad iron knobs arranged in lozenge pattern, and set deep in the thick wall. There had been a second, doubtless still stronger, flush with the external surface, for the great hooks of the hinges remained, with the bolt-hole in the stone on the opposite side. Except Grizzie to open and shut windows and attend to Cosmo's room, and Cosmo to go to it, seldom any one entered the place.

The door opened into a narrow passage, no wider than itself. Off this passage to the left was a good-sized hall with a huge fire place. It had a great oak table at which had often feasted a jubilant company, and very little furniture besides. The walls were of bare plaster, and stained with damp. Against them were fixed a few mouldering heads of wild animals—the stag and the fox and the otter—also one ancient wolf's-head. But it was not into this room the laird led his son.

The passage ended in a spiral stone stair. It was much worn, and had so little head-room that the laird could not ascend without stooping. Cosmo was short enough as yet to go erect, but it gave him always a feeling of imprisonment and choking, a brief agony of the imagination, though he passed through the narrow curves twice every day at least. That staircase was the oldest-looking thing about the place.

On a step broader than the rest the laird halted, and turning to the right, lifted a latch: all the doors of the house were latched. This one screaked dismally as it opened. The light in the room was just enough to show its panels divided by a great cross. The laird entered and folded back a shutter. An abiding flash of the ever young light of the summer day lit up the ancient room. It was some time since Cosmo had been in it, and the sunshine seemed to wither it up as it entered. It looked to him like a long withered wallflower.

It was a well furnished room. Some one lady at least with taste must have presided in it! But then withering does so much for beauty! The furniture was very modern compared with the house, but not much of it was younger than the last James, or Queen Anne, and almost all of it had a stately old-maidish look. Such venerable rooms have been described, and painted, and put on the stage, and dreamed about, tens of thousands of times; yet they haunt me as if they were as young as the new children who keep the world from growing old. On the floor was an ancient carpet, wondrously darned and skilfully patched, with all its colours faded into a sweet, faint, ghost-like harmony. Several spider-legged inlaid tables stood about, but most of the chairs were of a sturdier make; one or two were of the rich carved work of India, no doubt a great rarity when first brought to Glenwarlock. The walls had some colour, but it had grown so indistinct that no one could with certainty have said what it had been. There were three or four cabinets—one of them old Japanese; and on a table a case of gorgeous humming-birds. The cloth that covered the table and had once been scarlet was now a dirty orange, but the birds were as bright as when they darted live

jewels through tropical sunlight. They had not for the boy, however, half so much interest as a certain faded old fire-screen, lovelily worked in silks by hands to him unknown and long returned to the earth. It stood before a cold iron grate, with bulging bars, and a tall brass fender. A variety of nicknacks and ornaments, not a few of which would have been of value in the eyes of a connoisseur, crowded the chimney-piece—each with a history, mostly vanished. How still and solemn-quiet was the room with its melancholy show in the midst of the great triumphant sunny day—like some far-down hollow in a rock, the matrix of a gem! It looked as if it had done with life—as much done with it as if it were a room of the dead, hollowed in Egyptian rock; yet was it full as that of the memories of keenest life.

Having opened the shutter, the laird returned and closed the door of the room; then advancing the whole length of it, followed by Cosmo, stopped at a sofa covered with a rich brocade, and seating himself thereon, drew the boy down beside him, and began to talk to him. There was this difference between the relation of these two and that of most fathers and sons, that, thus conducted into solemn solitude by the old man, the boy felt no dismay, no sense of fault to be found, no troubled expectation of admonition. Reverence and love held equal sway in his feeling towards his father. While the grandmother looked down on Cosmo as the son of his mother, for that very reason his father in a strange lovely way reverenced his boy: the reaction was utter devotion. He sat and looked up in his father's eyes with eyes of the same colour—that bright, sweet, soft Norwegian blue, his left hand leaning gently on his father's knee, and his face worshipping his. The old man laid his gnarled right hand on his boy's left, and, I say, began to talk to him. A silent man ordinarily, it was from no lack of speech, for he had a Celtic gift of eloquence.

"This is your birthday, my son," he said.

"Yes, papa."

"You are now fourteen."

"Yes, papa."

"You are nearly a man."

"I don't know, papa."

"So nearly, at least, Cosmo, that I think from this day you had better call me *father*, for I am going to treat you like a man, and talk to you about things I have not talked about since your mother left me. You remember your mother, Cosmo?"

This question he was seldom alone with his boy without asking—not from forgetfulness of his answer, but from desire to keep fresh his remembrance of his mother, and for the pure pleasure of

talking of her to the only one with whom it did not seem profane to converse about his worshipped wife.

"Yes, father, I do."

The laird always spoke Scotch to his mother and Grizzie; the latter would have thought him seriously offended had he addressed her in book-English; but to his Marion's son he always spoke in the best English he had, and Cosmo did what he could with it in return.

"Tell me what you remember of her," said the old man.

He had heard the same answer again and again from the boy, yet every time it was as if he hoped and watched for some fresh revelation from the lips of the lad—as if, truth being one, memory might go on recalling, as imagination goes on foreseeing.

"I remember," said the boy, "a tall beautiful woman, with long hair, which she brushed before a great big looking-glass."

The love of the son, kept alive by the love of the husband, glorifying through the mists of memory the earthly appearance of his mother, gave her the form in which he was to see her again, rather than that in which he had actually beheld her. In the mirror of love's memory the husband saw her after a similar fashion. Tall to the boy of five, she was little above the middle height, yet the husband saw her stately in his dreams. There was nothing remarkable in her face except the expression, which after her marriage had continuously gathered tenderness and grace; yet the husband as well as the child recalled her as absolutely beautiful.

"What colour were her eyes, Cosmo?"

"I don't know, father; I never saw the colour of them; but I remember they looked at me as if I could hardly help running into them."

"She would have died for you, my boy. We must be very good, that we may see her again some day."

"I will try. I do try—father."

"You see, Cosmo, when a woman like that condescends to be wife to one of us and mother to the other, the least we can do when she is taken from us, is to give her the same love and the same obedience as when she was with us. She is with her own kind up in heaven now, but may be looking down and watching us. It may be God lets her do that, that she may see of the travail of her soul and be satisfied—who can tell? She can't be very anxious about me now, for I am getting old, and my warfare is nearly over, and she may be getting things ready to rest me a bit. She knows I have for a long time been trying to keep the straight path, so far as I could see it, though sometimes the grass

and heather have got the better of it, and made it hard to find. But she may be anxious about you, Cosmo. For you must remember that it is not enough to be a good boy, as I shall tell her you have always been; you've got to be a good man, and that is a rather different, and sometimes a harder thing. For, as soon as a man goes amongst other men, he finds they expect him to do things they ought to be ashamed of doing themselves; and then he has got to stand on his own honest legs, and not move an inch for all their pushing and pulling; and where a man loves his fellow-man, and likes to be on good terms with him, that is not easy. The thing is just this, Cosmo: when you are a full-grown man, you must be a good boy still—and there lies the difficulty. For a man to be a boy still, and a good boy, he must be a thorough man. The man that's not manly can never continue a good boy to his mother. And no man can be right manly, no man can keep true to his mother, except he remember him who is father and mother both to all men. I wish my Marion were here to teach you as she taught me. She taught me the reasonable way of prayer, Cosmo, as I have tried to teach you: when I was in any trouble, just to go into my closet, and shut to the door, and tell my secret Father—that same Father who loved you so much as to give you my Marion for a mother. But I am getting old and tired, and must soon go where I hope to learn faster. Oh, my boy! hear your father who loves you, and never do the thing you would be ashamed for your mother or me to know. Remember, nothing drops out; everything hid shall be revealed. But, of all things, if ever you should fail or fall, don't lie because you are down; get up again; for God's sake, for your mother's sake, for my sake, get up and try again.

"It is time you should know a little about the family of which you come. Doubtless there have been many in it who would count me a foolish man for bringing you up as I have done, but those of them that are up there with your mother don't. They see that the business of life is not to get as much as you can, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with your God—with your mother's God, my son. Men may say I've made a poor thing of it, but I shall not hang my head before the public of that country because I've let the land slip from me that I couldn't keep—any more than this weary old carcase that's now crumbling away from about me. Some would tell me I ought to shudder at the thought of leaving you to such poverty, but I am too anxious about yourself, my boy, to think much about the hardships that may be waiting you. I should be far more afraid about you if I were leaving you rich. I have seen rich people do things no poor

gentleman would do. I don't mean to say anything against the rich—there are good and bad in all sorts; but I just can't be so very sorry that I am leaving you to poverty, though, if I might have had my way, it wouldn't have been so great. But he knows best who loves best. I have struggled hard to keep the old place for you; but there's hardly an acre outside the garden and close but was mortgaged before I came into it. I've been all my life trying to pay off, but have made little progress. The house is free, however, and the garden; and don't you part with the old place, my boy, except you see you *ought*. But rather than anything not out and out honest, anything the least doubtful, sell every stone. Let all go, if you should have to beg your way home to us. Come clean, my son, as my Marion bore you."

Here Cosmo interrupted his father, to ask what *mortgaged* meant. Then the laird laid before him the whole condition of the property, showed him where the papers concerning it were, and told him who was his legal adviser. Weary then of business, of which he had all his life had much more than he liked, the laird turned to pleasanter things, and began to tell Cosmo anecdotes of the family.

"What in mercy can hae come o' the laird, think ye, my leddy?" said Grizzie. "Here's the yoong laird's birthday, an' I kenna whaur to gang to cry them til their denners!"

"Ring the great bell," said the grandmother, mindful of old custom.

"'Deed I s' du naething o' the kin'!" said Grizzie—but to herself; "it's eneuch to raise a regiment—gien it camna doon upo' my heid!"

But she had her suspicion where they were, and finding, as she expected, the great door open, ascended to the drawing-room.

The two were sitting at a table, with the genealogical tree of the family spread before them; the father had been telling tale after tale, and the son listening with delight. The laird's design was neither to glorify his family, nor teach its history, but to impress all he knew of ancestral nobility upon his boy. So much absorbed were they, that Grizzie's knock startled them.

"Yer denners is ready, laird," she said, standing erect in the doorway.

"Verra weel, Grizzie! I thank ye," returned the laird. "Cosmo, we'll take a walk this evening, and then I'll tell you more. Come to dinner now. You go first.—I houp ye hae something in honour o' the occasion, Grizzie," he said in a half-whisper when he reached the door, where the old woman waited to follow them.

"I teuk it upo' me, laird," answered Grizzie in the same tone,

while Cosmo was going down the stair, "to put a cock an' a leek thegither, an' they'll be nane the waur 'at ye hae keepit them i' the pot a while."

They descended and overtook the boy, who was lingering at the door.

"The Lord bless ye upo' this bonnie day, Cosmo!" said Grizzie. "An' may ye be aye a comfort to them 'at awes (*owns*) ye, as ye hae been to this present."

"I houp I may, Grizzie," responded Cosmo; and all went to the kitchen.

There the table was covered with a clean cloth of the finest of homespun, and everything set out with the same nicety as if the meal had been in the dining-room. The old lady, who had in truth forgotten what day it was until reminded by Grizzie, had now her best cap on, and was seated at the head of the board, waiting their arrival. She made a kind speech to the boy, the laird said a short grace, and then dinner began. It did not last long. They had the leek-soup first, then the fowl that was boiled in it, with the potatoes of Grizzie's paring, then pancakes, and dinner was over—except for the laird, who had a little toddy. Cosmo had never even tasted strong drink. Leaving the table he wandered out, pondering many things.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AN AFTERNOON SLEEP.

WITHOUT having thought whither he went, he found himself presently in a favourite haunt, in which, notwithstanding, he always had a curious feeling, not only of being far from home, but of being in a strange country. He had followed the torrent down to the valley river, then ascended the latter beyond a sudden sharp turn, and crossed it. He was now in a lonely nook of the glen, with steep *braes* about him on all sides, some of them smooth and covered with grass, others rugged and unproductive. He threw himself down in the clover of the little meadow, and straightway felt as if he were miles from home. Not a shadow of life was to be seen—cottage-chimney or any smoke, human being, work of hands, or sign of cultivation except the grass and clover. I do not know whether it came from his having learned in childhood that here he was beyond his father's land, or from an early sense of loneliness which a brooding fancy had fixed, but as often as he

visited the spot, he felt like a hermit of the wilderness cut off from human society, and was haunted with a vague sense of neighbouring hostility. Possibly it came of a childish fancy that the nook ought to be theirs still, as it had once been; but by no wrong outside of itself had the family lost it.

His sense of *away-from-homeness*, however, was not strong enough to keep Cosmo from falling into such a dreamful reverie as by degrees naturally terminated in slumber. Seldom is sleep far from one who lies in the grass, with the sound of waters in his ears. And ever active as Cosmo's mind was, perhaps in part because of its activity, he was very ready to fall asleep when warm and supine.

The moment he woke from what seemed a dreamless slumber, his half-roused senses were called upon to render account of something extraordinary of which they could not immediately lay hold: what could the strange thing be which he saw on the crest of the height before him on the other side of the water? Was it a fire in a grate, thinned away by the sunlight? How could there be a grate where there was neither house nor wall? As his eyes recovered themselves, even in heraldry the thing he saw would have seemed strange. There stood a frightful-looking creature half consumed in light—yet a pale light, surely not strong enough to burn! It could not be a phœnix, for he saw no wings, and thought he saw four legs. He burst out laughing, and laughed that the hills echoed. His sleep-blinded eyes had at length found their focus!

"I see!" he said, "I see what it is! It's Jeames Gracie's coo 's been loupin' ower the mune, an' stucken upo' 't!"

In very truth there was the moon between the legs of the cow! She did not remain there long, however, but was soon on the cow's back.

He bethought him of a couplet that Grizzie had taught him when he was a child:—

> "Whan the coo loups ower the mune,
> The reid gowd rains intil men's shune."

And in after-life he recalled not unfrequently the odd vision. When, imagining he had solved some difficulty, the same would presently emerge in a new form, as if it had but taken the time necessary to change its garment, he would say to himself with a sigh, "The coo's no ower the mune yet!" and set himself afresh to shape a handle on the infinite.

Grizzie, who was out searching for him, heard the roar of his laughter, and guided by the sound, spied him where he lay.

Presently she was looking down upon him like a benevolent gnome that had discovered a friendless mortal asleep in a place of danger.

"Eh, Cosmo, laddie, ye'll get yer deid o' caul'!" she cried. "An' preserve's a'! what set ye lauchin' in sic a fearsome fashion as yon? Ye're surely no fey (*acting unlike one's self from the approach of doom*)!"

"Na, I'm no fey, Grizzie. Ye wad hae lauchen yersel' to see Jeames Gracie's coo wi' the mune 'atween the hin' an' the fore legs o' her. It was terrible funny."

"Hoots! I see naething to lauch at i' that. The puir coo cudna help whaur the mune wad gang. The haivenly boadies is no to be restricket."

Again Cosmo burst into a great laugh, and this time Grizzie, terrified lest he should in reality be *fey*, grew angry, and seizing hold of him by the arm, pulled lustily.

"Get up, I tell ye!" she cried. "Here's the laird speirin' what's come o' ye 'at ye come na hame to yer tay!"

But Cosmo instead of rising only laughed the more, and went on until at length Grizzie made use of a terrible threat.

"As sure's sowens (*oat-meal jelly*)!" she said, "gien ye dinna haud yer tongue wi' that menseless-like lauchin', I'll no tell ye anither auld-warld tale afore Mairti'mas."

"Will ye tell me ane the nicht gien I haud my tongue an' gang hame wi' ye?" rejoined Cosmo.

"Ay, that wull I—that's gien I can min' upo' ane."

He rose at once, and laughed no more, and they walked home together in the utmost peace.

After tea, father and son went out for their walk, and in the course of it called on James Gracie, the owner of the cow whose *instellation* had so much amused Cosmo. James was an old man, a weaver to trade, whose father and grandfather before him had for many a decade done the weaving-work, both in linen and wool, required at the castle, but who had been on the property, in the person of his ancestors, from a time almost immemorial. He had but a cottage, and a little bit of land, barely enough to feed the cow, the playmate of the moon; but, poor little place as James's was, if the laird would have sold it, the price within his reach would have gone a good way towards clearing the rest of his property of its encumbrances. For the situation of the cottage was such as to make it a very Naboth's vineyard in the eyes of a certain lord Lumbiggin, on the border of whose land it stood—a lord of session he was, whose father had been so little of a gentleman, that the lordship in addition had not been enough to

make a gentleman of his son. He was one of those trim, orderly men, who will sacrifice anything—not to beauty—of that they have in general no sense—but to tidiness. To them it is the first thing, apparently because its pursuit is the nearest approach to creative energy of which they are capable. Hence the dwelling of James Gracie, visible from not a few of his windows, and very near the gate of his private road, was an eyesore to him, for it was not tidy, though to any life-loving nature as pleasant to know as it was picturesque to look at. But the decentest show of poverty seems to be felt as a reproach by some of the rich!—why else are they so anxious to get it out of their sight? Anyhow lord Lumbiggin could not bear the proximity of a cottage which no painter would have consented to omit themselves from his landscape.

The laird sat down and had some talk with James and his wife, while Cosmo went into the little garden with Agnes their granddaughter. There they seated themselves under an elder tree.

"Yon'er 's lord Lickmyloof leanin' ower his gate, an' glowerin' at 's!" said Agnes.

That was the name by which lord Lumbiggin was generally known throughout the country. Many who called him by it had never even heard his real title. It was given him because of a nasty habit he had, which I need not indicate further than by mentioning that the word *loof* in Scotch means the palm of the hand.

"Ye're no feart at 'im, are ye, Aggie?" said Cosmo.

"Na; he canna du mair nor kill 's," answered Agnes with a wise smile.

"My father 'ill never lat 'im come near ye," said Cosmo.

"I ken that—no gien he can help it," rejoined Agnes.

"My father wad jist protec' a'body," said Cosmo.

"An' wha is there to protec' *him?*" returned Agnes sadly.

"Ane 'at 's abune a'," replied Cosmo.

"Ye're richt there, I doobtna a hair," responded Agnes.

"That's jist like ane o' Grizzie's sayings," remarked Cosmo, and they laughed together.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SCHOOL.

THE next morning, by the steep farm road, and the parish road which ran along the border of the river, Cosmo, on his way to school, with his books in a green baize bag hung by the strings over his shoulder, came out from among the hills upon a comparative plain. But there were hills all around him yet, though farther off. They were not very high hills—few of them reaching two thousand feet—but bleak and bare, even under the glow of the summer sun: the time of heather was not yet; then they would show warm and rich—to the eyes of poet and painter, that is; the farmers there would have felt it an insult to be asked to admire them at any time: they were incapable of production! And in truth many a man who now admires and enjoys waste places, would be unable to do so if, like those farmers, he had to struggle with nature for little more than a bare living. What with early, long-lasting, and bitter winters, and the poverty of the soil in many parts, the struggle there was a severe one.

Leaving the river, the road ascended a little, and joined the highway, which here ran along a level consisting mostly of peat-land lately subjugated. It went for two miles in a straight line, fenced in parts by stone walls without mortar, abhorrent to the eye of Cosmo; in other parts by low walls of earth, covered with grass for the vagrant cow, sprinkled with loveliest wild flowers for the poet-peasant, burrowed in by wild bees for the adventurous delight of the honey-drawn schoolboy. Glad I am such had not vanished from Scotland before I found myself there. In some parts only a small ditch divided the fields from the road, and in others there was no kind of fence at all. It was a dreary road even in summer, though not therefore without its own attendant interests and even beauties.

A short way past the second milestone, he came to the first straggling houses of the village. It was called Muir o' Warlock, after the moor on which it stood, as the moor was named after the river that ran through it, and the river after the glen, and that from the family of Warlock, which had thus scattered its cognomen around it. A somewhat dismal-looking village it was—except to those that knew its people: to some of them it was beautiful—as the plainest face is beautiful to him who through it sees a fair soul inside. The highway, a broad fine road, fit for the richest country

under the sun, formed, with a path on each side, its only street. Some of its houses stood immediately on the edge of the path; some of them receded a little, with a garden between. They were almost all of one story, built of stone, and rough-cast—*harled* they called it there. They had mostly roofs of thick thatch, in which an occasional half-smothered pane of glass might hint at some sort of room beneath. A few were slated, and had dormer windows.

As Cosmo passed along, he saw every craftsman in the place at work; from blacksmith to tailor all were busy. Now and then he was met by a strong scent, as of burning leather, from the oak-bark which, after its astringent power had been exhausted in the tanpit, some of the housewives used for fuel; but mostly the air was filled with the odour of burning peat. He knew almost everybody, and was kindly greeted as he went along—nor the less that some of them, when they heard he was not at school the day before, had remarked that his birthday hardly brought him enough to keep it with. The vulgarity belonging to the worship of Mammon is by no means confined to the rich. Many of the villagers, having next to nothing, yet thought possession the one thing—money, houses, lands, the only inheritances. It is a marvel that even world-loving people should never see with what a load they oppress the lives of their children when, instead of bringing them up to earn their own living, and thus enjoy at least *the game* of life, they leave them a fortune enough to sink a devil yet deeper in hell. Was it nothing to Cosmo to inherit a long line of ancestors whose story he knew—their virtues, their faults, their wickedness, their humiliation? Was it nothing to inherit the nobility of a father such as his—the graciousness of a mother such as that father caused him to remember her? Was there no occasion for the laird to rejoice on the birthday of a boy whom he believed to have inherited all the virtues of his race, and left all their vices behind?

From time immemorial, until the present schoolmaster took it upon himself to abolish it, the birthday of "the yoong laird" had been a holiday to the school as well as to himself. Throughout the village, although there were several proprietors whose lands came closer to it, nearly all of whom were lairds, and although the village itself had ceased to belong to the family, Glenwarlock was yet always *the* laird; and the better part in the hearts of even its least elevated inhabitants honoured him as the best man in the country, "thof he hed little skeel o' haudin' his ain nest thegither."

There is scarce a money-making man who does not believe poverty the cousin, if not the child of fault; and the more un-

scrupulous, *within the law*, a man has been in making his money, the more he regards the man who seems to have lost the race he has won, as somehow or other to blame. "People with nought are naughty." Nor is this judgment confined to the morally unscrupulous. Few permitted to be successful care to conjecture that it may be the will of the power that, in part through their affairs, rules men, that some, of whom better can be made by preventing their so-called success, should therefore be unsuccessful: some men rise with the treatment under which others would sink. But although few of the inhabitants of Muir o' Warlock would have taken interest in such a theory of discipline, they all loved the man to whom they were incapable of yielding the just benefit of its application.

They all liked, and some who knew him best loved the young laird too; for if he had no lands, neither had he any pride, they said, and was as happy sitting with an old woman, sharing her tea, as at a lord's table. He was less of a favourite at school, however. Incapable of self-assertion, his inborn consciousness of essential humanity rendering it next to impossible to him to claim anything, some of the bigger boys were less than friendly with him. But the point in his behaviour particularly distasteful to them was that he seemed to scorn even an honest advantage, for he never could bring himself, in the small matters of dealing that pass between boys at school, to make the least profit. He had a passion for fair play, which, combined with an active love to his neighbour, made an advantage, although perfectly understood and recognized, almost a physical pain to him: he shrank from it with something like disgust. I may not, however, conceal my belief, that there was in this a rudimentary tinge of the pride of those of his ancestors who looked down upon commerce, though not upon oppression or even on robbery. But the true man will change to nobility even the instincts derived from strains of inferior moral development in his race—as the oyster makes, they say, of the sand grain a pearl.

Greeting the tailor through his open window, where he sat cross-legged on his table, the shoemaker on his stool, which, this lovely summer morning, he had brought to the door of his cottage, and the smith in his nimbus of sparks through the half-door of his smithy, and receiving from each a kindly response, the boy walked steadily on till he came to the school. There, on the heels of the master, the boys and girls were in the act of crowding in, and he entered along with them.

The religious preliminaries over, consisting of a dry and apparently grudging recognition of a sovereignty that required the

homage, and the reading of a chapter of the Bible in class, the *secular* business of the school commenced. Cosmo was sitting with his books before him, occupied with a hard passage in *Cæsar*, when the master left his desk and came to him.

"You'll have to make up for lost time to-day, Cosmo," he said.

Now if anything was certain to make Cosmo angry, it was the show, however slight, of disapproval of anything his father thought, or did, or sanctioned. His face flushed, and he answered quickly—

"The time wasn't lost, sir."

This reply made the master in his turn angry, but he restrained himself.

"I'm glad of that," he said. "I may then expect to find you prepared with your lessons."

"I learned my lessons for yesterday," Cosmo answered, "but my father says it's no play to learn lessons."

"Your father's not master of this school."

"He's maister o' me!" returned the boy, lapsing into the mother tongue.

The master took the youth's devotion to his father for insolence to himself.

"I shall say no more," he rejoined, still using the self-command which of all men an autocrat requires, "till I find how you do in your class. That you are the best scholar in it, is no reason why you should idle away hours in which you might have been laying up store for the time to come."—This last was a phrase much favoured of the master—in present application foolish.—"But probably your father has no intention of sending you to college?"

"My father hasna said, an' I haena speirt," answered Cosmo, with his eyes on his book.

Still misinterpreting the boy, the conceit and ill-temper of the master here overcame him, causing him to forget the proprieties and his English together.

"Haud on the gait ye're in, laddie, an' ye'll be as great a fule as yer father himsel'!" he said.

Cosmo rose, white as the wall behind him, looked in the master's eyes one brief moment, caught up his *Cæsar*, and dashed it in his face. Most boys would then have made for the door, but that was not Cosmo's idea of bearing witness. The moment the book left his hand, he drew himself up, stood like a statue, looked full at the master, and waited. Not by a motion would he avoid or avert any consequence of his act.

He had not long to wait. But a corner of the book had gone

into the master's eye, and clapping his hand to it, he seemed for a moment or two lost in suffering. All at once he clenched his fist, and knocked the boy down. Cosmo fell backward, with his legs over the form, his head struck the floor, and he lay.

A shriek arose, and a girl came rushing up.

"Go to your seat, Agnes!" shouted the master, and turning from her, stood, with his handkerchief to one eye, looking down on the boy. So little did he know him, he suspected him of pretending to be more hurt than he was.

"Touch me gien ye daur," cried Agnes, and stooped to take his legs off the form.

The master seized her, pulled her away, and flung her from him that she almost fell.

But by this time the pain in his eye had subsided a little, and he began to doubt whether indeed the boy was pretending. He began also to feel uneasy as to the possible consequences of his hasty act—not half so uneasy, however, as he would have felt had the laird been as well-to-do as his neighbour, Lord Lickmyloof: he, the master thought, would be rather pleased than otherwise at any grief that might befall either Cosmo or the lass Gracie, and he did not therefore much fear anything serious from the failure of his self-command. He dragged the boy up by the arm and set him in his place on the form ere Agnes could return; but his face was as that of one dead, and he fell forward on the desk. With a second great cry, Agnes sprang to him. She was a strong girl of sixteen, accustomed to all kinds of work, outdoor and indoor. She put her arms round Cosmo's waist from behind, drew him from the form, and sped with him thus to the door, which because of the heat stood open. There she took him in her arms, and literally ran with him along the street. The master had had enough of it, and did not attempt to hinder her.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GRANNIE'S COTTAGE.

She had not to pass many houses before she came to that of her grandfather's mother, an aged woman, I need not say, but in very tolerable health and strength, nevertheless. She sat at her spinning wheel with her door wide open. Suddenly, and to her dulled sense noiselessly, Aggie came staggering in with her burden. She dropped him on the old woman's bed, then collapsed on the floor, her heart and lungs going wildly.

"I' the name o' a'!" cried her great-grandmother, stopping her wheel and breaking her thread, the end of which twisted madly up amongst the revolving iron teeth now emerging from the mist of their own speed, in which a moment before they had looked ethereal as the vibration-film of a dragon-fly's wings.

She rose with a haste marvellous for her years, and approaching, looked down on the prostrate form of the girl.

"It can never be my ain Aggie," she faltered, "to rush intil my quaiet hoose that gait, fling a man upo' my bed, an' fa' her len'th upo' my flure!"

But Agnes was not yet able to reply. She could only sign with her hand to the bed, which she did with such energy that her great-grandmother—*Grannie*, she called her, as did the whole of the village—turned at once thitherward. She could not see well, and the box-bed was dark, so she did not at first recognize Cosmo. But the moment she suspected who it was, she uttered a cry, feeble and wailful.

"The Michty be ower's! what's come to my bairn?" she said.

"The maister knockit him doon," gasped Agnes.

"Eh, lassie! rin for the doctor."

"Na, na!" came feebly from the bed. "I dinna want notice ta'en o' the business."

"Are ye sair hurtit, my bairn?" asked the old woman.

"My heid's some sair, an' throughither-like," answered Cosmo; "but I'll jist lie still a wee, an' syne I'll be able to gang hame. I'm some sick. I winna gang back to the schuil the day."

"Na, my bonny man, that ye sanna!" cried Grannie, in a tone of mingled pity and indignation.

A moment more, and Agnes rose from the earth, for earth it was, quite fresh; and the two did all they could to make him comfortable. Agnes would have gone at once to let his father know: she was perfectly able, she said, and in truth seemed nothing the worse for her fierce exertion. But Cosmo said, "Bide a wee, Aggie, an' we'll gang hame thegither. I'll be better in twa or three minutes."

He did not get better so fast as he expected, however; and the only condition on which Grannie would consent not to send for the doctor, was that Aggie should go and tell his father.

"But eh, Aggie!" said the boy, "dinna lat him think there's onything to be fleyt aboot. It's naething but a gey knap o' the heid, for I'm sure the maister didna inten' duin' me ony sarious injury. But my father's sure to gie 'im fair play! He gies a'body fair play."

Agnes set out, and Cosmo fell asleep.

She hurried to the castle, and in the yard found the laird.

"Weel, lassie!" he said, "what brings ye here this time o' day? What for are ye no at the school? Ye'll hae little eneuch o' 't by an' by whan the hairst (*harvest*) 's here."

"It's the yoong laird!" said Aggie, and stopped.

"What's come till 'im?" asked the laird quickly, and in the sharpened tone of anxiety.

"It's no muckle, he says himsel'. But his heid's some sair yet."

"What maks his heid sair? He was weel eneuch whan he gaed i' the mornin'!"

"The maister knockit 'im doon."

The laird started as if one had struck him on the face. The blood reddened his forehead, and his old eyes flashed like two stars. The battle-fury of his fighting race rushed up from ancient fountains in the roots of his being, and almost whelmed his throbbing brain. He clenched his withered fist, drew himself up straight, and made his knees strong. For one moment he was again in the prime of life and its pride. The next his fingers relaxed, his hand fell by his side, and he bowed his head.

"The Lord hae mercy upo' me!" he murmured. "I was near takin' the affairs o' ane o' his intil *my* han's!"

He covered his face with his wrinkled hands, and the girl stood beside him in awe-filled silence. She did not quite comprehend, and was troubled at seeing him stand thus motionless. In the trembling voice of one who would comfort a superior, she said at length—

"Dinna greit, laird. He'll be better, I'm thinkin', afore ye win til 'im. It was Grannie gart me come—no him."

Speechless the laird turned, and without entering the house, walked away.

He had reached the valley-road before he discovered that Agnes was behind him.

"Dinna ye come, Aggie," he said, looking over his shoulder; "ye may be wantit at hame."

"Ye dinna think I wad ley ye, laird!—'cep' ye was to sen' me frae ye. I'm 'maist as guid's a man to gang wi' ye—wi' the advantage o' bein' a wuman. Ye see we can daur mair nor a man—but, guid forgie me!—no mair nor the yoong laird when he flang his *Cæsar* i' the maister's face."

The laird stopped, turned sharply round, and looked at her.

"What did he that for?" he asked.

"'Cause he ca'd yersel' a fule," answered the girl, with the utmost simplicity, and no less reverence.

The laird drew himself up once more, and again for a moment looked twenty years younger. It was neither pride that inspired him, nor indignation, but the father's joy at finding in his son his champion.

"Mony ane's ca'd me that, I weel believe, lassie, though no to my ain face or that o' my bairn afore—whether deservt or no, Ane kens. It's no by the word o' man we stan' or fa'; but by hoo the Maister luiks upon oor endeevour to gang by the thing he says. Min' this, lassie—lat fowk say as they like, but du ye as *he* likes, an', or a' be dune, they'll be upo' their k-nees to ye. An' sae they'll be yet to my bairn—though I'm some tribled he sud hae saired (*served*) the maister—e'en as he deservt."

"What cud he du, sir? It wasna for himsel' he strack! An' syne he muved na an inch, but stude there like a rock, nor liftet a han' to defen' himsel', but jist loot the maister tak his wull o' 'im!"

A flash of the joy eternal illuminated the father's soul. He turned again to the road, and the pair tramped swiftly along, heeding nothing on either hand as they went, Aggie lithe and active, the laird stooping greatly in his forward anxiety to see his injured boy, but walking much faster "than his age afforded."

Ere they reached the village, the midday recess had come, and everybody knew what had happened. Sincere were all, and some loud, in praise of the boy's behaviour, and many were the eyes that from window and door watched Glenwarlock as he hurried down the street to Grannie's, where everybody knew the young laird was lying, but as he passed, no one spoke above a whisper. The laird walked straight on, with his eyes to the ground, glancing neither to the right hand nor the left; and as did the laird, so did Aggie.

The door of Grannie's cottage stood open. There was a step down, but the laird knew it well. Turning to the left through a short passage, in the window of which stood a large hydrangea, shadowing two wooden pails of water below, he lifted the latch of the inner door, bowed his tall head, and entered the room where lay his darling. With a courteous obeisance to Grannie, he went straight up to the bed, saw that Cosmo slept, and stood regarding him with a full heart. Who can tell but him who knows it, how much more it is to be understood by one's own, than by all the world beside! To him who is supported by his own few, how small a thing is the misprision of the multitude!

The room was dark though it was summer, and although it had two windows, one to the street, and one to the garden behind: both were nearly filled up with plants favoured of Grannie, so that

little light could get in, while that little was half swallowed by the general brownness. For ceiling and floor were of a dark brown, the beams and boards of the one old and interpenetrated with smoke, and the other of hard-beaten clay, also full of smoke. A tall eight-day clock stood in one corner, up to which whoever would learn from it the time had to advance confidentially, and consult its face on tiptoe with peering eyes. Beside it was a beautifully polished chest of drawers; a tea-table of old mahogany stood in the centre, and some dark-shiny wooden chairs against the walls. A closet opened at the head of the bed, and at the foot of it was the door of the room, so that the bed was in a recess,—with doors, which were in a line with those of the closet and the room. A fire, partly of peat, partly of tan, burned on the little hearth.

Cosmo opened his eyes, and saw those of his father looking down upon him. He stretched out his arms, and drew the aged head upon his bosom.

"How do you find yourself, my boy?" said the laird, gently releasing himself. "I know all about it; you need not trouble yourself to tell me more than just how you are."

"Better, father—much better," answered Cosmo. "But there is one thing I must tell you. Just before it happened, we were reading in the Bible class about Samson—how the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and with the jaw-bone of an ass he slew ever so many of the Philistines; and when the master said the bad word, it seemed as if the spirit of the Lord came upon me; for I was not in a rage, but filled with what seemed a holy indignation; and as I had no ass's jaw-bone handy, I took my *Cæsar* and flung it as hard and as straight as I could in his face.—I am not so sure about it now," he added, a little sadly.

"Tak' ye nae thoucht anent it, Cosmo, my bairn," said the old woman, taking up the word. "It's no a hair 'ayont what he deserved 'at daured put sic a word to the best man in a' the cuintry. By the han' o' a babe, sic as Dawvid afore Goliah o' Gath, heth the Lord rebuked the enemy. The Lord himsel's upo' yer side, laird, to gie ye siccan a son."

"I never kent him lift his han' afore," said the laird, as if he would fain mitigate judgment on youthful indiscretion, "—excep' it was to the Kirkmalloch bull whan he ran at 's as gien he wad hae cleart the warl o' 's."

"The mair like it *was* the speerit o' the Lord, as the bairn himsel' jaloost (*jealoused, suspected*)," remarked Grannie, in a tone of confidence, to which the laird was ready enough to yield; "an' whaur the speerit o' the Lord is, there's leeberty," she added, quoting for the words rather than the meaning.

Glenwarlock stooped and kissed his son, then went to fetch the doctor. Before he returned, Cosmo was asleep again, and the doctor would not have him waked. He assured the laird there was no danger, and recommended him to go home. The boy must remain where he was for the night, he said; if the least cause for uneasiness should appear, he would send his gig for him at once.

"I don't know what to think," returned the laird: "it would occasion Grannie so much trouble and inconvenience!"

"'Deed, laird, ye sud be ashamed to say sic a thing: it'll be naething o' the kin'!" cried the old woman. "Here he s' bide—wi' your leave, sir, an' no muv frae whaur he lies! There's anither bed in the cloaset there. But, troth, what wi' the sorrow i' my banes, an'—an'—the din o' the rottans (*rats*), we s' ca' 't, mony's the nicht I gang to nae bed ava' (*of all, at all*); an' to hae the yoong laird sleepin' there, an' keep watch ower him, 'ill be jist like haein' a bairn i' the hoose, an' bein' o' some consequence again. Eh, sir, it's a lang time sin' I was onybody i' this warl'! I'm sure I houp they'll hae something for auld fowk to du i' the neist, for there's unco * little here."

"Hoots, Mistress Forsyth," returned the laird, "the' 'll be naebody auld there!"

"Hoo am *I* to win in than, sir? *I*'m auld, gien onybody ever was auld! An' hoo's yersel' to win in, sir—for ye maun be some auld by this time, thof I min' weel yer father a bit loonie (*a small boy*) in a tartan kilt?"

"What wad ye say to bein' made yoong again, auld freen'?" suggested the laird, with a smile of wonderful sweetness.

"Eh, sir! there's naething to that effec' i' the word."

"Hoot!" rejoined the laird, "wad ye hae me plaguit to tell the laddie there a' thing I wad du for him, as gien he hadna a hert o' his ain to tell 'im a score o' things—ay, hun'ers o' things? Dinna ye ken 'at the speerit o' man 's the can'le o' the Lord?"

"Hoo is 't 'at sae mony follows their ain fancies than, laird? What comes o' yer can'le there?"

"That's them 'at never luiks whaur the licht fa's, but aye some ither gait, no carin' to walk by the same. But them 'at orders their w'ys by what licht they hae, there's no fear o' them. Even sud they stummle, they sanna fa'."

"'Deed, laird, I'm thinkin' ye may be richt! I hae stummlet mony's the time, but I'm no doon yet! I hae a guid houp 'at

* *Unco* is from the old *uncouth*, which meant *unknown*. It is here used as an intensifying adverb, and has the force of *extremely*.

maybe, puir dissiple as I am, the Maister may lat on (*allow*) 'at he kens me."

Cosmo began to stir. His father went to the bedside, and saw at a glance that the boy was better. He told him what the doctor had decreed. Cosmo declared himself able to get up and go home that minute. But his father would not hear of it.

"I can't bear to think of you walking back all the way alone, papa—father!" objected Cosmo.

"Ye dinna think, Cosmo," interposed Aggie, "'at I'm gaein' to lat the laird gang hame himlane, an' me here to be his body-gaird! I ken my duty better nor that."

But the laird did not go till he had taken tea with Grannie, and the doctor had again come and gone, having said decidedly that all Cosmo needed was a little rest, and that he would be quite well in a day or two.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DREAMS.

THE gloaming came down much sooner in Grannie's cottage than on the sides of the eastward hills, but though the room was always dusky, it was never at this season quite dark at any time of the night. The old woman made up her little fire, and it glowed a bright heart to the shadowy place, for, though it was summer, such an old nurse needed a little extra warmth to her limbs during the night-watches. Then she sat down in her great chair, and all was still.

"What for arena ye spinnin', Grannie?" said Cosmo. "I like fine to hear yer wheel singin' like a muckle flee (*fly*) upo' the winnock.* It spins i' my heid lang lingles † o' thouchts, an' dreams, an' *wadbe's*. Neist to hearkenin' til a tale, I like to hear a wheel spinnin'. It has a w'y o' 'ts ain wi' me."

"I was feart it micht vex ye wi' the soomin' o' 't," answered Grannie, and rose, lighted her little lamp, and sat down to her wheel.

For a long unweary time, Cosmo lay listening—an aerial Amphion, building castles in the air to its monotonous music, which, like the drone of the bagpipes, would accompany any of his dream-tunes.

* Diminutive of *window*.

† A *lingle*—something long by entanglement.

When a man comes to trust in God thoroughly, he shrinks from castle-building, lest his faintest fancy should run counter to that loveliest Will; but a boy's dreams are nevertheless a part of his education. And the true heart will not leave the blessed conscience out even in its dreams.

Those of Cosmo were chiefly of a gracious woman, much older than himself, whom he obeyed and served. They came from the heart that needed a mother, and were bodied out from the memory, far-off and faint, of his own mother, and the imaginations of her so often roused by his father. This woman would be now one, now another of the powers of the fire, the air, the earth, and the water, who favoured, helped, and protected him, through dangers and trials many. Such imaginings may be unhealthy for those who will not face duty; but to those who labour in the direction of their ideal, dreams, I think, do no hurt, fostering rather the ideal.

When at length the spinning-wheel ceased its hum, the silence enwrapped Cosmo like the silence after a song, and his thoughts refused to do their humming alone. He had been all the time with sylphs in a great palace, on the tree-tops of a forest ages old; where the buxom air bathed every limb, and was to his ethereal body as water; where every room rocked like the baby's cradle of the nursery rhyme, but equilibrium attended the merest motion of the will; where the birds nested in the cellars, the squirrels ran up and down the stairs, the woodpeckers pulled themselves along the columns and rails by their beaks, and all kinds of flashing winged things haunted the domes and ceilings, and perched on the cornices, brackets, and couches; where the wind swung the whole city with a rhythmic roll and rime, and the sway as of tempest-waves, music-ruled to ordered cadences; where, far below, lower than the cellars, the deer, and the mice, and the dormice, and the foxes, and all wild things ran in its caves; and there he was watched and loved and taught by the most gracious and graceful, the most ethereally tender and powerful of beings: from this high city of the sylphs, he fell supine into Grannie's box-bed, with the departed hum of her wheel spinning out its last ghost-thread of sound in his disappointed brain.

In after years recalling the dreams of his boyhood, he never sighed after them as something gone, but would say to himself, "What matter! My own mother is waiting me, fairer and stronger and real. I imagined the elves; God imagined my mother."

Here the unconscious magician of the mystery, who had seemed to be spinning his very brain into dreams, rose, and, drawing near, said, as if to sweep down the last cobweb of the airy phantasy she had first called up—

"Is ye waukin', Cosmo, my bairn?"

"Ay am I," answered Cosmo, with a faint pang, and a strange sense of loss: when should he dream the like again?

"Soon, soon, Cosmo!" he might have heard, could he have interpreted the telephonic signals from the depths of his own being. "Wherever the creative Pneuma can enter, there it enters; and no door stands so wide to it as that of the obedient heart."

"Weel, ye maun hae yer supper," said Grannie, "an' syne ye maun say yer prayers, an' hae dune wi' Tyseday, an' gang on til Wudensday."

"I'm nae wantin' ony supper, thank ye," said the boy.

"Ye maun hae something, my bonny man; for them 'at aits ower little, as weel's them 'at aits ower muckle, the nichtmear rides—an' she's a fearsome horse! Ye can never win upo' the back o' *her*, for as guid a rider as ye're weel kent to be, my bairn! Sae wull ye hae a drappy parritch, or a sup o' gruel, sic as yer mother used to like weel frae my han', whan it sae happent I was i' the hoose?"

Cosmo chose the gruel, and from his nest watched the process of its making. Several times he fell asleep and woke again before it was finished, but when he had taken it, he fell asleep in earnest.

When he woke next, it was in the middle of the night. The lamp was nearly burned out: it had a long, red, disreputable nose, that spoke of exhausted oil. Grannie was asleep in her chair. The clock had struck something, and the sound of its bell was yet faintly pulsing the air. He sat up, and looked out into the room. Almost a sensation was upon him—he could not tell of what. He felt as if something had been going on besides the striking of the clock, and were not yet over—as if something was even now being done in the room. But there the old woman slept, motionless, and apparently in perfect calm! Her calm, however, could not have been so profound as it seemed, for presently she began to talk. At first came only portions of broken sentences, parted occasionally by a long pause; and just as he had concluded she would say nothing more, she would begin again. There was something awful to the fancy of the boy in this issuing of words from the lips of one apparently unconscious of surrounding things, and her voice, hardly the voice he knew, came to him like that of one speaking from another world. He was a brave boy; conscience or imagination could make him tremble, but of cowardice he knew nothing: his hair might rise upon his head, but that head he never hid beneath the bed clothes. He now sat staring through the gloom at the old woman leaning back in her chair,

muttering at irregular intervals. By and by she spoke a little more continuously, and now Cosmo's heart had got a little quieter, and making less noise in his ears allowed him to hear better. After a few words seemingly unconnected, she began to murmur something that sounded like verse, and Cosmo soon perceived that she was saying the same thing over and over. At length he had not only made out every word of the few lines, but had them so as to remember them:—

> "Catch yer naig an' pu' his tail;
> In his hin' heel caw (*drive*) a nail;
> Rug his lugs (*pull his ears*) frae ane anither—
> Stan' up, an' ca' the king yer brither."

When first he repeated to himself the lines in their completeness, the old woman still muttering them, he could not help laughing, and the noise roused her. She woke—not, like most young people, with gradual recovery of consciousness: all at once she sat wide awake in her chair.

"Was I snorin', laddie, 'at ye leuch?" she asked, in a tone of slight offence.

"Eh, na!" replied Cosmo. "I leuch or (*before*) I kent—ye was sayin' something sae funny i' yer sleep—a queer jingle o' poetry like."

Therewith he repeated the rime, and Grannie burst into a merry laugh—which, however, sobered rather suddenly.

"I dinna won'er I was sayin' ower thae fule words," she said, "for 'deed I was dreamin' o' the only ane I ever h'ard them frae. It's mony a year sin' syne (*since then*), but I'm no muckle gi'en to forgettin': I was a lass, maybe aboot thirty. Onybody micht hae h'ard the auld captain sayin' them—ower an' ower til himsel', as gien he cudna weary o' them, but naebody seemed to tak' muckle notice. I used whiles to won'er whether he un'erstude what he was sayin', or gien there was onything til un'erstan' in sic havers."

"Was there ony mair o' the ballant nor jist thae fower line?" asked Cosmo.

"Gien there was mair, I h'ard na 't," replied Grannie. "An' weel I wat, he wasna ane to sing, the auld captain! H'ard ye never tell o' 'im, laddie?"

"Gien ye mean the brither o' the laird o' the time, wha was my father's gran'father, him 'at cam hame frae his seafarin' to the East Indies——"

"Ay, ay; that's him! Ye hae h'ard tell o' 'im! He had a ship o' 's ain, an' made mony a voyage afore you or me was born, an' was an auld man whan at len'th hame cam he, as the sang

says—ower auld to haud by the sea ony mair. Never sall I forget the luik o' the man whan first I saw 'im, nor the hurry an' the scurry, the rinnin' here an' the routin' there got up whan the face o' 'm luikit ower the yett (*gate*) ! Ye see, they a' thoucht he was hame wi' a walth 'ayont figures. Eh, but he was no a bonny man ! an' fowk said he dee'dna a fairstrae deith : hoo that may be, I maunna say I ken, but there *war* unco (*strange*) things aboot the affair—things 'at winna weel bide speykin o'. Ae thing's clear, an' that is, 'at the place has never thriven sin' syne—only, for that maitter, it hedna thriven for mony a lang afore.

"There was a fowth o' awfu' stories reengin' the cuintry, like ghaists 'at naebody cud get a grup o'—as to hoo he had gotten his siller, an' sic like—the siller 'at naebody ever saw ; for upo' that siller, as I tell ye, fint (*fiend*) a sowl ever cuist an e'e. Some said he had been a pirate upo' the hie seas, an' tuik the siller in lumps o' gowd frae puir ships 'at hadna men eneuch to haud the grip o't ; some said he had been a privateer ; an' ither some 'at there was sma' differ 'atween the twa. An' some wad hae't he was ane o' them 'at tuik an' sauld the puir black fowk, 'at cudna help bein' black, for as ootlandish as 't maun luik,—I never saw nane o' the nation mysel'—ony mair nor a corbie (*raven*) can help his feathers no bein' like a doo's ; an' gien they turnt black for ony deevilry o' them 'at was their forbeirs (*ancestors*), I ken na, an' it maks naething to me or mine—I wad fain an' far raither du them a guid turn nor tak' an' sell them ; for gien their parents sinned, the mair are they to be pitied. But as I was sayin', naebody kent hoo he had gethert his siller, the mair by token 'at maybe there was nane, for naebody, as I was tellin' ye, ever saw a glimp o' siller aboot 'im. For a close-loofed (*palmed*), near kin' o' a man he was, gien ever ony ! Aye ready was he to borrow a shillin' frae ony fule 'at wad len' 'im ane, an' lang wad him 'at lennt it forget to luik for 't, er' he wad think o' peyin' the same. It was mair nor ae year or twa 'at he leeved about the place, an' naebody cared muckle for his company, though a'body was ower feart at 'im to lat 'im ken he wasna welcome here or there ; for wha cud tell but he micht oot wi' the swoord he aye cairriet, an' mak a speedy en' o' 'im ! For 'deed he feartna God nor regairdit man, ony mair nor the jeedge i' the Scriptur'. He drank a heap—for a'body he ca'd upo' aye hed oot the whusky bottle, weel wullin' to please the man they dreidit."

The voice of the old woman came sounding in the ears of the boy on and on across the gloom ; and through the voice, possibly from the effects of the blow he had had, he kept constantly hearing the foolish rime : it seemed to have laid hold of

him as of her in some odd, inexplicable way—perhaps from its very foolishness:

> Catch yer naig an' pu' his tail;
> In his hin' heel caw a nail;
> Rug his lugs frae ane anither—
> Stan' up, an' ca' the king yer brither.

On and on went the rime, and on and on went the old woman's voice.

"Weel, there cam a time whan an English lord begud (*began*) to be seen aboot the place, an' that was nae common sicht i' oor cuintry. He was a freen', fowk said, o' the yoong markis o' Lossie, an' that was hoo he cam to sicht. He gaed fleein' aboot, luikin' at this, an' luikin' at that; an' whaur or hoo he fell in wi' *him*, I dinna ken, but for lang the twa o' them was a heap thegither. They playt cairts thegither, they drank thegither, they gaed drivin' thegither—for the auld captain never crossed beast's back—an' what made sic freen's o' them no ane cud imaigine. For the tane was a rouch sailor chield, an' the tither a yoong laad—little mair, an' a fine gentleman as weel's a bonny man. But the upshot o' 't a' was an ill ane; for, efter maybe aboot twa month or sae o' sic freen'ship as was 'atween them, there cam a nicht 'at brouchtna the captain hame. For ye maun un'erstan' 'at hoo, wi' a' his rouch w'ys, an' his drinkin', an' his cairt-playin', he was aye hame at nicht, an' intil 's bed, whaur he sleepit i' the best chaumer i' the castel. Ay, he wad come hame—aften as drunk as man cud be, but hame he cam! Sleep intil the efternune o' the neist day he wad, but never oot o' 's bed—or if no aye in his nakit bed, for I fan' him ance mysel' snorin' upo' the flure, it was aye intil 's ain room, as I say, an' no in ony strange place, drunk or sober. Sae there was some surprise at his no appearin', an' fowk spak o' 't, but no that muckle, for naebody cared i' their hert what cam o' the man. Still, whan the men gaed oot to their wark, they bude (*behooved*) to gie a luik gien there was ony sign o' 'im nigh: it was easy to think he micht hae been ance at last ower sair owertaen to win hame. But that wisna hit—though whan they cam upo' 'im lyin' on 's back i' the how (*hollow*) yon'er 'at luiks up to my dauchter's bit gerse for her coo, they thoucht he bude to hae sleepit there a' nicht. Sae he had, but it was the sleep 'at kens nae waukin'—at least no the kin' o' waukin' 'at comes wi' the mornin'."

Cosmo recognized with a shudder the spot where he fell asleep on his birthday.

"Deid was the auld captain—as deid as ever was man wi'

nane left to greit for 'im! But thof there was nae greitin', na but sic a hullybaloo as rase upo' the corp! They rade an' they ran; the doctor cam an' the minister, the lawyer an' the grave-digger. But whan a man's deid, what can a' the warl' du for 'im but beery 'im?—puir hin'er en' (*last end*) thof it be to him 'at draws himsel' up, an' blaws himsel' oot! There was mony a conjectur as to hoo he cam by his deith, an' mony a doobt it wasna by fair play. Some said he dee'd by his ain han', driven on til 't by the enemy; an' it's true the blade he cairriet was lyin' upo' the gerse (*grass*) aside 'im; but ither some, 'at exem't him, said the hole i' the side o' 'im wasna made wi' that. But o' a' 'at cam to luik upo' the corp, the English lord was nane. He hed vainished the cuintry; an' the general opingon sattled doon to this, 'at they twa bude til hae fa'en oot at cairts, an' fouchten, an' the auld captain, for a' his skeel an' experience, had gotten the warst o' 't, an' sae there they faun' 'im. But I reckon, Cosmo, yer father 'ill hae tellt ye a' aboot it mony's the time, an' I'm jist deivin' (*deafening*) ye wi' my clavers, an' haudin' ye ohn sleepit!"

"Na, Grannie," answered Cosmo, "he never tellt me. He did mak mention o' some gran'-uncle 'at cam til a sair hin'er en', an' I think maybe he was gaein' on to tell me aboot 'im, whan Grizzie cam to say the denner was ready. That was only yesterday—or the day afore, I'm thinkin', by this time.—But what think ye cud hae been i' the auld man's heid wi' yon jingle aboot the horsie?"

"Ow, what wad be intil 't but jist fulish nonsense! Ye ken some fowk has a trick o' sayin' the same thing ower an' ower again to themsel's wi'oot ony meanin' intil 't. There was the auld laird himsel' was ane o' sic. He wad be aye an' ower again, an' that lood oot, sayin' til himsel', 'A hun'er poun'! ay, a hun'er poun'!' It maittered na what he micht be speykin' aboot, or wha til, oot it wad come its lane i' the middle o' onything, ye cudna foretell whan or whaur: 'A hun'er poun'!' says he; 'ay, a hun'er poun'!' Fowk leuch whan they first h'ard him, but gat sae used til't as hardly to ken mair nor himsel' whan he said it, for what has nae sense has little hearin'. I believe thae rimes war never sae muckle as a verse o' an auld ballant, but jist a clatter o' clinkin' styte (*clanking nonsense*) 'at he had learnt, maybe, frae some blackamore bairn, an' cudna drive 't oot o' 'is heid ever efter, but bude to say 't, aye thinkin' sae to hae dune wi' 't. Whan the cat gangs scrattin' at the door, ye hae to get up whether ye wull or no an' open 't, an' the cratur gangs oot; but the fule owercome (*foolish repetition*) 's nae suner oot nor it's in an' scrattin' again."

Cosmo did not feel quite satisfied with the explanation, but he had nothing ready to advance against it.

"I maun alloo, hooever," the old woman went on, "'at there's something by ord'nar' aboot thae rimes; for the verra moment I got a haud o' *them* they tuik a grip o' *me;* an' ever sin' syne they hae an unco queer w'y o' hauntin' me like, noos an' thans, aiblins (*possibly*) as they did the man himsel', sae 'at I'm i' the same perdickyment wi' him, an' canna get quit o' them. They come, as I say, only at noos an' thans, but whan the fit 's upo' me, I can *not* get them oot o' my heid. The verse gangs tum'lin' ower an' ower intil 't till I'm jist scunnert (*disgusted*) wi' 't. Awa' it winna gang, maybe for a haill day—or maybe a haill nicht in ae dream efter anither; an' syne it mayna come again for months."

True enough, the rime was already running about in Cosmo's head like a mouse in a clock, and he fell asleep with it ringing its changes in the ears of his mind.

Before he woke again he had a curious dream.

He thought he was out late in the moonlight. It was a summer night, but there was something very strange about it: right up in the top of it was the moon, looking down as if she knew all about it, and something was going to happen. He did not like the look of her—he had never seen her look like that before! and he turned and went home to get away from her.

As he was going up the stairs to his chamber, something moved him, as he was passing the door of the drawing-room, to stop and go in. It was flooded with moonlight, but he did not mind that, so long as he could keep out of the sight of the moon herself. The place, however, had a strange, eerie look, and the things in it seemed to cast shadows different from those that by rights belonged to them. He gazed at this thing and that, feeling almost as if he had never seen it before. Presently he found there was some kind of spell upon him, that he could not leave the room. He seated himself therefore on the brocaded couch, and sat staring—with a sense, which by degrees grew torturous, that he was where he would not be, and that if he did not get up and go, something would happen. But he could not rise—not from physical impediment, but lack of resolve. He was like one in irksome company, who longs to leave, but waits in vain a fit opportunity. Delay grew agonizing, and still he sat.

He became aware that he was not alone. His entire skin seemed to contract with a shuddering sense of presence.

Gradually, slowly, in the chair on the opposite side of the fireplace, a form grew visible, until he saw it plainly. It was that of a seafaring man, in a blue coat, with a red sash round his waist, in which were stuck pistols and a dagger. He had a brown and red, weather-beaten face, crossed diagonally by a great scar, and

wearing an expression of horror trying not to look horrible. Out of it stared fierce eyes, black, yet glowing, as if set on fire of hell. They filled Cosmo with a fear that threatened to turn him into clay, but something seemed to sustain him under it. He felt as if there must be a third in the room—protecting him, and met his fear with scorn, strove against it, would not and did not yield to it. The figure sat staring without motion, as if to fascinate him, then slowly at length rose, and with a look whose willed intensity seemed meant to rivet the foregone stare, turned, and led the way from the room. Thereupon Cosmo felt not merely that he could but that he must rise and follow him, nor did he desire to resist, for even in his dreams he had courage, and feared nothing so much as yielding to fear. The figure went up the stair, nor ever turned its head, and entered the state bedroom, the guest-chamber of the house. Cosmo entered also. It walked across the floor as if making for the bed, but in the middle half turned, and went round the foot of it, and the curtains hid it. Cosmo followed—but the shape was nowhere to be seen, and he woke, his heart beating terribly.

Grannie was snoring in her chair. For a while he lay and looked at the dying fire, and the streak from the setting moon, that stole in at the window as if seeking shelter, and lay weary at the foot of the wall. But soon he fell fast asleep again, and slept far into the morning. Lessons were long begun in school, and village affairs were in full swing, and still he slept; nor did he wake till his father entered.

"I'm quite well, father," he said in answer to his inquiry; "—able to go to school in the afternoon."

"I don't mean you to go again, Cosmo," replied his father gravely. "It would not be pleasant either for you or the master. The proper relation between you is destroyed."

"If you think I was wrong, father, I will beg his pardon."

"If you had done the thing for yourself, I should say you must. But as it was, I am not prepared. The father is above the master—to the son, that is."

"What am I to do then? How am I to prepare for college?"

The laird gave a sigh, and made no answer: alas! there was another and greater difficulty in the path. He went to call on the doctor, and Cosmo rose and dressed himself.

Grannie was again at her wheel when he sat down in her chair to await his father's return.

"Whaur did the auld captain sleep at the castel?" he said—across the burr and whiz and hum of the wheel.

Through the low window, betwixt the leaves of its many

shadowing plants, he could see the sun shining hot upon the bare street, but inside was soft gloom filled with murmurous sound.

"Whaur but i' the best bedroom?" answered Grannie. "Naething less wad du for *him*. Na, he thouchtna sma' o' himsel'! Ance there cam the markis to the hoose—whan things warna freely sae scant aboot the place as sin' yer father cam to the throne—an' at his back cam a storm sic as comes but seldom in a life lang as mine, an' sic 'at his lordship cudna win awa'. Thereupon yer father, that is yer gran'father—or wad it be yer grit-gran'father?—I'm turnin' confeest amo' ye: ye aye haud on comin'!—whilkever o' them it was, he gae the auld captain a hent like 'at he wad du weel to mak offer o' his room til 's lordship. But wad he, think ye! Na, no him! He grew reid, an' syne as white 's the aisse (*ashes*), an' luikit to hae in him the awfu'est rage mortal wessel cud weel haud. Sae yer gran'father, no 'at he was feart at 'im, for I s' be b'un' he never feart the face o' man, but jist no wullin' to anger his ain kin, an' maybe no wullin' to luik like a respecker o' persons, heeld his tongue an' said nae mair, an' the markis hed the second best bed, for he sleepit in Glenwarlock's ain."

Cosmo told her the dream he had had. All the time she was narrating herself, it had been to the accompaniment of her wheel, but he had not got far before she ceased spinning, and sat absorbed—listening as to a real occurrence, not the feverish dream of a boy. Then she made him describe the person he had seen in it more particularly, asking him several minute questions, as if concerning one he had beheld with his bodily eyes. When he had answered her as well as he could—

"It maun hae been the auld captain himsel'!" she said under her breath.

Cosmo saw her lips moving, but heard no sound. She heaved a great sigh, closed her mouth, and remained speechless. Nor did she make any reply to the one or two questions with which he sought to rouse her. There was something indescribably strange in her silence—which she did not break until his father returned.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOME.

Cosmo was not particularly fond of school, and he was particularly fond of holidays; hence the laird's resolve that he should go to school no more, seemed to him the promise of an endless joy. The sun himself seemed swelling in his heart as he walked home with his father. A whole day of home and its pleasures was before him—only the more welcome that he had had one like it so lately, and that so many like it were yet to come. Every shadow about the old place was a delight to him. Never human being loved more the things into which he had been born, than did Cosmo. His whole home surrounding had to him a sacred look, such as Jerusalem, the temple, and its vessels, may have borne to those of the Jews who were not capable of loving them for God's sake. There was hardly anything that could be called beauty about the building—strength and gloom were its main characteristics—but its very stones were dear to the boy. There never was such a rushing river, there never were such bees, there never were such thick walls, there never were such storms, as those about his beloved home!—and this although all the time, as I have said, he longed for more beauty of mountain and wood than the country around afforded him. Then there were the books belonging to the house!—was there any such collection in the world besides! They were in truth very few—all contained in a closet opening out of his father's bedroom; but to Cosmo they bore the aspect of wealth inexhaustible—partly because his father had as yet restricted him to certain of the shelves—as much to cultivate his self-restraint as to keep from him one or two of the books for a time—partly because he read so faithfully that books remained books to him, he believed in them after he had read them, nor imagined them capable of being exhausted. The only thing to keep us from wearying of our friends is to be true to them. But the range at least of his taste was certainly not a limited one. While he revelled in *The Arabian Nights*, he read also, and with no small enjoyment, the *Night Thoughts*—two books, it will be confessed, a tolerable distance apart both in scope and in style. To enjoy life, however, it was to him enough to lie in the grass. In certain moods the smell of the commonest flower would drive him half crazy with delight. On a holiday his head would be haunted with old ballads like a sunflower with bees: on other days

they would only come and go. He rejoiced even in nursery-rimes —only, somehow or other, in his head they got glorified. With its swing and hum and *bizz*, a verse that had to him no meaning would yet play its tune in him, as any mountain-stream its infinite water-jumbled melody. This holiday one kept coming and coming, as to Grannie the old captain's foolish rime—that one of Grizzie's which came into his head when he saw the moon playing bo-peep betwixt the cow's legs :—

> Whan the coo loups ower the mune,
> The reid gowd rains intil men's shune.

I think there must at one time have been a poet or poetess in close relations with the Glenwarlock nursery, for there were rimes, and modifications of rimes, floating in the family for which nobody could account. Here is one of such :—

> Hither an' thither, here an' awa',
> Into the dub (*mire*) ye maunna fa';
> Oot o' the dub wad ye come wi' speed,
> Ye maun lift yer han's abune yer heid.

Cosmo's mother too had been, in a fragmentary way, fond of verse; and the laird delighted himself with saying over and over some of her favourite rimes. Here is one :—

> Make not of thy heart a casket,
> Opening seldom, quick to close;
> But of bread a wide-mouthed basket,
> And a cup that overflows.

Here is another :—

> The gadfly makes the horse run swift :
> "Speed," quoth the gadfly, "is my gift."

One more :—they serve as dim lights on the faint form of the all but vanished mother, of whom the boy she bore knew so little :—

> In God alone, the perfect end,
> Wilt thou find thyself or friend.

Cosmo's dream of life was, to live all his days in the house of his forefathers—or at worst, to return to it at last. In his castle-building, next to that of the fairy-mother-lady, his fondest fancy was—not the making of a fortune, but the returning home with one to make the house of his fathers beautiful, and the heart of his father glad. About the land he did not think much; the country was open to him as if it had been all his—only he had a different feeling for that portion yet lying within the sorely contracted marches : to see any smallest nook of that sold would have

been like to break his heart. His love of place was in danger of becoming a disease. It had something of the nature, if not of the avarice that grasps, yet of the avarice that clings. He was generous as few in the matter of money, but then he had had so little—not half enough to learn to love it! Nor had he the slightest idea of any mode in which he would like to make it. Most of the methods he had come in contact with, except that of manual labour, repelled him as involving elements of the unhandsome where not the dishonest: he was not yet able to distinguish in them between substance and mode. The only way in which he ever imagined himself coming into the possession of money—it was another cherished though less favoured dream—was finding in the old house a room he had never seen or heard of, and in it a hoard of riches.

As they walked home together his father told him he had been thinking all night what it would be best to do with him, now that the school was closed against him, and had resolved to ask his friend Mr. Simon to take charge of his education.

"He is a man of peculiar opinions," he said, "as I dare say you may have heard; but everything in him, both of practice and theory, is on a scale so grand, that to fear harm from him would be to sin against the truth. Every man must learn to judge for himself, and he will teach you that."

"I have heard that he believes in ghosts, father!" said Cosmo.

His father smiled, and made him no answer. Born into an age whose incredulity, growing more and more active, had reached at length the remote region where he lived, his mind had become as it were a border-land between an intelligent reception and a rationalistic refusal of the marvellous. An active believer in the care and providence of God, with no conscious difficulty in accepting any miracle recorded in the Bible, he was, on all points concerning which the oracles were dumb, inclined to scepticism. This scepticism, however, was confined to the region of his intellect: his imagination loved the atmosphere of the so-called supernatural, and welcomed any glimmer of light that reached him through it.

In the history of the world the imagination has been oftener right than the intellect, and the things in which it has been right are of much the greater importance; only, wherever Pegasus has shown the way through a bog, the pack-horse which followed has got the praise of the discovery; while many of the blunders made by the latter are attributed to the misleading influences of the former.

Such being his mental condition, the laird was unable to speak with authority respecting ghosts, neither was anxious to influence

the mind of his son concerning them. Happily, in those days the platitudes and weary vulgarities of what they call *spiritualism* had not been heard of, at least in those quarters, and the soft light of imagination yet brooded over the wide region of mingled false and true, commonly called Superstition: the most killing poison to the imagination must be a strong course of "spiritualism." For myself, I am not so set upon entering the Unknown as to creep through the sewers of it to get in. I would not encounter its lovers of garbage, its thieves, impostors, liars, plagiaries, and canaille of all sorts, except I could serve them. That they are on the other side, that they are what men call dead, is not reason for courting their company, taking them into my confidence, asking their advice. Neither do the cups of lukewarm Bible-and-water, which its apparently respectable inhabitants dispense, arouse in me any thirst.

"Do *you* believe in ghosts, father?" resumed the boy, noting the laird's silence, and remembering that he had never heard him utter an opinion on the subject. "The master says none but fools believe in them now; and he makes such a face at superstition, that you would think it must be in the commandments."

"Mr. Simon remarked the other day," answered his father, "that the dread of superstition might amount to superstition, and become the most dangerous superstition of all."

"Do you think so, father?"

"I could believe it. But I am prejudiced in favour of anything Mr. Simon thinks."

The boy rejoiced to hear his father talk thus, for he had a strong leaning to the marvellous, but hitherto, from the schoolmaster's assertion and his father's silence, had supposed nothing was to be accepted that was neither scientifically probable nor told us in the Bible. That we live in a universe of marvels of which we *know* only the outsides, and that we render any news of these marvels incredible by taking the outsides for all, forgetting that the roots of the seen remain unseen—this fact began to dawn upon him, falling in with certain notions his mind had already conceived and entertained. He was delighted also at the prospect of making closer acquaintance with a man of whom his father could speak with such reverence.

All day long he strayed brooding about the house and garden, and in the twilight went wandering over the hills.

There was no night there at that season, any more than all the year through in heaven. Indeed, we have seldom real positive night in this world—so many provisions have been made against it. Every time we say, "What a lovely night!" we speak of a breach, a rift in the old night: there is light more or less, positive light,

else were there no beauty. Many a night is but a low starry day, a day with a softened background, against which the far-off suns of millions of other days can show themselves. The near vision vanishes, the far hope awakes. It is not said of heaven there shall be no twilight there.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FELLOW-STUDENTS.

THE twilight had not yet reached the depth of its mysteriousness, when Cosmo, returning home from casting a large loop of wandering over several hills, walked up to James Gracie's cottage, doubting whether they would not all be in bed. But seeing light in the window he went to the door and knocked: had it been the daytime, he would have gone straight in.

Agnes came to it and opened cautiously, for there were occasionally tramps about.

"Eh! it's you?" she cried with a glad voice, when she saw the shape of Cosmo in the dimness. "There's naething wrang, I houp!" she added, changing her tone.

"Na, naething," answered Cosmo. "I only wantit to lat ye ken 'at I wasna gaein' back to the schuil ony mair."

"Weel, I dinna won'er at that!" returned Agnes, with a little sigh. "Efter bein' ill used that gait, the laird couldna weel lat ye gang again. But what's he gaein' to du wi' ye, Cosmo, gien a body micht speir 'at has nae richt to be keerious?"

"He's sen'in' me to Maister Simon," answered Cosmo.

"I wuss I was gaein' tu," sighed Aggie. "I'm feart I come to hate the maister whan ye're no to be seen ony mair i' the place, Cosmo. An' we maunna hate, for that, ye ken, 's the hin'er en' o' a'thing. It wad be a heap easier no to hate him gien I had naething to du wi' him."

"That maun be confest," answered Cosmo. "But," he added, "the hairst-play (*harvest-holidays*) 'ill be here sune, an' syne the hairst itsel'; an' whan ye gang back ye'll hae won ower 't."

"Na, I doobt no, Cosmo; for, ye see, as I hae h'ard my father say, the Gracies are a' terrible for min'in'. Na, there's nae forgettin' o' naething. What for sud onything be forgotten? It's a cooardly kin' o' a w'y to forget."

"Some things, I doobt, hae to be forgotten," returned Cosmo, thoughtfully. "Gien ye forgie a body, for enstance, ye maun

forget tu—ay, forget 'at ye hae forgien him onything—an' that for yer ain sake; for what ye hae dune richt, my father says, maun be forgotten oot o' sicht for fear o' corruption, naething comin' to stink waur nor a guid deed hung up i' the munelicht o' the memory."

"Eh, but ye're unco wice for a laad o' yer 'ears!" exclaimed Aggie.

"I wad be an unco gowk," remarked Cosmo, "gien I kent naething, wi' sic a father as yon o' mine. What wad ye think o' yersel', Aggie, gien the dochter o' Jeames Gracie war nae wicer-like nor Meg Scroggie?"

Agnes laughed, but had not time to reply, for here the voice of her grandmother came from somewhere in the dark.

"Wha's that, Aggie," it said, "ye're haudin' sic a confab wi' i' the mids o' the nicht? Ye tellt me ye was sittin' up to yer lessons!"

"I was busy at them, mother, whan Cosmo chappit at the door."

"Weel, what for lat ye him stan' there? Ye may hae yer crack wi' *him* as lang's ye like—in rizzon, that is. Gar him come in."

"Na, na, Mistress Gracie," said Cosmo; "I maun awa' hame; I hae been a gey lang walk. It's no 'at I'm tired, but I'm gey an' sleepy. Only I was sae pleased 'at I was gaein' to learn wi' Maister Simon, 'at I bude to tell Aggie. Besides, she micht hae been won'erin', an' thinkin' I wasna better, whan she didna see me at the schuil the morn."

"I s' warran' her no gang to the schuil ohn * speirt in at the castle!" said the grandmother, and therewith ceased.

"Is there onything I can help ye wi', Aggie, afore I gang?" asked Cosmo. "Somebody tellt me ye was tryin' yer han' at algebra."

"Naebody had ony business to tell ye sic a thing," returned Aggie, rather angrily. "At the schuil I wadna think o' 't. But I *wad* fain ken what 's intil 't. Du 'at I like I can *not* un'erstan' coontin' wi' letters an' crosses an' strokes in place o' figures. I hae been at it noo a haill ook (*week*), an' I'm nane nearer 't yet. I can add an' subtrac', by the rules gi'en i' the buik, but that's no un'erstan'in', an' un'erstan' I canna an' I maun."

"It's something, Aggie, like this: ye hae a horse, an' a coo, an' a cairt to sell. But ye takna them to the market. Ye lea' the beast wi' the legs i' the stable, the beast wi' the horns i' the byre, an' the box upo' wheels i' the shed, an' bargain away aboot the

* *Without*, like the German *ohne.*

*horse* an' the *coo* an' the *cairt*—that's the *x* an' the *y* an' the *z*—till ye 're agreet, an' syne ye sen' for the things themsel's an' han' them ower."

Aggie remained in silent thought for a while, then shook her head as if she had gained but little.

"*Ye* ken a' aboot algébra—divna ye, Cosmo?"

"Na, no the half, nor the hun'ert pairt. I only ken eneuch to haud me gaein' on to mair. A body maun hae learnt a heap o' a thing afore the licht braks oot o' 't. Ye maun win throuw the wa' afore ye see. I doobt gien onybody un'erstan's a thing oot an' oot, sae lang's he canna gar anither see intil 't."

"I'm thinkin', Cosmo," said Agnes, "a body maun be nearhan' seein' o' hersel' 'afore anither can lat her see onything."

"Ye may be richt there," yielded Cosmo. "But jist lat me see whaur ye are," he went on. "I may be able to help ye, though I canna lat ye see a' at ance. It wad be an ill job for them 'at needs help, gien naebody could gie them ony but them 'at kent a' aboot the thing."

Without a word, Aggie turned and led the way to the kitchen. An iron lamp, burning train-oil, hung against the wall, and under that she had placed the table, white as scouring could make deal. Upon it lay a slate and a book of algebra.

"My cousin Willie lennt me the buik," said she.

"What for didna ye come to me to len' ye ane? I could hae gi-en ye ane 'at wad hae helpit ye mair!" expostulated Cosmo.

Aggie hesitated a moment, then turning her face from him, answered—

"I wantit to gie ye a surprise, Cosmo. Divna ye min' tellin' me ance 'at ye saw no rizzon a lassie sudna un'erstan' jist as weel 's a laddie? I wantit to see whether ye was richt or wrang; an' as algébra luikit the maist oonlikely thing, I thoucht I wad taikle that, an' sattle the queston at ance. But, eh me! I'm sair feart ye was i' the wrang, Cosmo!"

"I maun du my best to pruv mysel' i' the richt!" returned Cosmo. "I never said lassie or laddie cud learn a' o' themsel's. An' there's unco feow laddies wad try like you, Aggie!"

They sat down together at the table, and in half an hour or so Aggie had begun to see the faint light of dawn across the thickets of algebra. It was nearly midnight when Cosmo rose. She would not let him go alone, but insisted on accompanying him to the gate of the court.

The relation between the two was a curious one. While Agnes looked up to Cosmo, about two years her junior, as immeasurably her superior in all that pertained to the intellect, she assumed

with him, in virtue of her two years, and of her having played the part of little nurse to him in his childhood, a sort of authority, like that a mother will assert over the most gifted of her grown-up sons. One has heard, with a kind of sacred amusement, the cynosure of some of the best literary and artistic circles rebuked with severity by his mother as if he were still a boy! And who has not heard some child of this world speak with condescending superiority of the child of light whom he loved, regarding him as a kind of God's chicken; for nothing is so unintelligible to the children of the world as the ways of the children of light—to themselves simple enough. But Agnes never treated Cosmo with anything of this patronage, for she was nearly as much a child of light as he; only, being a woman, she was keener of perception, and being older, felt the more towards him of the mother that every woman feels, and made the most of it. It was to her the most merely natural thing to act his protector. Indeed she would have claimed the right to serve any one of the family of Warlock to the last drop of her blood. From infancy she had heard the laird spoken of as the noblest, best, and kindest of men, as the earthly power over the Gracies for their help and healing; hence her love-duty to him and his family seemed a main reason of her existence.

Notwithstanding the familiarity I have shown betweeen them, the girl, as they went towards the castle, walking through the deep dusk and alone, kept a little behind the boy—not behind his back, but behind his left hand. Spy most curious could have detected no love-making between them, and their talk in the still, dark air, sounded loud all the way. Strange talk it would have been to most, unintelligible indeed, for it was the talk of childlike boy and girl, wise not above their own years only, but wise immeasurably above all years of worldly prudence. Riches indubitably favour stupidity; poverty, where the heart is right, favours mental and moral development. They parted at the gate, and Cosmo went straight to his room.

But although his father allowed him such plentiful liberty, and would have the boy feel the night holy as the day, therefore never, save from loving interest, asked him where he had been, or at what hour he had come home—a question which, having no watch, he would have found it hard to answer—he never fell asleep until he knew that his boy was in the house. Indeed, although all were in bed, not an eye was that night closed in the castle before his entering footsteps were heard. The grandmother lay angry at the freedom her son gave to his son: it was against decency and order, she said to herself in the dark; it was against

all ancient rule of family life : she must speak about it! But she never did speak about it, for, with all her pity for his attributed weakness, she had long ago grown a little afraid of the son who, without a particle of obstinacy in his composition, yet would take what she called his own way. In the next room Grizzie lay unhappy, and grumbling to herself that the young laird was sure to come to "mischeef;" but the main forms of "mischeef" in her anxious imagination were tramps, precipices, and streams. The laird, in the room above, spent most of the time his son's absence kept him awake, in praying for him—not that he might be the restorer of the family, but that he might be able to accept the will of God as the best thing for family as for individual. If his boy might but reach the spirit-land unsoiled and noble, his prayers were ended!

In the course of his nocturnal experiences and meditations, the laird learned to understand how the catholics have come to pray to their saints, and the Chinese to their parents and ancestors; for he frequently found himself, especially when drowsiness had begun to steal upon his praying soul, seeming to hold council with his wife concerning their boy, and asking from her such help for him as she was able to minister.

But Cosmo went up to bed without a suspicion that such holy messengers were ascending heavenward for his sake from the heart of his father. He never imagined any one anxious about him.

As he passed the door of the guest-chamber, immediately above which was his own, his dream, heralded by a shiver, suddenly possessed him. But he scorned to quicken his pace, or to glance over his shoulder, as he ascended the second stair. He lighted no candle, but in the still, faint twilight, which is the ghosts' day, he threw off his clothes, and was presently buried in the grave of his bed, under the sod of the blankets, lapt in the death of sleep.

## CHAPTER X.

### A MORNING.

THE moment he woke, he jumped out of bed. A new era in his life was at hand, the thought of which had been subjacently present in his dreams, and was operative the instant he became conscious of waking life. He hurried on his clothes, and rushing down the stairs like a cataract—for not a soul slept in that part

of the castle but himself, and there was no fear of waking any one—ran from the house, and down the hill to the spot where, with a final dart, the torrent shot into the quiet stream of the valley. There, in the channel of rock and gravel, it had hollowed a deep basin. This was Cosmo's bath. His clothes were off again in a moment, and headforemost he shot like another torrent into the boiling mass, where for a minute he yielded himself the sport of the foaming water, and was tossed and tumbled about like a dead thing in the heart of the turmoil. Then he struck out, and swimming from under the fall, rose to the surface panting and blowing. To get out on the bank was the work of a moment, and to plunge in again the play of the next. Half a dozen times he thus plunged, was tossed and overwhelmed, struggled, escaped, and plunged again. Satisfied at length, he ran for a minute or two up and down the bank to dry himself—he counted the use of a towel effeminacy—and dressing again, hurried home to finish his simple toilet. Then he knelt at his bedside, and did not merely "say his prayers." Next he took his slate, to try after something Aggie's bewilderment had led him to know he did not understand either. But before long, certain sensations began to warn him there was breakfast in the world, and he hastened to the kitchen, where he found Grizzie making the porridge.

"Min' pe pit saut eneuch i' them the day, Grizzie," he said. "They war unco wersh (*insipid*( thestreen." *

"An' what war they like last nicht, Cosmo?" asked the old woman, irritated at being found fault with where she counted herself as near perfection as mortal could approach.

"I had nane last nicht, ye min'," answered Cosmo. "I was oot a' the evenin'."

"An' whaur got ye yer supper?"

"Ow, I didna want nane. Hoot! I'm forgettin'! Aggie gied me a quarter o' breid as I cam awa', efter giein' her a han' wi' her algebra."

"What ca'd ye 't? an' what kin' is 't for a lass-bairn to be takin' up her time wi'? I never h'ard tell o' 't! What's its natur, Cosmo?"

He did his best to give her some far-off idea of the sort of thing algebra was, but apparently without success, for she cried at length—

"Na, sirs! I hae h'ard o' cairts, an' bogles, an' witchcraft, an' astronomy, but sic a thing as this ye fess (*bring*) me noo, I never did hear the like o'! What can the warl' be comin' til! An' dis

* *Yestere'en*, used for *yesterday*.

the father o' ye, laddie, ken what ye spen' yer midnicht hoors gangin' teachin' to the lass-bairns o' the country roon'?"

She was interrupted by the entrance of the laird, and they sat down to breakfast. The grandmother broke her fast in her own room.

Grizzie was full of anxiety to know what the laird would say to the discovery she had just made, but she dared not hazard a word that might seem to reflect on the conduct of his son, and must, therefore, only lead the conversation up alongside of it. About the middle of Cosmo's breakfast, that is about two minutes after he had attacked his porridge, she began to approach he design, addressing her master thus:

"Did ye never hear the auld saw, sir—

> Whaur's nor sun nor mune,
> Laich (*low*) things come abune?"

"I 'maist think I hae, Grizzie," replied the laird. "What gars ye come ower 't (*repeat it*) the noo?"

"I canna but think, sir," answered Grizzie, "as I lie i' the mirk, o' the heap o' things 'at gang to nae kirk, oot 'an aboot as sharp as a gled, whan the yoong laird is no in his bed, but oot wi' 's auld gibbry, an' astronomy, an' sic like! 'Deed, sir, it wadna be canny gien they cam to ken o' 't!"

"Wha come to ken o' what, Grizzie?" asked the laird, with a twinkle in his eye, and a glance at Cosmo, who sat gazing curiously at the old woman.

"Them 'at the saw speyks o', sir," said Grizzie, answering the first part of the double question, and placing two boiled eggs before her master.

The laird smiled; he was too kind to laugh. Not a few laughed at old Grizzie, but never the laird.

"Did *ye* never hear the auld saw, Grizzie," he said—

> "Throuw the heather an' how (*hollow*) gaed the creepin' thing,
> But abune was the waught o' an angel's wing?"

"Ay, I hae h'ard it," confessed Grizzie, but immediately added the qualification, "—naegait 'cep' here i' this hoose:" she would disparage the authority of the saying by a doubt as to its extra-mural origin. "But, sir," she continued, "mortal man sud never temp' Providence. Wha kens what may be oot i' the nicht!"

"To *him*, Grizzie, the nicht shineth as the day."

"Weel, sir," cried Grizzie, "ye jist pit me 'at I dinna ken mysel'! Is't poassible ye hae lost sicht o' the fac' sae weel kent in a' the cuintry roon', 'at the auld captain's never lain a nicht in

's grave yet, an' canna lie still because o'—because o' whatever the rizzon may be, for onygait (*anyhow*) he's no laid yet, an' there's some 'at thinks him foreordeent to haunt the hoose till the day o' jeedgment!"

"I suspec' there winna be muckle o' the hoose left for him to haunt 'gen that time, Grizzie," said the laird. "But what for sud ye pit sic fule things intil the bairn's heid? Gien the ghaist haunt the hoose, isna the bairn better oot o' 't? Wad ye hae him come hame the suner to sic company?"

This posed Grizzie, and she held her peace.

"Come, Cosmo," said the laird, rising; and they set out together for Mr. Simon's cottage.

## CHAPTER XI.

### PETER SIMON.

THE would-be wits of the neighbourhood of course called him Simon Peter. He was not a native of the district, but had for some years now been a dweller in it. He had bought the cottage he now occupied when first he came, but only of late had begun to live in it. Report said he was the son of a small tradesman in the great county-town; but he made no secret of the fact that he was only found by such a man, lying on the pavement one stormy desolate Christmas-eve. It was dark, with the wind blowing bitterly from the north, and the said tradesman seemed the one inhabitant of almost the coldest town in Scotland who dared face it. He had closed his shop, had carried to the house of one of his customers a forgotten order, and was returning home, when he all but stumbled over the infant. He looked all about him: there was nobody but himself! Not a human being, not even what comes next to one, a dog, was in sight, and the wind was blowing like a blast from a frozen hell. There was no help for it—no one to do it instead of him; he must take up the child! He did, and carried it home—grumbling all the way. What right had the morsel to be lying there, a trap and a gin for his character—in the dark and the cold, where there was positively nobody but himself! What would his wife say? What would the neighbours say? All the way home he grumbled.

What happened there—how his wife received him with his burden; how she scolded and he went on grumbling; how it

took but the one day—the Christmas Day, which happily was a Sunday, with nothing to be done—to reconcile them to the gift; and how they brought him up, blessing the night of storm on which they found him—would be a story to make the true-hearted of my readers both laugh and cry, but I have not room or time for it.

Of course, as they were in poor circumstances, hardly able, indeed, not merely to make both ends meet, but to get them to the same side of the parcel of their necessities, their neighbours, especially their friends, and more especially their relations, called their refusal to hand over the brat to the parish utter insanity—and doubtless felt the truth of what they said, seeing it was a reflection upon all who in vain advised the step. But when the child-witched pair manifested folly enough to say—might he not have been sent them in the stead of the still-born infant that had hitherto been all their offspring?—then indeed it was too much for the neighbours—that peculiar people often in reality better acquainted with the faults and duties of others than those are themselves, and than they themselves are with their own. It was rank superstition! It was a flying in the face of Providence! How could they expect to prosper who acted with so little foresight! Staggering under the burden of life, they actually perched a strange brat on the top of it! But the members of this self-constituted moral police did not take into account what strength the additional motive, what heart the new love, what uplifting the hope, kindled by their righteous deed, of help from on high, might give the hitherto baffled toilers; it did not occur to them that the child might be just the fresh sting of life the fainting pair required; for they had never perceived that God likes far better to help people from the inside than from the outside. To mark their disapproval, some of them immediately withdrew what little custom they had given them; one who had hardly been into their shop before offered them the whole of hers on condition they sent the child away; others, with some inconsistency, doubled theirs, and sent them fresh customers—saying they were a brace of woodcocks, but they must not be allowed to starve!

They began to get on a little better. And still as the boy grew, and they wanted a little more, they had the little more they wanted. For the boy turned out to be one of God's creatures, and the maker of him, who was also the ruler of the world, was not displeased with them for taking him to their hearts and not leaving him to the parish. He was the light of the house and of the shop, a beauty to their eyes and a joy in their hearts. But perhaps the best proof of all that they had done right, lay in the

fact that they began to love each other better from that very Christmas-day; for, to tell the truth, one cause of their not getting on well had been that they did not pull well together. We can thus explain the improvement in their circumstances by the merest natural causes, without having recourse to the superstitious and distasteful idea that any unseen power, with a weakness called a special providence, was interested in the matter.

But foolishness such as theirs is apt to increase with years: they sent the foundling to the grammar-school, and thence to college—not a very difficult affair in that town. At college he did not greatly distinguish himself; his special gifts, though peculiar enough, were not of a kind to attract attention, or gain even barren praise. He went on and prospered nevertheless. His father and mother, as he called them, would gladly have made a minister of him, but of that he would not hear, and became a master in one of the schools. He lived with his adoptive parents till they died, always taking home to them his salary, minus only what sums, not very great, he spent on books. His life, his devotion, his loving gratitude so wrought upon them, that the kingdom of heaven opened its doors to them, and they were the happiest old couple in the town. Of course this was all an accident, for, the kingdom of heaven being but a dream, natural cause cannot be supposed to work for delusion. It was therefore a part of the folly of the good-natured pair to look upon their miserable foundling as a divine messenger, an angel entertained not for long unawares, and the cause of all the luck that followed his admission. They never spent a penny of his salary, but saved it up and added to it; and when they went, heartlessly left all they had to this same angel of a beggar, instead of to their own relations, who would have been very glad of it, for they had more than enough of their own.

The foundling then sought a situation as librarian, and was successful: in the family of an English lord he lived many years. When time's changes decreed his withdrawal, he returned to the county in which he had been brought up. In his cottage on the Warlock he was now living the quietest of quiet lives, cultivating the acquaintance of but a few—chiefly that of the laird, James Gracie, and a neighbouring minister. By the people he was generally regarded as "no a'thegither there,"—a judgment possibly founded in parts on the facts, that he not unfrequently wandered about the fields from morning to night, sometimes from night to morning, and never drank anything worthy in their eyes of the name of drink. That he never ate animal food was hardly notable where so many seldom did; and as he was no propagandist, few

had any notion of his opinions, beyond a general impression that they were unsound.

Cosmo had heard some of the peculiarities attributed to him, and was filled with curious expectation as to the manner of man he was about to meet, for he had never yet even seen him except at a distance; but anxiety, not untinged with awe, was mingled with his curiosity.

Mr. Simon's cottage was some little distance up the valley, on the bank of the Warlock, at the foot of a small cliff that sheltered it from the north. The bank was of rock, but the ground about the cottage was soil washed from the hill, and Mr. Simon had his little garden of flowers and vegetables, with a summer-seat in the middle of it on a rock that came shouldering up through the earth, in which he smoked his pipe of an evening—slowly and gently and broodingly, thinking more than he smoked, and making his one pipe last a long time. To his delight he had found the garden filled with the commonest flowers: rarity was no recommendation to him. Nor in this was he unlike himself, although some of his opinions were of the rarest; for in truth never had Peter Simon adopted an opinion because of its strangeness. He never indeed *adopted* an opinion at all; he believed, he loved, he obeyed what he saw true.

The cottage was of unhewn stone, and rough-cast, shining white in sun and moon. It contained two rooms with a smaller between, and one under the thatch.

When they entered the parlour, Cosmo was struck with astonishment: the walls from floor to ceiling were covered with books; even the chimney-piece was assimilated, turned into a book-shelf, and absorbed. Mr. Simon's pipe lay on the hob; there was not another spot suitable for it. No mere shelf, not a cupboard was to be seen. Books, books everywhere, and nothing but books! Even the door that opened into the room where Mr. Simon slept was covered over, and, like the mantelshelf, obliterated with books. To the eyes of Cosmo it seemed a mighty library—a treasure-house for a royal sage.

There was no one in the room when they entered, but while Cosmo was staring in mute astonishment, he suddenly heard Mr. Simon address his father. How he had entered he could not think, but there he stood in the gigantic proportions, to the eyes of the boy, of a wise man, if not indeed a wizard.

Mr. Simon was in truth a little below the middle height—somewhat round-shouldered, with long arms, and small, well shaped hands. His hair was plentiful, grizzled, and cut short; his head was large and his forehead wide; his eyes were small,

dark, and brilliant, with black overhanging brows; his nose had a certain look of decision—but a nose is a feature beyond description; his mouth was large, and his chin strong; his complexion was sallow, and his skin rugged. His only *fine* features were his ears, which were delicate enough for a lady. His face was not at first sight attractive—looking indeed rather gloomy till he had once smiled, after which it never seemed the same as before: the old face had vanished in the smile, and a new one come; for that smile was the true interpreter of the mouth, and through the mouth, of the face.

After a word or two about a book he had borrowed of him, the laird took his departure, saying the sooner he left master and pupil to themselves the better. Mr. Simon acquiesced, and immediately Cosmo was facing his near future, not without anxiety.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE NEW SCHOOLING.

WITHOUT a word, Mr. Simon went to the table, and opening a drawer, took from it about a score of leaves of paper, one of which he handed to Cosmo. Upon it, in print, was a stanza—one, and no more.

"Read that," he said, with a glance that showed through his eyes the light burning inside him, "and tell me if you understand it. I don't want you to ponder over it, but to say at a reading whether you know what it means."

Cosmo obeyed, and read.

"I dinna mak heid nor tail o' 't, sir," he answered, looking over the top of the paper like a prisoned sheep.

Mr. Simon took it from him, and handed him another.

"Try that," he said.

Cosmo read, put his hand to his head, and looked troubled.

"Don't distress yourself," said Mr. Simon. "The trial is of no consequence for judgment; it is only for discovery."

The remark conveyed little consolation to the pupil. Dismay was settling upon him like a fog from the hills.

One after another Mr. Simon handed him the papers he held. With the fifth or sixth in his hand, Cosmo exclaimed, but with no exultation—

"I do understand this, sir."

"Very well," returned Mr. Simon, without, in his turn, showing any special satisfaction, and immediately handed him another.

This again was a non-luminous body, actively dark indeed, for it cast a fresh shadow over the face of the embryo student. One by one Mr. Simon handed him all the papers he held. Out of the score there were three Cosmo said he understood, and four he thought he should understand if he were allowed to read them over two or three times. Mr. Simon laid them all back into the drawer.

"Now I shall know a little what I must be about," he said. "Tell me what you have been doing at school."

Were my book a treatise on education, it might be worth while to give some account of Peter Simon's ways of furthering human growth. But intellectual development is not my business, and I will say no more here concerning Cosmo's than that, after about six weeks' work, he one day begged Mr. Simon to let him look at those papers, and found to his delight that he understood all but three or four of them.

That first day, Mr. Simon gave him one of Horace's odes and one of Wordsworth's poems to copy—telling him to put in every point as it was in the book exactly, but to make a note of any improvement he thought possible in the pointing. He told him also to keep his eyes open to any resemblance between the two poems.

As he sat surrounded by the many books, Cosmo felt as if he were at work under the gaze of many masters.

Before the evening the heart of the boy clave to his new guide. For one thing, Mr. Simon always, in anything done by Cosmo, took note first of the things that pleased him, and after that of its faults—most of which he treated more as imperfections, letting Cosmo see plainly that he understood how he had come to go wrong.

Such an education as Mr. Simon was thus attempting with Cosmo, is hardly to be effected with more than one at a time; and indeed there are not a great many boys with whom the attempt would be other than lost labour.

Cosmo, however, was now almost as eager to go to his lessons, as before to spend a holiday. Mr. Simon never gave him anything to do at home, judging it an imperative duty to leave room for his pupil to grow after the fashion in which he was made, and believing that what a boy does by himself is of far greater import than what he does with any master. A great part of such room is leisure; and although it may be of comparatively small value in the case of most young people, it is an absolute necessity to one born with

individuality so far determined as to be on the point of beginning to develop itself. When Cosmo, therefore, went home, he read or wrote what he pleased, wandered about at his will, and dreamed to his heart's content. Nor was it long before he discovered that his dreams themselves were growing of greater import to him—they also influenced by Mr. Simon.

One day he came late, and his eyes were swollen with weeping. His master looked at him almost wistfully, but said nothing until he had been for a while at work. Then he asked him what was amiss, and the boy told him. To most boys it would have seemed small ground for such heart-breaking sorrow.

Among the horses on the farm was a certain little mare, which, although hard-worked as any, was yet an excellent one to ride, and Cosmo, as often as there was not much work doing, rode her where he would. In the prime of the summer he would have her all his own every day for several weeks, when the harvest was drawing nigh, and the school had its long yearly holiday. Then they would be out for hours together, though perhaps not far from home all the time. Sometimes the whole sleepy afternoon would Cosmo lie in the heather on some hill-side, with Linty feeding amongst it, ready to come at his call, receive him on her back, and carry him where he would! Boy and mare loved each other greatly.

But alas! though supple and active, Linty was old—she was nine and twenty—and the day could not be distant when they must part company. And now she was ill! Two of the men had been up with her all night, and Grizzie too: she had put her own pillow under Linty's head, and sat by her for hours. When Cosmo left, she was a little better, but there were great fears as to the possibility of her recovery.

"She's sae terrible aul', ye see, sir!" said Cosmo, ending his tale of woe, and burst out crying afresh.

"Cosmo," said Mr. Simon,—and to a southern ear the issuing of such sweet solemn thoughts in such rough northern speech might have seemed strange—only the vowels were finely sonorous, if the consonants were harsh,—"Cosmo, your heart is faithful to your mare, but is it equally faithful to him that made the mare?"

"I ken it's his wull," answered Cosmo. "I ken mears maun dee!—but eh, *she* was sic a guid ane!—Sir, I canna bide it."

"Ye ken wha sits by the deein' sparrow?" said Mr. Simon, himself taking to the old dialect. "Cosmo! there was a better nor Grizzie sat nearer to Linty a' the lang nicht. Things warna gaein' sae ill wi' her as ye thoucht. Life's an awfu' mystery, Cosmo, but it's jist the ae thing the maker o' 't can haud nearest

til, for it's nearest til himsel' i' the mak o' 't.—Fowk may tell me," he went on, more now as if he were talking to himself than to the boy, "'at I sud content mysel' an' lat alane sic useless speculations, but wi' deein' men an' mears a' aboot me, hoo can I! An' 'deed they're onything but useless to me, for gien I had naething but what I see an' hear, gran' an' bonny as a heap o' 't is, I wad jist smore (*be smothered*) for want o' room."

"But what's the guid o' 't, whan I'll never see her again!" sobbed Cosmo.

"Wha daurs to say sic a thing, laddie?"

"A'body," answered Cosmo, a good deal astonished at the question.

"Maister A'body has a heap o' the gowk in him yet, Cosmo," rejoined his master. "In fac', he's scarce mair nor an infant yet, though he wull speyk as gien the haill universe o' wisdom an' knowledge war open til 'im! There's no a word o' the kin' i' the haill Bible, nor i' the hert o' man—nor i' the hert o' the Maker, do I, i' the hert o' me, believe. Cosmo, can *ye* believe 'at that wee bit foal o' an ass 'at cairriet the maister o' 's a' alang yon hill-ro'd frae Bethany to Jerus'lem, cam to sic an ill hin'er en' as dee forgotten by him he cairriet? No more can I believe that jist 'cause it cairriet him it was ae hair better luikit efter nor ony ither bit assie foalt i' the lan' o' Isr'el."

"The disciples micht hae min't (*remembered*) it to the cratur, an' luikit efter him for 't," suggested Cosmo.

The master looked pleased.

"They could but work the wull o' him that made the ass," he said, "an' does the best for a' thing an' a' body. Na, na, my son! gien I hae ony pooer to read the trowth o' things, the life 'at's gien is never taen; an' the love ony cratur ever waukent in a human breist 'ill no more be lost than the objec' o' the same. That a thing can love an' be loved—an' that's yer bonnie mearie, Cosmo—is a' ane to sayin' 'at it's immortal; for God is love, an' whatever partakes o' the essence o' God canna dee, but maun gang on livin' till it please him to say haud, an' that he'll never say."

By this time the face of the man was glowing like an altar on which had descended the fire of heaven. His confidence entered the heart of Cosmo, and when the master ceased, the scholar turned with a sigh of gladness and relief to his work, and wept no more. The possible entrance of Linty upon an enlarged existence widened the whole heaven of his conscious being; the well-spring of personal life within himself seemed to rush forth in mightier volume; and through that grief and its consolation, the boy made a great stride towards manhood.

One day in the first week of his new schooling, Cosmo took occasion to mention Aggie's difficulty with her algebra, and her anxiety to test his statement that a girl could do as well as a boy. Mr. Simon was much interested. Although he knew her father well, he had made no acquaintance with Agnes yet, who was a little afraid of him notwithstanding his reassuring smile. The same day old Dorothy, Mr. Simon's servant and housekeeper, was taken ill, and Cosmo mentioning the fact in Aggie's hearing, she ran to offer her assistance.

"Auld Dorty," as the neighbours called her, not without some hint askance at the quality of her temper, though not very seriously ailing, was yet glad of her help; and it so happened that while Aggie was on her knees washing the slabs of the passage that led through the cottage, the master, as she always called him now that Cosmo was his pupil, came from his room.

"How's the algebra getting on, Agnes?" he said.

"Naething's gettin' on verra weel sin' Cosmo gaed frae the schuil, sir," answered Aggie, rising in haste and drying her hands in her apron. "I dinna mysel' seem to hae the hert for the learnin' 'at I had. Sae lang as he was there, far aheid o' me, but no a'thegither oot o' my sicht, I bude to follow."

"Would you like," said the master, "to do some work with me—I don't say along with Cosmo, but at any odd times you could spare?"

"There's naething upo' the airth, sir," said Aggie, "'at I wad like half sae weel. I hae a hoonger upo' me for un'erstan'in' things. It comes o' bein' sae muckle wi' Cosmo—ever sin' he was a bairn, sir; for bein' twa year aul'er nor him, I was a sma' nurse til him; an' ye ken what he's like—aye winnin' at the boddom o' things! an' that's infeckit me, sae 'at I canna rist whan I see onybody un'erstan'in' a thing till I set aboot gettin' a grip o' 't mysel'."

"A very good infection to take, Agnes," replied the master, with a smile of thorough pleasure, "—one that will do more for you than the cow-pox! Come to me as often as you can. I have some things to tell you that will make you happier."

"'Deed, sir, I'm in no want o' happiness!—o' that I hae full mair nor I deserve; but I want a heap for a' that. I canna say what it is, for the hoonger 's for what I haena. My hert's jist toom (*empty*) like, an' wants to be fillt."

"Another of God's children," thought the master, "full of the groanings of the spirit! The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them."

He often quoted scripture as the people of the New Testament sometimes do—not much minding the original application of the

words. Those filled with the spirit have always taken liberties with the letter.

That same evening, when she had done helping Dorty, she had a talk with Mr. Simon about algebra. She went no more to school, but almost every day to the master.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### GRANNIE'S GHOST STORY.

THE glorious days of harvest came and went, leaving the fields bare for the wintry revels of the great winds. The potatoes were all dug up, and again buried—deeper than before, in pits, with sheets of straw and blankets of earth to protect them from the biting frost. Their stalks and fruit, and many weeds with them, were burned, and their ashes scattered. Some of the land was ploughed, and some left till the spring. Many cart-loads of peats were brought from the hill where they had been drying in sun and wind through the summer, and a great stack they made. The winter stock of coal was also carted, from the nearest sea-port—not in such quantity as the laird would have liked, for money was very scarce. Every sort of stick fit for burning was collected; those too large were cut up with saw and axe, and all were stored in the house. Good preparation was thus made for the siege of winter.

In their growing poverty, partly no doubt from consideration, they had come to be much left to themselves. The family was like an old thistle-head withering on its wintered stalk, alone in a wide wind-swept field. All the summer through, not a single visitor, friend or stranger, had slept in the house. A fresh face was more of a wonder to Cosmo than to Abraham in the desert. The human heart, like the human body, can live without much variety to feed on, but its house is nevertheless built on a lordly scale for hospitality, and is capable of welcoming every new face as a new revelation. Steadily Cosmo went to his day's work with the master, steadily returned to his home—saw nothing new, yet learned as he went and came to love more the aspects of the country, to read better the lines and shades of its varying expression. A country far from enough to satisfy one's ideal has yet endless loveliness for him who loves it enough to understand it. When the autumn came, it made him sad, for it was not in harmony with the forward look of his young life, which, un-

ambitious, was yet vaguely expectant. But when the hoar-frost gleamed white, when the clouds gathered, the winds began to wail, and the snows to fall, his spirit rose to meet the invading death. The old castle grew grayer and grayer outside, but ruddier and cozier within. Oh, that awful gray and white Scotch winter—dear to my heart as I sit and write with windows wide open to the blue skies of Italy's December!

Cosmo kept up his morning bath in *the pot* for some time after the arrival of the frost, but when sleet and rain came, and he could no longer dry himself by running about, he did not care for it longer, but waited for the snow. Stirred in part by the ambition of hardy endurance, his custom in the winter, let the cold be what it might, provided only the snow lay deep, was to jump from his bed with the first glimmer of the morning, and running, in a light gray with the grayness of what is frozen, to a near hollow on the hill-side, there pull off his night-garment and roll in the snow, kneading handfuls, and rubbing himself all over with snow. He strengthened himself thus against the cold of the day, and happily he was strong enough to stand the strengthening, and did therefore so increase his hardihood: what would have been death to many was to him invigoration.

He knew nothing of boxing, or fencing, or rowing, or cricket, but he could run and jump well, ride fairly, and, above all, endure. In the harvest of this year he learned to cut corn with a scythe, and the next spring not only learned to hold a plough, but by patient persistence and fearless compulsion trained two young bulls to go in one, thus saving several weeks' work of a pair of horses. Even his grandmother began to feel proud that she had a share in the lad. What might he not be worth by the time he was a man! It troubled her, however, that he was no sportsman—never hunted the otter, never shot hares or partridges; the fact being, that, ever since his talk with the master about Linty, he could not bear to kill anything. His heart was larger and tenderer than his grandmother's, and got in the way of the killing.

He never went to the village without going to see Grannie. The old woman suffered much from rheumatism, which she described as a sorrow in her bones, but never lost her patience, and so got the good of the discipline which is specially that of old people—sent to start them well in the next world. Before the winter set in, the laird had seen her provided with peats—that cost nothing but labour: Cosmo had carted them himself, with Linty, quite recovered, between the shafts. But no amount of fire could keep the frost out of her body, or the sorrow out of her bones. She had often to retreat to the box-bed, and when the

bitter weather came, soon after Christmas, Agnes had to go and stay with her.

One afternoon, clouds rising, and the wind blowing keen from the north, Cosmo left Glenwarlock for the village, to see how they were getting on. He tramped the two miles and a half in joyous conflict. The snow was deep and powdery, and struggle with windy space from incoherent footing brought the blood to his cheeks and the sparkle to his eyes, and he entered the cottage radiant. He found Grannie sitting up in bed, and Aggie getting her tea. Setting on the table a bottle of milk he had brought—a luxury there in the winter—and some barley-meal scons Grizzie had made that morning, he dropped into Grannie's soft chair, and they had tea together. Grannie was a little better than usual, for every disease has its inconsistencies, and pain will abate before an access: notwithstanding the storm at hand, and the fiery serpents flying through her limbs and joints, she was talking more than for days previous. When tea was over, and Aggie was removing the things, her voice came feebly from the bed to Cosmo's ears, where he lay back luxurious in her great chair:

"Did ye dream ony mair aboot the auld captain, Cosmo?" she asked.

"No ance," he answered. "What gars ye speir, Grannie?"

She said nothing for a few minutes, and Cosmo thought she had dismissed the subject. Aggie had returned to her seat, and they were talking about a certain proposition in Euclid, when she began again.

"Ye're weel nigh a man, Cosmo," she said, "an' a body daur speyk to ye aboot things she wadna be wullin' to say afore a bairn for fear o' frichtin' him mair nor the bit hert o' 'm cud stan'."

This preamble was enough in itself—not exactly to bring Cosmo's heart into his mouth, but to send a little more blood from his brain to his heart than was altogether welcome there. His imagination, however, was yet more eager than apprehensive, and his desire to hear far greater than his dread of what might be coming. He looked at Aggie, and she stared at him again with pupils already dilated as if by the shadow of some awful approach. Neither said a word, but their souls made haste into their ears, and there sat listening.

"There's no guid ever cam o' ca'in' things oot o' their ain names," she began, "an' it's my min' 'at gien ever ae man was a willain, an' gien ever ae man had rizzon no to lie quaiet whan he was doon, that man was yer father's uncle—his gran'-uncle, that is—the auld captain, as we ca'd him. Fowk said he saul' his sowl to the ill ane: hoo that may be, I canna tell; but sure I am 'at

his was a sowl ill at ease i' this warl', an' less at ease I doobtna it maun be noo i' the neist. Them 'at sleepit 'aneth me, for there was twa men-servan's i' the hoose at that time—an' troth there was need o' them an' mair, sic war the gangin's on!—an' they sleepit whaur I'm tauld ye sleep noo, Cosmo, an' they swore to me 'at never a nicht passed 'at they h'ardna soons 'aneth them 'at there was no mainner o' accoontin' for. There's mony ane nooadays wad explain 't a'—by w'y o'! but that explainin' I canna bide: it's jist a love o' leasin', an' taks the bluid oot o' a' thing, lea'in' life as wersh an' fusionless (*insipid and weak*) as kail wantin' saut. Them 'at h'ard it swoor to me, as I tell ye, 'at there was *no* accoontin' for the reemish (*romage*) they baith h'ard—whiles douf-like dunts (*muffled knocks*), whiles a scrapin' an' tap-tappin', an' whiles speech o' moo', like beseekin' an' groanin', as gien the enemy war bodily present to the sinner."

"He micht hae been but jabberin' in 's sleep," suggested Cosmo, with his love of fair play.

Aggie gave him a warning nudge.

"Ay micht he," returned the old woman with calm scorn; "an' it micht, nae doobt, hae been snorin', or a cat speykin' wi' man's tongue, or ony ane o' mony things 'cep' the trowth 'at ye're no wullin' to hear."

"I'm wullin' to hear the warst trowth ye daur tell me, Grannie," cried Cosmo, terrified lest he had choked the fountain—and that although the tale had to do with the room he slept in last night, and must go back to, and sleep in again this same night that was now around him!

Grannie was mollified, and went on.

"He micht weel be ill at ease, as I was sayin'—the auld captain, gien ae half was true 'at was tauld o' him: he bude til hae led a deevilich life amo' the pirates!—only whaur was the wauges o' his ineequity? I dinna mean the wauges the apostle speyks o'; he got them—for, as ye weel ken, 'the wauges o' sin is deith.' But for the maist pairt sic-like sinners get for a time wauges o' anither speckle frae the maister o' them. Troth! he has little need to be near wi' them, seein' there's nae buyin' nor sellin' whaur he is, an' a' the gowd he has doon yon'er i' the booels o' the yird wad jist lie there duin' naething, gien he sentna 't up abune to work his wull. Na, he seldom scrimps them 'at follows his biddin'—but i' this case, whaur, I say, was the wauges? He aye cairriet himsel' like ane 'at cud lay doon the law, an' cleemt no sma' consideration, yet was there never sign or mark o' the proper foundation for respec'.

"The Englishman, him 'at was thoucht to hae killt him, was

far-awa' sib (*related*) to the faimily, an' it turnt oot 'at the twa had come thegither 'afore, somewhaur i' foreign pairts. But that's naither here nor there, nor whether he killt him, nor what for he killt him, nor wha's faut was that same: aboot thae maitters naething was ever kent for certain.

"It was an awfu' like thing, ye may be sure, to quaiet fowk, sic as we was a'—'cep' for the drinkin' an' sic like sin' the auld captain cam wi' his reprobat w'ys—it was a sair thing, I'm sayin', to hae a deid man a' at ance upo' oor han's; for whatever the men du, the warst o' 't aye comes upo' the women. It's them 'at has aye to set richt what they hae set wrang. Lat a bairn come to mischance, or the guidman coup (*turn over*) the kettle, an' it's aye —'Rin for Jean this, or Bauby that.' Whan a man kills a body, it's the women hae to mak the best o' 't, an' gar the corp luik dacent—an' there's some corps no that easy to bonnifie! Troth there's mony ane luiks bonnier deid nor livin', but that wasna the case wi' the auld captain, for he luikit as gien he had dee'd cursin', as he bude to du, gien he dee'd as he lived. His moo' was drawn fearfu', as gien the last aith had chokit him. Nae doobt they said 'at wad hae 't they kent, 'at hoo that was the w'y wi' deith frae slayin' wi' the swoord; but I wadna hear o' 't: be that as it micht, there was rizzon eneuch wantin' that. An' whether he had fair play or no, the deith he dee'd was a just ane; for them 'at slays wi' the swoord maun be slain by the swoord. Whan they faun' him, his richt han' was streekit oot, as gien he was cryin' to somebody rinnin' awa' to bide. But there was anither at han'—ane 'at wad tak 'im wi' 'im. Only, gien he tuik 'im that same nicht, he cudna hae cairriet him far. 'Deed, maybe, the auld sinner was ower muckle aiven for *him!*

"They broucht him hame, an' laid the corp o' him upo' 's ain bed, whaur, I reckon, up til this nicht, he had lain mair nor he had sleepit. An' that verra nicht, what sud I see—but I maun tell ye a' aboot it, an' hoo it was, an' syne ye can answer me. Sin' my ain auld mither dee'd, I haena oppent my moo' to mortal upo' the subjec'."

The minds of the two listeners were on the acme of expectation. A real ghost-story, from the lips of one they knew and must believe, was a thing of dread delight. Like ghosts themselves, all unconscious of body, they sat with fixed eyes, rapt in listening.

"Ye may weel believe," resumed the old woman after a short pause, "'at nane o' 's was ower wullin' to sit up wi' the corp oor lane, for, as I say, he wasna a comely corp to be a body's lane wi'. Sae auld auntie Jean an' mysel', we agreed 'at we wud tak the

thing upo' the twa o' 's, for, huz twa, we cud lippen til ane anither no to be ower feart, but min' 'at there was twa o' 's.

"There hadna been time yet to fess hame the coffin, though, i the quaiet o' the mirk, we thoucht, a swe sat, we cud hear the tap-tappin' o' the hemmer upo' the heids o' the nails, as they cawed them intil 't, awa' in Geordie Lumsden's chop, ower at the Muir o' Warlock—a twa mile it wad be! We was sittin', auntie Jean an' mysel', i' the mids o' the room, no wi' oor backs til the bed, nor yet wi' oor faces, for we dauredna turn aither o' them til 't. I' the ae case, wha cud tell what we micht see, an' i' the ither, wha cud tell what micht be seein' hiz? We war sittin', I say, wi' oor faces to the door o' the room, an' auntie was noddin' a wee, for she was turnin' gey an' auld, but *I* was as wide waukin' as ony baudrins (*puss*) by a moose-hole, whan suddent there cam a kin' o' a dirlin' at the sneck (*latch*) 'at sent the verra sowl o' me up intil the garret o' my heid; an' 'afore I had time to ken hoo sair frichtit I was, the door begud to open; an', glower as I wad, misbelievin' my ain e'en, open that door did, langsome, langsome, quaiet, quaiet, jist as my auld grannie used to tell o' the deid man comin' doon the lum (*chimney*), bit an' bit, an' jinin' thegither upo' the flure, aye the last come to that was 'afore 't. I was turnt to stane, like, 'at I cudna hae fa'en frae the cheir gien I had swarfed (*fainted*) clean awa'. Eh, but it tuik a time to open that door! But at last, as sure as ye sit there, you twa, an' no anither,——"

At the word, Cosmo's heart came swelling up into his throat, but he dared not look round to assure himself that they were indeed two sitting there and not another.

"—in cam the auld captain, ae fit efter anither! Speir gien I was sure o' 'im! Didna I ken him whan he was alive as weel as my ain father—as weel as my ain minister—as weel as my ain man? He cam in, I say, the auld captain himsel'—an' eh, sic an evil luik!—the verra luik deith had frozen upo' the face o' the corp! The live bluid turned to dubs (*mud*) i' my inside. He cam on an' on, but no straucht for whaur we sat, or I dinna think the sma' rizzon I had left wad hae bidden wi' me, but as gien he war haudin' for 's bed. To tell God's trowth—for I daurna lee, gien it war only for fear o' haein' to gang to the same place he was in, an' luik upon him again—my auld auntie declaret efterhin (*afterwards*) 'at she saw naething. She bude til hae been asleep, an' a mercifu' thing it was for her, puir body! but she livedna lang efter.

"Weel, he made straucht for the bed, as I thoucht. 'The Lord preserve 's!' says I to mysel', 'is the bein' gaein' to lie doon wi' 's ain corp?' But wi' that he turnt awa', an' roon' the fit o'

the bed to the ither side o' 't, an' I saw nae mair: for a while, kenna hoo short or hoo lang, auntie Jean sat her lane wi' the deid, for I lay upo' the flure, an' naither h'ard nor saw. It's a mercy I wasna deid, for he wad hae gotten me than! But think ye, wad auntie Jean believe 'at I had seen him, or that it was onything but a dream had come ower me atween waukin' an' sleepin'! Na, no she! for, ye see, she had sleepit throu' 't."

For some time silence reigned, as befitted the close of such a story. Nothing but the solemn tick of the tall clock was to be heard. On and on it went, steady as before: ghosts were nothing special to the clock; it had to measure out the time for both ghosts and unghosts.

"But what cud the ghaist hae been wantin'? No the corp, for he turnt awa', ye tell me, frae hit!" Cosmo ventured at length to remark.

"Wha can say what ghaists may be efter, laddie! But, troth to tell, whan ye see live fowk sae gien ower to the boady 'at they're never happy but whan they're aitin' or drinkin' or sic like—whan the boady's the best half o' them, like, an' they maun aye be duin' something wi' 't, wha can won'er 'at the ghaist o' ane sic sud fin' himsel' geyan eerie an' lanesome like wantin' his seck to fill, an' come to hae a luik hoo it was weirin'!"

"But he gaedna to the corp!" Cosmo objected.

"'Cause he wasna alloot," answered Grannie. "He wad hae been intil 't again in a moment gien that had been in his pooer, an' what wad hae come o' 's than! But the deevils cudna win intil the swine wantin' leave."

"Ay, I see," said Cosmo.

"But jist ye speir at yer new maister," Grannie went on, "what he thinks aboot it; for I aince h'ard him speyk richt wice words to my guidson, Jeames Gracie, sittin' whaur ye sit the noo, anent sic things. I min' weel hoo he said the only thing 'at made again' the viouw I tuik—though I spakna o' the partic'lar occasion—was, 'at naebody ever h'ard tell o' the ghaist o' an alderman—wha they say 's some grit Lon'on man, sair gi'en to the fillin' o' the seck."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE STORM GUEST.

AGAIN a deep silence descended on the room. The twilight had long fallen, and settled down into the dark. The only thing that acknowledged and answered the clock was the red glow of the peats on the hearth. To Cosmo, as he sat sunk in thought, the clock and the fire seemed holding a silent talk. Presently came a great and sudden blast of wind, which roused him, and made him bethink himself that it was time to be going home.

"Weel, I'm glaid to see ye sae muckle better, Grannie," he said, rising. "I maun say guid nicht to ye noo, but I'll luik in again the morn. I winna sune get yon awfu' story oot o' my heid."

"'Deed it's no mony days thegither oot o' mine!" rejoined the old woman. "But guid nicht to ye, Cosmo, an' thank ye kin'ly. There's been but feow o' yer kin, be their fau'ts what they micht, wad forget ony 'at luikit to them for a kin' word or a kin' deed!—Aggie, lass, ye'll convoy him a bittock, winna ye?"

The few in whom yet lingered the phantom-idea of retainership to the long-faded chieftainship of Glenwarlock, seemed to cherish the notion that the heir of the house must be tended and looked after like a child, and that that was what they were in the world for. Doubtless a pitying sense of the misfortunes of the family had much to do with the feeling.

"There's nae occasion," said Cosmo.

"I'll du that," said Agnes—the two speaking together.

Cosmo began to put on his plaid, crossing it over back and chest, and leaving his arms free: that way the wind would get least hold on him. Agnes went to the closet for her plaid also—of the same tartan: drawing it over her head and pinning it under her chin, she was quickly ready for the stormy road. Turning then to Cosmo, she was pinning his plaid together at the throat, when the wind raised a sudden howl, rushed down the chimney, and drove the level smoke into the middle of the room. It could not shake the cottage—it was too lowly; but it bellowed over it like a wave over a rock, and as in contempt blew its breath back into its throat.

"It'll be a wull (*wild*) nicht, I'm doobtin', Cosmo!" said Agnes. "I wuss ye safe at the ingle-neuk (*hearth-corner*)."

Cosmo laughed.

"The win' kens me," he said.

"Guid forbid!" cried the old woman from the bed. "Kenna ye wha's the prence o' 't, laddie? Makna a jeist o' the pooers 'at be."

"Gien they binna ordeent o' God, what are they but a jeist?" returned Cosmo. "Eh, but ye wad mak a bonny munsey (*monsieur*) o' me, Grannie, to hae me feart at the deil an' a'! I canna a'thegither help it wi' the ghaists, an' I'm ashamet o' mysel' for 't, but I *am not* gaein' to heed the deil. I defy him an' a' his works. He's but a cooard, ye ken, Grannie—for whan ye resist him, he rins."

She made no answer. Cosmo took her hand, bade her good-night again, and went, followed by Agnes, who locked the door behind her, and put the key in her pocket.

It was indeed a wild night. The wind was rushing from the north, full of small, sharp-stinging slugs of snow, like diminutive, ill-made hailstones. Down the wide street it came right in their faces. Through it, as through shifting gauzy veils, they saw on each hand the lights of the village homes, but before them lay darkness and the moor—a chaos, a carnival of wind and snow. Worst of all, the snow on the road was not *binding*, and was like loose sand to walk upon. So long as the footing is good, one can make progress, even in the face of a storm from the north; but to heave with a shifting fulcrum is hard. Nevertheless Cosmo rejoiced; he saw in his mind's eye the mad waste around him, and rejoiced; invisible, it was yet a presence, and his strong young heart was eager for the conflict. There was no fear of ghosts in such a storm! The ghosts might be there, but there was no time to heed them, and that was as good as their absence —perhaps better, if we knew all.

"Bide a wee, Cosmo," cried Agnes, and leaving him in the middle of the street, she ran across to one of the houses, and lifting the latch, went in. No one there troubled a neighbour to come and open the door.

Cosmo turned his back to the wind, and stood waiting. From the house Aggie had entered, came through the wind and snow the sound of a shoemaker's hammer on his lapstone.

"Cud ye spare the mistress for an hoor, or maybe twa an' a half, to haud Grannie company, John Nauchty?" said Agnes.

"Weel that," answered the *sutor*, hammering away, and intending no reflection on the social qualities of the mistress.

"I dinna see her!" said Aggie.

"She'll be in in a meenute. She's run ower the ro'd to get a can'le," returned the man.

"Gien she binna the speedier, she'll hae to licht it to fin' her

ain door," said Aggie merrily, to whom also the approaching fight with the elements was welcome. She had made up her mind to go all the way to Castle Warlock, let Cosmo protest as he chose.

"Ow, na! she'll hearken an' hear the hemmer," replied the shoemaker.

"Weel, tak the key, John Nauchty—an' ye winna forget?" said Aggie, laying the key in the hollow of his stool beside his hand, amongst his smaller implements. "Grannie's lyin' there her lee-lane, an' gien the hoose was to brak intil a lowe (*flame*), what wad come o' her?"

"Guid forbid Grannie sud ever be forgotten!" rejoined the man heartily; "but fire wad hae sma' chance the nicht. It's win' an' hard watter the nicht!"

Agnes thanked and left him. All the time they talked he had not missed a single stroke of his hammer on the ben-leather on his lapstone.

When she rejoined Cosmo, where he stood leaning his back up against the wind in the middle of the road—

"Come nae farther, Aggie," he said. "It's an' ill nicht, an' grows waur. There's nae guid in 't, for we winna hear ane anither speyk ohn stoppit an' turnt oor back to the tempest. Gang to yer grannie; she'll be feart aboot ye."

"Feart! No a grain. I *maun* see ye oot o' the toon."

They fought their way along the street, and out to the open moor, a great part of which was still heather and swamp, fit floor for the dance of the storm. Peat-bog, ploughed land, and king's highway was all one waste of snow. Creation seemed but the snow that had fallen, the snow that was falling, and the snow that had yet to fall; or, to put it otherwise, a fall of snow between two outspread worlds of snow.

"Gang back noo, Aggie," said Cosmo. "What's the guid o' twa whaur ane only need be, an' ilk ane has to fecht for himsel'?"

"I'm no gaein' back yet," answered Aggie. "Twa's better at onything nor ane himlane. The sutor's wife's gaein' in to haud Grannie company, an' Grannie 'ill like her cracks a heap better nor mine. She thinks I hae nae mair heid nor a hen, 'cause I canna min' upo' things 'at war nearhan' forgotten or I was born."

Cosmo tried persuasion, but found it useless and desisted. Again they struggled on together, through the snow above and the snow beneath. Aggie was more than a match for Cosmo: smaller, and stronger in proportion to her size, she bored her way through the blast better than he. The moment he began to expostulate, she would increase the distance between them until she could not hear a sound he uttered.

On one such occasion, she turned at length her back to the wind, and waited for him to come up.

"Noo ye've had eneuch o' 't!" he said with a tinge of triumph. "I maun turn an' gang back wi' ye, or ye'll never win hame."

Aggie broke into a loud laugh that rang like music through the storm.

"A likly thing," she cried, "an' me wi' my back to the win' a' the ro'd hame! Gang back yersel', Cosmo, an' sit in Grannie's cheir, an' I s' gang on to the castel, an' lat them ken whaur ye are. Gien ye dinna that, I tell ye ance for a', I'm no gaein' to lea' ye till I see ye safe inside yer ain wa's."

"But, Aggie!" reasoned Cosmo, with yet greater earnestness, "what'll ye gar fowk think o' me, 'at wad hae a lassie gang hame wi' me, for fear the win' micht blaw me intil the sea? Ye'll bring me to shame, Aggie!"

"A lassie! say ye?" cried Aggie. "—I think I hear ye!—An' me auld eneuch to be yer mither! I s' tak guid care there s' be nae affront intil 't. Haud yer hert quaiet, Cosmo; ye'll hae need o' a' yer breath 'afore ye win to yer ain fireside."

As she spoke, the wind pounced upon them with a fiercer gust than any that had preceded. Instinctively they grasped each other, as if from the wish, if they should be blown away, to be blown away together.

"Eh, that's a rouch ane!" said Cosmo, and again Aggie laughed merrily.

While they stood thus, with their backs to the wind, the moon rose. Far indeed from being visible, she yet shed a little glimmer of light over the plain, revealing a world as wild as ever the frozen north outspread—as wild as ever poet's vision of despairing desolation. I see it! I see it! but how shall I make my reader see it with me? It was ghastly. The only semblance of life in it was the perplexed, multitudinous motion of the drifting, falling snow. Shape was not to be seen, sound but that of the wind was not to be heard. It was a world of gray and roaring. It was like the dream of a delirious child that had read of the birth of the world from the rushing together of fortuitous atoms. Wan and wild, tumultuous-thick, innumerable to millions of angels, an interminable tempest of intermingling and indistinguishable vortices, it stretched on and on, a boundless hell of cold and shapelessness—white thinned with gray, and fading into gray blackness, into tangible darkness.

The moment the fury of the blast abated, Agnes turned, and without a word began again her boring march, forcing her way through the wind. Unable to prevent her, Cosmo followed. But

he comforted himself with the certainty that, if the storm continued, his father would use his authority, and make her stay the night. The sutor's wife was one of Grannie's best cronies, and there was no fear of her being neglected.

Aggie kept the lead she had taken till there could be no more question of going back. They were now drawing near the road that, leaving the highway, ran along the bank of the Warlock river, up among the valleys and low hills that had all at one time been the property of the house of Warlock.

Aggie stopped suddenly.

"What's yon, Cosmo?" she said, with consternation in her tone.

He looked sharply forward, and saw what seemed a glimmer, but might be only something whiter in the whiteness. No! it was certainly a light—whether on the road or not, he could not tell. There was no house anywhere near! It moved!—yet not as if carried in human hand! Now it was gone! There it was again! There were two of them! They were two huge pale eyes in a head rolling from side to side! Grannie's warning about the Prince of the Power of the Air darted into Cosmo's mind. It was awful! But whatever it was, it was not to be run from! That was the readiest measure, no doubt, yet not the less the one impossible to take.

And now it was plain that the Something was not away on the moor, but on the road in front of them. It came nearer and nearer, and grew vaguely visible—a huge blundering mass. They knew no animal half so big, or half so unwieldy: it could never surely overtake them if they had to run for it!

On the wind came sounds that might be human—like the talk of men to horses. And now it was approaching no more! With simultaneous impulse they hastened towards it.

It was a travelling carriage—a rare sight in those parts at any time, and rarer still in winter. The companions had certainly seen one before, but as certainly never a pair of lighted carriage-lamps, with reflectors that made of them fiendish eyes. It had but two horses, which now positively declined attempting a single step farther. They had tried and tried, and done their best, and finding themselves unable to move the carriage an inch, preferred standing still to sending all their eight legs slipping about under them for nothing.

Cosmo looked up to the box: the driver was little more than a boy, and nearly dead with cold. Already Aggie had a forefoot of the near horse in her hand; Cosmo ran to the off one.

"Their feet's fu' o' snaw!" said Aggie.

"Ay; it's ba'd hard!" said Cosmo. "They maun hae come ower a saft place: it wadna ba' the nicht upo' the muir!"

"Hae ye yer k-nife, Cosmo?" asked Aggie.

A head was put out of the carriage-window. It was that of a lady, in a swan's-down travelling-hood. She had heard an unintelligible conversation—and one intelligible word. They must be robbers! How else should they want a knife in a snow-storm? Why else should they have stopped the carriage? When she put out her head it was with a little cry of alarm. Aggie dropped the hoof she held, and went to the window.

"What's yer wull, mem?" she asked.

"What's the matter?" the lady returned, in a trembling voice, but not a little reassured; for, as she crossed the range of one of the reflectors, the face of the young girl seemed to come out of the storm like the face of an angel of help. "Why doesn't the coachman go on?" she asked.

"He canna, mem," answered Agnes. "The horse canna win throuw the snaw. They hae ba's o' 't i' their feet, an' canna get a grip wi' them, nae mair nor ye cud yersel', mem, gien the soles o' yer shune war roon' an' made o' glaiss. But we'll sune set that richt. Hoo far hae ye come, mem, gien I may speir? Aigh, mem, it's an unco nicht!"

The lady understood but little of what Aggie said, for she was English. Half guessing at her question, however, she answered that they had come from Cairntod, and were going on to Howglen. She told her also, now entirely reassured by Aggie's voice, that they had been much longer on the way than they had expected, and were getting anxious.

"Eh, but ye're gaein' the wrang gait for Howglen!" said Aggie. "But ye're not yer lone?" she added, suddenly bethinking herself to summon her English, of which she had plenty of a sort, though not always at hand or easy to find.

"My father is with me," replied the lady, looking back into the carriage; "but I think he is asleep, and I don't want to wake him."

Glancing in, Aggie caught sight of a muffled mass in the farther corner of the carriage. It was breathing heavily, having indeed had more than was good in the way of refreshment.

In the mean time Cosmo was busy clearing the snow from the horses' hoofs. The young driver, stupid or dazed, sat helpless as a parrot on a swinging perch.

"You'll never win to Howglen to-night, mem," said Aggie.

"We must put up where we can, then," answered the lady.

"I dinna know of a place nearer, fit for gentlefowk, mem."

"What are we to do, then?" asked the lady, with subdued, but evident anxiety.

"What's the guid o' haein' a father like that—sleepin' an' snorin' whan maist ye're in need o' 'im!" thought Aggie to herself; but what she replied was, "Bide, mem, till we hear what Cosmo has to say til't."

"That is a peculiar name!" remarked the lady, brightening at the sound of it, for it could, she thought, hardly belong to a peasant.

"It's the name the lairds o' Glenwarlock hae borne for generations," answered Aggie; "though doobtless it's no a name indigenous to the country. One o' them long ago brought it from Italy, where the Pop' bides."

"And who is this Cosmo whose advice you would have me ask?"

"He's the yoong laird himsel', mem. Eh, but ye maun be a stranger no to ken the name o' Warlock!"

"Indeed I am a stranger—and I can't help wishing, if there is much more of this weather between us and England, I had been more of a stranger still."

"'Deed, mem, we hae a heap o' weather up here as like this as ae snaw-flake is til' anither! But we tak what's sent, an' makna mony remarks—though to be sure the thing's different whan it's o' a body's ain seekin'!"

This speech—my reader may naturally think it not over-polite—was happily not over-intelligible to the lady. Aggie, a little wounded by the reflection on the weather of her country, had in her emotion aggravated her Scotish tone.

"Then where is this Cosmo? How are we to find him?"

"He'll come onsoucht, mem. It's only 'cause he's cleanin' oot yer puir horse' hivs 'at he disna pey his respec's to ye. He'll be blithe eneuch to wait upo' ye whan that's dune."

"I thought you said he was a lord!" remarked the lady with disappointment.

"No, mem, I saidna that. He's nae lord. But he's a laird, an' some lairds is better nor 'maist ony lords; an' *he*'s Warlock o' Glenwarlock—at least he wull be—may it be lang or come the day!"

Hard as the snow was packed in them, all the eight hoofs were now cleared out with Cosmo's busy knife, carefully used lest he should hurt the frog. The next moment his head appeared beside that of Aggie, a little behind; and in the light of the lamp reflected from the snow, the lady saw the handsome face of a lad seemingly about sixteen.

"Here he is himsel', mem !" said Aggie. "This is the yoong laird. Ye speir at *him* what ye're to du, and du jist as he tells ye."

Having thus said, she drew back, that Cosmo might take her place.

"Is that girl your sister?" asked the lady, with not a little abruptness, for the *best bred* are not always the most courteous.

"No, my lady," answered Cosmo, who had learned from the lad on the box her name and rank; "she is the daughter of one of my father's tenants."

Lady Joan Scudamore thought it odd. The youth and the maiden seemed on strangely familiar terms! And how came they to be out together thus in the heart of a hideous storm? The girl looked up to him certainly, but as it were from the same level, sharing in the pride of the family!—Should she take her advice, and ask his? or should she order the coachman to drive on to Howglen? There was, alas, no counsel to be had from her father just at present! If she woke him, he would but mutter something not so much unlike an oath as it ought to be, and go to sleep again!

"We want very much to get to Howglen—I think that is what you call the place," she said at length.

"You're going the wrong way for that, my lady. But anyhow you couldn't have got there to-night," returned Cosmo, who had respectfully waited for her to speak. "The road is, as you see, no road at all. The horses would do better if you took their shoes off—only then, if they came on a bit of frozen dub, it might knock their hoofs to pieces: they are brittle in such a frost."

The lady glanced round at her sleeping companion with a look expressive of no small perplexity.

"My father will make you welcome, my lady," continued Cosmo, "if you will come with us. We can only give you what English people think poor fare, for we're not——"

She interrupted him.

"I should be only too glad to sit all night by a fire! I am nearly frozen."

"We can do a little better for you than that, I hope, though not so well as we should like," returned Cosmo.

"You are very kind. I promise you I will be comfortable," said the lady, beginning to be a trifle interested in the odd specimen of the Scotch calf.

"Welcome then to Glenwarlock!" said Cosmo. "Come, Aggie, tak ane o' them by the heid; they're gaein' wi' 's.—We must turn the horses' heads, my lady. I fear they won't like to face the wind; they've only had their backs to it yet. I can't

make out whether your coachman is half drunk or more than half frozen; but Aggie and I will take care of them, and if he tumble off, nobody will be the worse."

"What a terrible country!" said the lady to herself. "The coachmen get drunk upon the box! The boys talk like old men! There is no distinction of classes! And it snows from morning to night, and from one week's end to another's!"

Aggie had taken the head of the near horse, and Cosmo took that of the off one. The driver said nothing, but let them do as they pleased. With some difficulty and more than ordinary caution, the road being indistinguishable from the ditches that here bounded it on both sides, they got the carriage round. But when the weary animals received the tempest in their faces, they backed and would have turned again, and it was some time before they could be induced to front it: Agnes and Cosmo had to employ all their powers of persuasion, first to get them to stand still, and then to advance a little. Gradually, however, by leading, and patting, and continuous encouragement, they were coaxed as far as the parish road, and there, turning their sides to the wind and no longer their eyes and noses, they began to move with a little will of their own: horses have so much hope, that the mere fact of having made a turn is enough to revive them with the expectation of cover and food and repose. They reached presently a more sheltered part of the road, and if now and then they had to drag the carriage through deeper drifts, they were no longer buffeted by the cruel wind or stung by its frost-arrows.

All this time the gentleman inside slept—nor was it surprising; for, lunching at the last town, and not finding the wine fit to drink, he had fallen back on an accomplishment of his youth, and betaken himself to toddy. That he had found at least fit to drink: it was proved by the state he was in.

They reached at last the ascent from the parish road to Castle Warlock. This was so steep that their conductors, though they held no conference on the subject, were both anxious as to the behaviour of the horses; but the moment their heads came round, whether only that it was another turn with its fresh hope, or that the wind brought some stray odour of hay or oats to their wide nostrils, I cannot tell, but finding the ground tolerably clear, they took the *brae* with a will, and tore up with the last efforts of a strength all but exhausted, Cosmo and Aggie running beside them, and talking to them all the way. The only difficulty was to make the lad on the box give them head enough.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE CASTLE INN.

THE noise of their approach, heard in the lonely winter castle from the bottom of the hill, awoke varied conjecture, and Grizzie proceeded at once to light the lanthorn that she might the sooner learn what catastrophe could cause such a phenomenon. But the rapidity of the horses' ascent in the hope of rest and warmth and supper was so great, that the carriage was in the close and rattling up to the door, ere she had got the long wick of the tallow candle to repent and shine. The laird laid his book aside, rose in haste from his chair, and went to the door. Just as he reached it a post-chaise stopped before it, and a dense cloud of steam began to shut in the horses from whose quick-heaving sides it rose. And there were Cosmo and Agnes at the door of the chaise, assisting somebody to descend!

The laird was never in a hurry. Too thorough a gentleman to trouble approach by uneasy advance, he stood in the door, calmly expectant.

A long-cloaked lady got down, and leaving the assistant hand of his son, came towards him—a lady quite young yet somewhat stately, evidently weary, and probably in want of food as well as rest. He bowed with old-fashioned worship, and held out his hand to welcome her. She gave him hers graciously, and expressed the hope that in accepting the hospitality his son had offered them they had not presumed.

"Come in, come in, madam," said the old man; "the fire-side is the best place for explanations. Welcome to a poor house, but a warm hearth! So much we can yet offer stranger-friends."

He led the way, and she followed him to the kitchen-fire. On a small piece of carpet before it stood the two chairs of state, each protected by a large old screen. From hers the grandmother, perceiving the quality of the entering guest, rose with dignified difficulty.

"Mother," said the laird, "it is not often we have the pleasure of visitors at this time of the year!"

"The rarer the welcomer!" she answered, and made lady Joan a courtesy as low as she dared—for she could not reckon on her power of recovery.

Lady Joan returned her salute, less impressed with the honour done her than the old lady intended her to be, but quite recog-

nizing the hospitality of a gentlewoman. She took the laird's offered seat, and leaning back, looked wearily at the fire.

The next minute a not very pleasant-looking old man entered, supported on the one side by Cosmo, and on the other by Agnes. They had had some little difficulty in waking him up, and he entered the house with the idea that they had arrived at an inn where they were to spend the night. If his grumbling and swearing as he advanced was *sotto voce*, the fact was owing only to his not being sufficiently awake for a more vigorous utterance. The laird advanced to meet him, but he took no notice of him, plainly regarding his welcome as the mere obsequiousness of a landlord, and turned shivering to the fire, where Grizzie was hastening to set him a chair.

"The fire's the best flooer i' the gairden, an' the pig's the best coo' i' the herdin', my lord," she said—a saw to which his lordship might have been readier to respond, had he remembered that the *pig* meant the stone jar that held the whisky.

As soon as lord Mergwain was seated, Cosmo, drawing his father aside, informed him concerning the names of their guests and the situation in which he had found them, adding that the lady and the horses were sober enough, but for the other two he would not answer.

"We have been spending some weeks at Canmore Castle in Ross-shire, and are now on our way home," said lady Joan to Mistress Warlock.

"You have come a long way round!" remarked the old lady, displeased with the manners of the elder visitor, on whom she kept casting, every now and then, an almost admonitory glance.

"We have," replied lady Joan. "We turned out of our way to visit an old friend of papa's, the laird of Cairntod, and have been storm-bound there till he—I mean papa, could bear it no longer. We sent our servants on this morning. They are by this time waiting us at Howglen."

"I hope so," said the laird, a little doubtfully.

The fire had been thawing the sleep and rousing the normal ill-humour of lord Mergwain, so that now at length he was sufficiently awake to be annoyed that his daughter should hold so much converse with the folk of the inn.

"Can't you show us to a room," he said gruffly, "and get us something to eat?"

"We are doing the best we can for your lordship," replied the laird. "We were not expecting visitors, and as one of the rooms you will have to occupy has not been in use for some time, it will, in such weather as this, take two or three hours of a good fire to

render it fit to sleep in. But I will go myself, and make sure that the servant is attending first of all to the fires."

He put on his hat over his nightcap, and went towards the door.

"That's right, landlord!" cried his lordship. "Always see to the comfort of your guests yourself. God bless me! you don't mean we have to go out of doors to reach our bedrooms?"

"I am afraid we cannot help it," answered the laird, who had stopped half-way. "There used to be a passage somewhere, connecting the two houses, but for some reason or other, I have been told, it was built up before my father's time."

"He must have been a precious old fool!" remarked the visitor, who had not cared to hear accurately.

"My lord!"

"I said your father must have been an old fool," repeated his lordship testily.

"You speak of my husband!" said Mrs. Warlock, drawing herself up with dignity.

"I can't help that. *I* didn't give you away! Let's have some supper, will you? I want a tumbler of toddy, and without something to eat it might make me drunk."

Lady Joan sat silent, with a placid look on her handsome face, but a twinkle of mischievous enjoyment in her shining eyes. She had too often to suffer from her father's rudeness not to take some pleasure in its bringing him into a hurtless scrape. The laird was both sharper and kinder, however, than she expected, and understanding both the old man's condition and his mistake, humoured the joke; but his mother rose trembling with indignation. He immediately gave her his arm, and conducted her to a stair which ascended from the kitchen, whispering to her at the foot of it that, as the man was their guest and the worse for drink, and there was no other shelter to which he could betake himself, he must not quarrel with him. He then called Cosmo and Agnes, who were talking together in a low voice near the door, and taking them with him to Grizzie where she toiled to get the spare room ready, told them to relieve her, and let her go and get supper for the strangers.

"I fear, my lord," he said, returning, "we are but poorly provided for such guests as your lordship, but we will do what we can."

"A horrible country!" growled his lordship. "But, look you, I don't want jaw—I want drink."

"What drink would your lordship have? If it be in my power——"

"I'll be damned, for all your talk, if you've got anything better than your cursed whisky!" interrupted lord Mergwain.

Now the laird had some remnants of old wine in the once well-stored cellar, and, thankless as his visitor seemed likely to prove, his hospitality would not allow him to withhold what he had.

"I have a few bottles of claret," he said, "—if it should not be over old! I do not understand much about wine myself."

"Let's have it up!" cried his lordship. "I'll soon tell you what sort it is! If you don't know good wine, I do. I'm old enough, blast my soul! to know the devil in any bottle."

The laird would have had more confidence in recommending his port, which he had been told was as fine as any in Scotland, but he thought claret safer for one in his lordship's condition—one who having drunk would drink again. He brought therefore from the wine-cellar, which had once been the dungeon of the castle, a thoroughly respectable-looking magnum of claret, dirty as a burrowing terrier, and to the eyes of the imagination hoary with age. The whole wrinkled face of the toper glistened at the sight. Eagerly he stretched out both hands towards it. They trembled with desire. Scarcely could he endure the delay of its unsealing. No sooner did the fine promissory note of the discharge of its tompion reach his ear, than he cried out, with the authority of a field-officer at least—

"Decant it. Leave the last glass in the bottom."

The laird placed a small deal table near the fire; then observing that lady Joan had taken his mother's chair, set his beside the table. His lordship at once occupied it. The laird filled a decanter and set it before him.

"Haven't you a magnum-jug?" he growled.

"No, my lord."

"Then fill another decanter, and mind the last glass."

"I have not another decanter, my lord."

"Not got two decanters, you fool?" sneered his lordship, angry at not having the whole bottle set down to him at once. "But, after all," he resumed, "it mayn't be worth a damn, not to say a decanter. Bring the bottle. Set it down. Here!—carefully! Bring a glass. You should have brought the glasses first. Bring three; I like to change my glass. Make haste, will you!"

The laird did make haste, smiling at the exigence of his visitor. Lord Mergwain listened to the glug-glug in the long neck of the decanter as a lover might to a song of love, and the moment it ceased was holding the glass to his nose.

"Humph! not much aroma here!" he grumbled. "I ought

to have made the old fool"—the laird must have been some fifteen years younger than he—"give it a taste of the fire, only what would have become of me while it was thawing! By Jove, by the time I've been buried as long, I shall want thawing too!"

The wine, however, turned out more satisfactory to the palate of the toper than to his nostrils—which in truth, so much had he drunk that day, were at the moment incapable of doing it justice—and he set himself to enjoy it. How that should be possible to a man for whose spiritual palate the accompanying dried olives of memory could do so little, I find it difficult to understand. One would think, alone to enjoy his wine, a man must have either good memories or good hopes. Lord Mergwain had forgotten the taste of hope; and most men would shrink from touching the spring that would set such a panorama unrolling itself as made up his past; yet there he sat, and there he drank alone, and, truth to tell, now and then smiled grimly.

The laird put a pair of brass candlesticks on the table beside the bottle, the decanter, and the three glasses—there were no silver utensils any more in the house of Glenwarlock; years ago the last of them had vanished—and retired to a deal chair at the end of the hearth, under the lamp that hung on the wall. But first he took from a shelf an old, much-thumbed folio, which Mr. Simon had lent him—the Journal of George Fox; and the panorama which then for a while passed before his mind's eye was not a little different from that passing before lord Mergwain's. What a study to a spirit able to watch the unrolling of the two side by side!

In a few minutes Grizzie entered, carrying a fowl just killed, its head as she came all but dragging on the ground at the end of its long, limp neck. She seated herself on a stool, somewhere about the middle of the large space of the kitchen-floor, and proceeded to pluck and otherwise prepare it for the fire. Having last of all split it open from end to end, so turning it into something not unlike an heraldic double eagle, she approached the fire, the fowl in one hand, the gridiron in the other.

"I doobt I maun get his lordship to sit a wee back frae the fire," she said. "I hae to bran'er this chuckie til 's supper."

"What does the woman mean?" said his lordship. "Oh! I see—a spread-eagle! But is there no room to sit in? Or is my chamber not ready yet? I don't relish feasting my nose so much in advance of the better sense."

"Ow, nae fear o' yer lordship's nose, 'cep' it be frae yer lordship's hose, my lord!" said Grizzie, "—for I doobt ye're birstlin' (*scorching*) yer lordship's shins! I'll tak the cratur oot to the

cairt-shed, an' sing' 't there. An' 'deed I wadna advise ye to gang to yer room a minute afore ye need, for it winna be that warm the nicht. I hae made a fire 'at's baith big an' bricht—ane fit to ro'st Belzebub—an' I beg yer pardon, laird—but it's some days—I micht say ooks—sin' it last saw fire, an' the place needs time to tak the heat intil its auld neuks."

She might have said years not a few, instead of some weeks, but her truthfulness was not strong enough to drive her so far. She turned, and left the house, carrying with her the fowl to singe.

"Here," said his lordship to his host, "move back this table and chair a bit, will you? I don't relish the old witch fussing about my knees. What a cursed mistake it is not to have rooms ready for whoever may come."

The laird rose, laid his book down, and moved the table, then, having helped his guest to rise, moved his chair also, and placed the screen again betwixt him and the door. His lordship re-settled himself to his bottle.

In the mean time, in the guest-chamber, which had for so long entertained neither friend nor chance-visitor, Cosmo and Aggie were airing the linen, dusting the furniture, setting things tidy, and keeping up a roaring fire. For this purpose the remnants of a broken-down cart, of which the axle was anciently greasy, had been fetched from the winter store, with many peats, and a few shovelfuls of coal to give the composition a little body, and all between them had made a glorious glow. But the heat had hardly yet begun to affect sensibly the general atmosphere of the room, which was large—the same size as the drawing-room immediately under it.

This room was still less familiar to Cosmo: the drawing-room filled him with a kind of loving awe; this caused him a kind of faint terror. The genesis of the feeling was unknown to him. His late experiences in Grannie's cottage had but deepened it. At no time, even in broad daylight, had he been willing to enter it. Now and then he would open the door in passing, and for a moment stand peering in, with a stricken, breath-bating enjoyment of the vague atmosphere of dread which issuing seemed to envelop him in its folds; so, it was like a page in a book of horrors; but to go one step nearer to that heavily curtained bed was more than he would ever of his own motion have done. What it was about the room that scared him he could not tell, but the scare was there. At the same time he rejoiced in the possession of such a room by the house, cherishing an idea of some undefined measureless value in it—almost as if it had a mysterious window looking out upon the infinite. Nor was the cause traceable of this feeling

either. Until Grannie's story, he had heard no tale concerning the room—that he remembered, though doubtless hints and words dropped had made their impressions, outlasting the memory of their origin.

With a companion like Aggie, however, even after hearing Grannie's terrible reminiscence, he could enter the room and remain in it without worse than that milder dread experienced upon its threshold when he only *glowered* into the strange brooding silence of the place. But this applied only to the space on the side of the bed next the fire. Not to mention the shadowy region beyond it, the bed on which the body of the pirate had lain was awfully gruesome: it seemed scared at its knowledge both of the fact, and of the feeling its own conscious look caused in the beholder.

In the strength of Aggie's presence, notwithstanding, Cosmo was equal to taking a survey of the room. Over walls, floor, and ceiling, his eyes were wandering. But the bed hid a part of the room beyond. What was that like? When they were ready to put the sheets on the bed, he must go to that side, and then he would see! He dared not go till then! "Daurna!" he repeated to himself—and went at once.

Near the head of the bed was a door which seemed to him quite strange, but the next moment an eerie foggy memory woke in him that he had seen it in his dream. The dream, old captain and all, threatened to rush back and enfold him! What if he were about to find himself suddenly alone in the midnight of that awful time! The curtains hid Aggie, and he felt as if he were miles alone even now, and must rush back to her. But he would not yield to the folly, and compelled himself to walk up to the door: instead of a door it was an old dark screen in stamped leather, from which the gilding was long faded.

"Aggie," he said, and although he called gently, he trembled at the sound of his own voice, "did ye ever hear—did Grannie mak mention o' ony door but the ane the auld captain cam in at?"

"Whisht! whisht!" cried Aggie, in a loud hissing whisper, which seemed to pierce the marrow of Cosmo's bones. "I rede (*counsel*) ye say naething aboot yon i' this chaumer. Bide till we're oot o' 't. As sune's we hae dune, we'll steek (*close*) the door, an' lat the fire work. It'll hae eneuch adu afore it mak the place warm: the cauld intil this room's no a common ane. There's something by ord'nar' intil 't."

Cosmo could no longer endure having the great, old, hearse-like bed between him and Aggie. With a shiver in the very

middle of his body, he hastened to the other side: on the one lay the region of air, and fire, and safe earthly homeliness; on the other was the dank region of the unknown, whose march-ditch was the grave.

In silence they hurried on the rest of their work; Aggie insisted on taking the farther side of the bed when they made it, but then only was another word spoken between them till they were safe from the room and had closed its door behind them.

Their further task was to make Cosmo's room somewhat fitter for a lady's bower. Opening a certain chest, they took from it—stored there by his mother, Cosmo loved to think—another set of curtains, clean blankets, fine sheets, and a counterpane of silk patchwork, and put them on the bed. With these, a toilet-cover, and a chair or two from the drawing-room, they so changed it that Cosmo declared he would not have known it. They then filled the grate, where the fire was already burning fiercely, with as much additional fuel as it would hold, and ran to the kitchen. At the door of it Aggie gave her companion the slip, and went back through the storm to Muir o' Warlock.

Cosmo found the table spread for supper, the English lord sitting with his wine before him, and the lady in his grandmother's chair, leaning back, and yawning wearily. Lord Mergwain looked muddled, and his daughter cast on him now and then a look more of discomfort than affection. He was not now a very pleasant lord to look on, whatever he might once have been. He was red-faced and blear-eyed, and his nose, partly from the snuff he took in large quantity, was much injured in shape and colour: closer description the historical muse declines. His eyes had once been blue, but tobacco, potations, revellings day and night—everything but tears, had washed from them the most of their colour. He wore a jet-black wig, which added much to the strange unpleasantness of his appearance, for therein to the unnatural came the untimely, and enhanced the withered. His mouth, full of false teeth very white and ill-fitting, had a cruel expression, and Death seemed to look out every time he grinned.

As soon as he and lady Joan were seated at the table, the laird and Cosmo left the kitchen and went to the guest-chamber, for, the condition and behaviour of her father being such, the laird judged that the lady would be more comfortable without them.

"Cosmo," he said, throwing more peats on the fire, and then standing with his back to it, "I cannot help feeling as if I had known that man before. But I can recall no circumstance of the acquaintance, and it may be a mere fancy. *You* have never seen him, my boy—have you?"

"No, father; and I shouldn't be sorry to think I was not to see him soon again," answered Cosmo. "The lady is pretty, but not very pleasant, though she be a lord's daughter."

"Ah, but such a lord, Cosmo!" returned his father. "When a man drinks like that, he's no better than a cheese under the spigot of a wine-cask; he only lives to keep his body well soaked —whether the nicer or the nastier for the worms I don't know. He drowns his soul in his body, as they drowned the duke of Clarence in the malmsey-but. The material part of us is meant to keep growing gradually thinner to let the soul out when its time comes, and the soul to keep growing bigger and stronger every day, until it burst the body at length, as a growing nut breaks its weakening shell; but when, instead, the body grows thicker and thicker, lessening the room within, it squeezes the life out of the soul, and when such a body dies, the soul inside it is found a poor shrivelled thing. Cosmo, to see that man drink, makes me ashamed of my tumbler of toddy. I know I like my drink just the same way that man likes his—it's only a difference of degree. I don't believe it does me any good, and from this hour I will take no more.—Then," he added, after a short pause, "I shall be quite sure you will never take any."

"Oh, father!" cried Cosmo, "take your toddy all the same: I promise you—and a Warlock never breaks his word, you know —I will not taste strong drink while I live."

"The word of a man is better than that of a Warlock," said the laird. "A Warlock is nothing except he be a man. Some Warlocks have been men. The apostle says, 'Quit yourselves like men.'"

From that day the laird drank nothing that could be called strong drink, much to the satisfaction of his friend Peter Simon, who was from choice a water-drinker.

"What a howling night it is, Cosmo!" he resumed. "If the poor old lord had held on for Howglen, he would have been frozen to death. When the drink's out of the drunkard, he's nothing but a sponge."

By this time lord Mergwain had had his supper, and had begun to drink again. Grizzie wanted to get rid of him and "redd up" her kitchen, and had not scrupled to tell him so, but he would not move. He was quite comfortable where he was, he said, and damned her kitchen. He wouldn't stir a peg, he said, till he had finished the magnum. My lady might go when she pleased; the magnum was better company than the whole houseful of them!

Grizzie was on the point of losing her temper altogether.

When the laird and Cosmo re-entered, she was standing before their guest with her hands on her hips. They lingered a moment at the door, for what Grizzie said was not seldom worth hearing.

"Na, na, my lord!" she expostulated, "I canna lea' ye here. Yer lordship 'ill sune be past takin' care o' yersel'—no 'at ye wad be a witch at it this present!—an' wad be thinkin' ye was i' yer bed whan ye was i' the mids' o' the middin' (*mixen*), or pu'in' the blankets o' the deuk-dub (*duck-pond*) ower yer heid at the deil's biddin'. Lord! my lord, ye micht set the hoose o' fire, an' burn a', baith stable an' byre, horses an' cairts an' cairt-sheds, an' hiz a' to white aisse i' oor nakit beds!"

"Hold your outlandish gibberish," returned his lordship, "and fetch me some whisky. This stuff is too cold to go to sleep on."

"Deil a drap or drap o' whusky, or oucht else, yer lordship s' hae frae my han' this nicht—nae mair nor gien ye war a bairn 'at wantit poother to blaw himsel' up wi'! Ye hae had ower muckle a'ready, gien ye war but cawpable o' un'erstan'in' 't, or failin' that, o' believin' an honest wuman 'at kens what state ye are in better nor ye du yersel'!—A bonny lordship!" she muttered to herself as she turned from him.

The laird thought it time to appear, and advanced. Lord Mergwain had not understood the half of what Grizzie said, but had found sufficient provocation both in her refusal and in the tone of it, and was much too angry for anything articulate but swearing.

"My lord," said the laird, "I think, you will find your room tolerably comfortable now: shall I have the pleasure of showing you to it?"

"No, damn you! I'm not going to stir. Fetch me a bottle of your whisky;—that's pretty safe to be good."

"Indeed, my lord, you shall have no more drink to-night," said his host, and taking the bottle, which was nearly empty, carried it from the table.

But the volley that now came pouring from the outraged heart of his guest was such, that, for the sake of Grizzie and Cosmo, the laird took the wine again in his hand, and said—

"If your lordship will drink it in your own room, you shall have what is left of the bottle."

Not too drunk to see where his advantage lay, Lord Mergwain yielded; the hellish thunder of imprecation from bellowing sank to growling, then to muttering, and the storm gradually subsided. The laird gave him one arm, Cosmo another, and Grizzie came behind, ready to support or push as occasion might require; and so in procession they moved from the kitchen along the causeway,

his lordship grumbling and slipping, hauled, carried, and shoved, through the great door, up the stairs, past the drawing-room, and into "the muckle chaumer." There deposited in an easy chair before the huge fire, he was fast asleep in a moment. Lady Joan had followed them, and when they went into her father's room, passed up to her own. When the three therefore returned to the kitchen, they found nobody in it. Grizzie went back to see that the young lady was comfortable, and the laird, with a sigh of relief, sank into his mother's chair. After a little, having asked Cosmo to hand him the Journal of George Fox, he sent him to bed, and rejoicing in the quiet, began to read. Grizzie returned, pottered about for a while, retired, and the laird was alone.

When he had read for about an hour, he thought it time to go and see after his guest. He found him still asleep before the fire. But he must not be left there through such a night, for the fire would go out, and a pack of wolves would hardly be worse than the invading cold. It was not an easy task to rouse him, and indeed remained in large measure unaccomplished, for, after having with much labour and contrivance relieved him of his coat and boots, the laird had to content his hospitality with getting him into bed in the remainder of his clothes. He then heaped fresh fuel on the fire, put out the candles, and left him to what repose there might be for him. Returning to his chair and his book, he read for another hour, paid his guest one visit more to make up the fire, and then went to bed. His room was in the same block with the kitchen, above that of his mother.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THAT NIGHT.

Cosmo's temporary quarters were in one of two or three chambers above his own, formerly occupied by domestics. He went to bed under many blankets, but after about four hours' sleep, woke so cold that he could not sleep again. Now Cosmo could bear any degree of cold he had yet experienced in the open air, but to be cold in bed was more than he would willingly endure. When disturbed on a summer night, he always got up and went out; and although naturally less inclined to do so on such a night as this, when, though the wind had fallen and the snow ceased, the rooks would be tumbling dead from the fir trees with pure cold, he yet thought anything better than lying sleepless from such a cause.

On the opposite side of the court, in a gap between the stable and the byre, the men had heaped up the snow from the front of the offices, and with that heap Cosmo had been amusing himself. Snow as a plastic substance, a thing that could be compelled into shapes, was an endless delight to him, and now he had conceived and partly carried out a new tancy, which, but for the interruption of their visitors, he would have already brought to completion.

Into the middle oi the mound he had bored a tunnel, and there hollowed what may be called a negative human shape—the mould, as it were, of a man, of life-size, with his arms thrown out, and his feet stretched straight, as one that had fallen and lay weary. His object was to illuminate it, in the hope of "a man all light, a seraph man," shining through the snow, and that same night had intended, on his return from Muir o' Warlock, to light it up: now that he was driven from his citadel, he would brave the enemy in his camp, and make his experiment.

He dressed himself, crept softly out, and, for a preparation, would have a good run. He trotted down the hill, beating his feet hard, for there was comparatively little snow here, until he reached the more level road, where he set out at what speed was possible, and soon was warm as any boy need care to be.

About four o'clock in the morning the laird woke suddenly, not knowing why. But it was not long ere he knew why he must not go to sleep again. From a distance, as it seemed, through the stillness of the night, in rapid succession, came three distinct shrieks, one close on the other, as from the throat of a human being in mortal terror. Never had such shrieks invaded his ears. Whence they came, whether from some part of the house, or from outside, he could not tell. He sprang upon the floor, thinking first of his boy, and next of the old man left drunk in his bed, and drew on a garment or two with speed, expecting every moment a fresh assault of horrible sound. But all he heard was the hasty running of far-off feet. He hurried down, passing carefully his mother's door, and listening as he passed, in the hope of finding she had not been disturbed. He heard nothing, and went on; but the old lady lay there trembling, too terrified to move or utter a sound. In the next room he heard Grizzie, evidently preparing to issue in haste. Down to the kitchen he ran, and through it to the door. When he opened it, a strange sight met his eyes, and for a moment arrested him.

The night was dark as pitch, for great clouds of snow filled the vault of the sky, and behind them was no moon. But the heap of snow on the opposite side of the court was shining with a faint, phosphorescent radiance, rendering the whole of it plainly

visible. A thing yet stranger was that the light seemed to come from inside the heap, and, strangest of all, its core had a vague *shadowy* resemblance—if one may use the word of a shape of *light*—to the form of a man. There lay what seemed to the laird's troubled eyes the shining body and outstretched limbs of one who had cast himself supine, and been swallowed by a snowy grave. The vision flickered and faded, revived and faded again, while, in his wonder forgetting for one brief moment the cries he had heard, the laird stood and gazed. It was the strangest, ghostliest thing he had ever seen! Surely he was witness of some phenomenon hitherto unknown! But Grizzie's footsteps on the stair behind roused him, and the same instant the light suddenly vanished. He hurried towards the great door, with Grizzie now at his heels.

He opened it. All was still. Feeling his way in the thick darkness, he went up the elliptic spiral of the stair.

Cosmo had left the remnants of his candle-ends burning, and had just climbed glowing to his room, to watch from its one small window the last of his successful experiment, when those quick-following, hideous sounds rent the night, like flashes from some cloud of hellish torture. His heart stood still. Involuntarily associating them with what he had been about, he felt for a moment like a murderer. The next he caught up his light and rushed from the room, to seek, like his father, that of their guest.

As he reached the bottom of the first stair, the door of his own room opened, and lady Joan came out, in a cloak over her nightgown. She looked like marble; her wide eyes seemed immovable. But Cosmo felt it was not she who had shrieked, and passing her led the way down.

When the laird reached the door of the guest-chamber, there was his boy in his clothes, with a candle in his hand, and the lady in her nightgown, standing in the middle of the floor, and gazing downward with terror-stricken countenances. Before them lay lord Mergwain!—or was it but a thing of nought—the deserted house of a living soul? The face was drawn to one side, and hence an unavoidable suggestion of the ludicrous mingled hideously with the horror which was its real expression. Upon closer investigation the laird concluded he must be dead; but as he could not be certain, something must be done. Cosmo was dazed, and lady Joan stood staring with a lost look, more of fright than of sorrow, but on Grizzie's countenance, looking through between them with bright searching eyes, was neither dismay, anxiety, nor distraction. She only nodded her head now and then, as if she had expected it, and here it was.

"Rin an' fess het watter as fest 's ye can, Grizzie," said the

laird. "My dear lady, go and put on your clothes, or you will be frozen to death. Cosmo, get the fire up as quickly as possible; it is not quite out. But first we must get him into bed and cover him up warm. I will rub his hands and feet till the hot water comes."

As the laird said every one did speedily. Grizzie soon brought a pail of hot water, Cosmo soon lighted the fire, and the lady soon returned more warmly clad. Grizzie put the pail on a chair by the bed-side, and they got his feet in without raising him or taking him out of the blankets. Before long he gave a deep sigh, and presently showed other signs of revival. When at length he opened his eyes, he stared wildly round him, and seemed to have lost his reason. But the laird thought he might not yet have got over the drink he had taken, and if he could be got to sleep, would perhaps wake better. They removed therefore more of his clothes, made him as comfortable as they could, and placed hot bottles about him. The laird said he would sit with him, and sent lady Joan to bed, assuring her he would call her if in the least her presence should seem desirable. But from her behaviour he suspected the catastrophe was not altogether strange to her. She went readily, more like one relieved than anxious. Grizzie went to see how her mistress fared. Cosmo was left with his father.

In the mind of the laird had arisen the same fear that had the first moment seized Cosmo: might he not unwittingly have had some share in the frightful event? When first he entered the room, there was Cosmo dressed, and with a light in his hand!—the seeming phosphorescence of the snow must have been one of his *ploys:* might it not have been the source of the shock to the dazed brain of the drinker?

His lordship was now breathing regularly and more softly, though every few minutes half waking with a cry—a dreadful thing to hear from a sleeping *old man*. They drew their chairs close to the fire and to each other, and Cosmo, as was usual with him, laid his hand on his father's knee.

"Did you observe that peculiar appearance in the snow-heap on the other side of the court, Cosmo?" asked the laird.

"Yes, father," replied the boy; "it was my doing."

And therewith he told him all about it.

"You're not vexed with me, are you, father?" he concluded, seeing him look grave.

"No, my son," answered the laird; "I am only uneasy lest that should have had anything to do with this sad affair."

"How could that be, father?" asked Cosmo, his heart again seeming to stand still with dread.

"He may have looked out of the window and seen it."

"But why should it do him any harm to see it?" said Cosmo, the more inclined to question, that his peace was concerned.

"It may have terrified him."

"Why should it terrify him?"

"In the half-foolish state he was in he may have taken it for something supernatural," replied his father. "I cannot help feeling uneasy about it."

"Did *you* see anything frightful about my man of light, father?" inquired Cosmo.

"No," answered his father thoughtfully; "but, you see, it was the shape of a man lying full length as if he were dead and in his grave, and he may have taken it for his own wraith—an omen of death at hand."

"But he is an Englishman, father, and the English don't believe in the second sight."

"That does make it less likely.—Few lowlanders believe in it."

"Do you believe in it, father?"

"Well, you see," returned the laird, with a small smile, "I, like yourself, am neither pure highlander nor pure lowlander, and the natural consequence is, I am not very sure whether I believe in it or not. I have heard stories difficult to explain."

"Still," said Cosmo, "if it were so, his lordship must be the most to blame in the matter; for surely no man with a good conscience would be so frightened if he did see his wraith!"

"However that may be, Cosmo, a man must be sorry any such terror should in his house come upon a stranger. You and I, Cosmo, would have our house a place of refuge.—But you had better go to bed. There is no reason in tiring two people, where one is enough."

"But, father, I got up because I was so cold I could not sleep. I would much rather sit with you. I should be much more comfortable here."

That his son should have been cold in the night distressed the laird. He felt as if for the sake of strangers he had neglected his own, and would have persuaded him to go to his bed, which was in a warmer room, but Cosmo begged to be allowed to remain, and the laird yielded. The boy rolled himself in his plaid, lay down at his father's feet, and was soon slumbering peacefully: his father with him, the chamber had lost its terrors, and was a homely room of the house. Many a time did the memory of his falling asleep on the rug that night before the huge fire, with his father in the great chair beside him, and the bad lord snoring within the dark curtains, return to him, and often in his after troubles

would he say to himself that, if he were as faithful to his heavenly Father in his great house as he was to his earthly father in Castle Warlock, he would fear nothing in earth or hell.

To know one's self safe amid storm and darkness, fire and water, disease and pain, violence and death, is to be a follower of the Master, for that is what he knew, even in the hour of his darkness.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### IN THE MORNING.

All night long, at intervals, the old man moaned, and every now and then would mutter something unintelligible, from which stood out ugly, occasionally fearful words. In the gray of the morning he woke.

"Bring me my brandy," he cried in a voice of discontent.

The laird rose and went to him. But the moment lord Mergwain saw the laird's face above him, he shook all over, his jaw fell, and his face became like that of one who had died of fear.

"Who are you?" he gasped at length, with chattering teeth. "Where am I? How did I come to this cursed place?"

"You came for refuge from the storm last night, my lord," said the laird.

"I never had such horrible dreams in my cursed life. Where am I, do you hear? Who are you? What is your name?—Why don't you answer me?"

"You are at Castle Warlock, my lord," replied the laird.

"God damn me!" he shrieked, and throwing off the blankets, sprang from the bed.

"I entreat you, my lord, lie down again: you were very ill in the night," expostulated the laird.

"Go to hell!" roared his guest in a fierce quaver. "I don't stop another hour in the blasted hole! Out of my way, you fool! Where's Joan? Tell her to come to me directly. I'm off, tell her. I'd as soon go to bed with the devil's grandmother as stop another half-hour in this abominable old lime-kiln!"

He flew at his clothes to dress himself, but his poor old hands trembled so with rage, fear, drink, and eagerness, that he made but little speed. The laird did his best to help him, but he was nowise recognizant.

"I will get you some hot water, my lord," said Glenwarlock at length, moving towards the door.

"No, damn you! Damn everybody!" shrieked the old man. "If you go out of that door, I will throw myself out of this window."

The laird turned, and in silence waited on him again like a servant. "It must be delirium tremens!" he said to himself. He poured him out some cold water, but he would not wash himself till he was clear of the horrible hole, he said. The next moment he cried for water, drank three mouthfuls eagerly, threw the tumbler from him, and broke it on the hearth.

The instant he was dressed he dropped into the chair before the fire, and closed his eyes.

"Your lordship must allow me to fetch some fuel," said the laird; "the room is growing cold."

"Damn you, no!" cried lord Mergwain, opening his eyes and sitting up. "When I'm cold I'll go to hell and get warm again. If you attempt to leave the room, I'll send a bullet after you.—God have mercy! what's that at my feet?"

"It's only my boy," replied the laird gently. "We have been with you together all night—since your attack, at least."

"What do you mean by that?" he said, looking up sharply, with more intelligence in his face than he had yet shown.

"Your lordship had some sort of fit in the night, and if you do not compose yourself, I dread a return of it."

"You well may, if I stop here!" he answered—then, after a pause, "Did I talk?" he asked.

"Yes, my lord—a good deal."

"What did I say?"

"Nothing I could understand, my lord."

"And you did your best, I don't doubt!" rejoined his lordship, with a sneer. "But you know nothing is to be built upon what a man may say in a fit."

"I have told your lordship I understood nothing."

"No matter; I don't stay another hour under your blasted roof."

"That will be as it may, my lord."

"What the great Satan do you mean?"

"Look at the weather, my lord.—Cosmo!"

The boy was asleep, but at his name from his father's lips, he started at once to his feet.

"Go and wake Grizzie," said the laird. "Tell her to get the breakfast ready as fast as she can. Then bring some sticks and peat for the fire, and some hot water for his lordship."

Cosmo ran to obey. Grizzie had been up for more than an hour, and was going about with the strangest look on her face. Her mouth was pursed up close, as if worlds should not make her speak, but her eyes were wide and restless, and now and then she would nod her head, as if assenting to some unheard argument. Whatever Cosmo required of her, she did immediately, but not one solitary word did she utter. He returned with the fuel, and began to make up the fire. Lord Mergwain was lying back in his chair, with his eyes closed.

"Why don't you bring me my brandy, you devil's whelp?" he cried. "—Oh, I thought it was my own rascal! Get me some brandy, will you?"

"There is none in the house, my lord," said his host.

"What a miserable sort of public you keep! No brandy!"

"My lord, you are at Castle Warlock—not the right place, I am sorry to find, for your lordship's needs."

"Oh, damn it, yes! I remember!" he cried, sitting bolt upright. "I once knew your father, or your grandfather, or your grandson, or somebody of yours—the more's my curse! Out of this I must go, and at once! Tell them to put the horses to. Little I thought when I left Cairntod where I was going to come to myself! Better be in hell and have done with it! Lord! Lord! to think of a trifle like that not forgotten yet! For God's sake, give me my brandy. There's some in a pocket somewhere! Damn it! where's the coat I had on yesterday? God! God! God!"

He threw himself back again. The laird thought that if he had the brandy of which he spoke, it might be well to give him some, and would have gone to search the coats his lordship had put off in the kitchen; but at his first step in the direction of the door, he burst out afresh:—

"I tell you—and damn your soul and body that you have to be told twice—I will not be left alone with that child! He's as good as nobody! What could *he* do if——?"

He stopped, as if terrified at the end he saw coming to the sentence.

"Very well, my lord," responded the laird, "I will not leave you. Cosmo shall go and look for the brandy in your lordship's greatcoat."

"Yes, yes, good boy! you go and look for it—and make the devil's own haste about it.—You're all Cosmos, damn you! It's a long line—and a cursed for me—if it shouldn't hang me! But I had the best of the game—though I did lose my diamond ring! Cursed old cheating son of a porpus! It was doing the world

a good turn and Glenwarlock a better!—Damn you! what are you listening to?—Ha! ha! ha! I say, now, Glenwarlock, would you hang a man when there was nothing to be got by it—not a ha'p'orth?"

"I never had occasion to consider the question, my lord," answered the laird.

"Ha! ha! let me tell you it's quite time you did consider it. If you wait for the occasion, you'll find you have waited too long. It's no joke when a man has to decide without one moment to think. He's pretty sure to decide wrong."

"That depends, I should imagine, my lord, on how he has been in the habit of deciding."

"Come now! none of your Scotch sermons to me! You Scotch always were a set of oily hypocrites! The better to roast at last: you won't want basting! Damn the whole nation!"

"To judge by what you said last, my lord——"

"Oh, my last speech, eh!—my dying declaration! 'Tis fairer to judge a man by anything rather than what he says. That only serves to hide what he's thinking. By God! I wish I might be judged by what I say, though, bad as it is! I've done a thing or two I wish I could forget now that age has clawed me in his clutch. So have you! So has everybody! Why should I fare worse than the rest!"

Here Cosmo returned with a brandy-flask. His lordship reached out both hands to it, more eager after it than for even the cobwebbed magnum of claret—hands trembling at once with feebleness and hunger for strength. Heedless of his host's offer of a glass, he put the flask to his mouth, and swallowed three great gulps. Then he breathed deep, seemed to say with Macbeth, "Ourselves again!" drew himself up in his chair, and glanced around him with a look of gathering arrogance. Truculent question sat in his eyes—as if his soul were saying, "Now then, what do you make of it? What's your damned notion about me and my behaviour?" After a moment's silence—

"What puzzles me is this," he said, "—how the deuce, of all places, I should come just here! I don't believe, in all my wicked life, I ever made such a fool of myself before—and I've made many a fool of myself too!"

Receiving no answer, he took another pull at the brandy. Cosmo stood *glowering* at him openly—fascinated. The laird stood a little behind him, harking back upon old stories, putting this and that together, and resolving to have a talk with Grannie.

In a minute or two more his lordship got up, and proceeded to wash his face and hands, ordering Cosmo about after the things

he wanted as if he had been his valet. The moment he had finished his toilet,

"Richard's himself again!" he said, in a would-be jaunty voice, and cast a crow-cocky look at the laird. But the laird read trouble below the look.

"Now, then, Mr. Warlock, where's this breakfast of yours?" he said.

"For that, my lord," replied the laird, "I must request your lordship to come to the kitchen. The dining-room in this weather would freeze the very marrow of your bones."

"And, by God! it don't want freezing," returned lord Mergwain with a shudder. "The kitchen, to be sure!—I desire no better place.—I'll be hanged if I enter this room again!" he muttered to himself. "—My natural tastes are quite as simple as your own, Mr. Warlock," he added aloud, "though I may not have had the same opportunity of indulging them."

He was returning to the semblance of what he would have called a gentleman.

He rose, and the laird led the way. Lord Mergwain kept muttering to himself all down the stairs, and Cosmo, coming behind, heard what he muttered: "Mere damned nonsense! Nothing whatever but the drink!—Yes, that's the drawing-room! —What's done's done—and more than done, for it can't be done again!"

It was a nipping and an eager air into which they stepped from the great door. The storm was over, but the snow lay much deeper than before. The world seemed folded in a lucent death, of which the white mounds were the graves. Again all the morning it must have been snowing busily, for no footprints lay between the two doors but those Cosmo had just made.

When they reached the kitchen, there was a great fire on the hearth, and a great pot on the fire, in which the porridge was swelling in huge blobs that burst in sighs. Grizzie was live as the new day, bustling and deedy. Her sense of the awful was nowise to be measured by the degree of her dread: she believed and did not tremble much. She had an instinctive consciousness that a woman ought to be, and might be, and indeed was a match for the devil.

"I am sorry we have no coffee for your lordship," said the laird; "but I hope you can take tea—and Grizzie's scons are good."

His lordship had in the mean time taken yet another pull at the brandy-flask, and was growing more and more polite.

"The man would be hard to please," he said, "whom such

a display of good victuals would not entice. Tea for me before everything!—Damn the stuff! how am I to pretend to swallow it!" he added, murmuring rather than muttering to himself.

Presently he made a curious noise in his throat, and the laird, looking up involuntarily, saw his eyes fixed upon something before him. He followed their look, and saw its object was a certain pepper-pot of odd device—a piece of old china in the shape of a clumsy horse, with holes between the ears for the issue of the pepper.

"I see, my lord," said Glenwarlock, "you are amused with the pepper-pot! It is a curious utensil, and has been in the house a long time—longer than anybody knows. Which of my great-grandmothers let it take her fancy, it is impossible to say; but I suppose the reason for its purchase, if not its manufacture, was that a horse passant is the crest of the family."

"Curse the crest! Devil take the horse!" said his lordship.

The laird started. His guest had for the last few minutes been behaving so much like a civilized being, that he was taken at unawares by the sudden relapse into barbarity. But the entrance of lady Joan looking radiant, diverted the current of things.

The fact was that lord Mergwain, like not a few old people, had formed such a habit of speaking in his worst moods without restraint, that in those which were by comparison good he would at times utter his mind as unconsciously as unintentionally.

During the rest of the breakfast his lordship did not speak. He drank his tea, and lady Joan ate oat-cakes and scons, with fresh butter and jam, and for all the frost and snow had a new-laid egg—the only one. The laird and Cosmo ate porridge and milk —the latter scanty, and tasting not a little of turnip. Grizzie, seated on a stool some yards from the table, took her porridge with treacle. Mrs. Warlock was not of the company; she had not yet left her room.

When the meal was over, lord Mergwain turned to his host:

"Will you oblige me, Mr. Warlock," he said, "by sending orders to my coachman to put the horses to as quickly as possible? We have trespassed too much already on your hospitality. I'm damned if I stop an hour longer in this hell of a place!"

"Papa!" cried lady Joan.

Thus admonished, his lordship understood that he had spoken what he ought not, but instead of looking confused, sought with much readiness to put the best face on his blunder.

"Pardon me, Mr. Warlock," he said; "I have so long had the bad habit, that now I am an old man I swear without knowing it."

"Your lordship has already accustomed me to it," replied the laird. "I will see your coachman myself—but I am more than doubtful."

He left the kitchen, and Cosmo followed him. Lord Mergwain turned to his daughter and said—

"What does the man mean? I tell you, Joan, we must go at once. Mind you don't side with him if he wants us to stop. I knew this cursed place before you were born, and hate it like hell."

"Very good, papa!" replied his daughter, with a slight curl of her lip, which was neither of contempt nor of sorrow, yet seemed to have in it a touch of both.

Regardless of the presence of Grizzie, they had spoken aloud.

"May it be lang afore ye're in a waur an' a warmer place, my lord an' my leddy," said the old woman, with the utmost politeness of manner she could assume.

They took no more notice of her speech than if she had not spoken. Lord Mergwain threw himself into Mrs. Warlock's chair, and gazed into the fire. Lady Joan went to Grizzie where she stood washing the breakfast things, tucked up her sleeves, with a glance to make sure her father was not looking, and would have helped her.

"Haud awa' wi' ye, my leddy," said Grizzie; "ye'll du naething but chap a' yer bonny han's, an' maybe my dishes to the ill bargain. Cauld bin's the weet but lowsens the dry."

Joan went to the window, and looked out into the yard.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### BEFORE DINNER.

It was a glorious morning. There was not a breath of wind, and the sun was shining to the tune, "Keep up your hearts, I am up here still; we all have our parts, and must work with a will." But Nature lay dead, with a great white sheet cast over face and form. Not dead?—Just as much dead as ever is man when the neighbours say, "We shall not see him again." The poor old lord who sat looking into the fire, would have been glad to think that the approaching dank and cold of the sepulchre would be the end of all things to him—that he would be permitted to lie there, and not have to get up and go to worse quarters.

"I am sorry to be the bringer of ill news, my lord," said the

laird, re-entering. "Our roads and your horses both render it impossible you should proceed to-day."

His guest turned white through all the discoloration of tobacco and strong drink. He stood silent, his pendulous under lip trembling.

"After the wind fell," resumed the laird, "it continued to snow for some hours, and it seems quite impossible you should get through. The attempt would be no small risk."

"Joan," said lord Mergwain, "go and order the rascal to put the horses to."

Lady Joan turned from the window, drew her shawl up from her shoulders over her head, and went. Cosmo ran to open the door for her. The laird looked on, and said not a word.

"Will you come and show me where to find the coachman, Cosmo?" said lady Joan as she reached the door, where the boy stood holding it. Her smile flashing out in white teeth and dark eyes bewitched him. Then first, in the morning light and the brilliance of the snow-glare, he saw that she was beautiful. With the shadows around her, the dusk of her complexion obscured itself; against the sheeny world she stood out darkly radiant; and the boy noted how the long eyelashes made a softening twilight round the low, horizon-like luminousness of her eyes. She was just enough older than himself to make him look up to her as a grown lady.

Through the deep snow between the kitchen and the stable, were none but his father's footsteps. He cast a glance at her small feet, daintily shod in little more than sandals.

"My lady," he said, "you'll get your feet soaking wet! They're so small they'll just dibble the snow! Please ask your papa if I mayn't go and give his message instead of you. It will do just as well."

"I must go," she answered. "Sometimes he will trust nobody but me."

"Stop a minute," said Cosmo. "Come to the drawing-room. I won't keep you more than a minute. There is a path there, you see."

He led the way, and she followed.

The fire was not only alight, but blazing powerfully: Grizzie, foreseeing, and determined she would not have strangers in the kitchen all day, had lighted it before she laid the breakfast. Lady Joan walked straight to it, and dropped, with a little shiver, into a chair beside it. To Cosmo the unaccustomed sight of a fire in that room brought a strange pleasure, like the discovery of a new loveliness in an old friend. To lady Joan the room looked the

very type of old-fashioned dreariness, while to Cosmo it was an ancient marvel, ever fresh.

The moment he saw her seat herself, he left the room and ran to his own, whence presently he returned with a pair of thick woollen stockings, knitted in green and red by his grandmother, and hastening to her, dropped on his knees by her side, and, without a word of apology or explanation, began to draw a stocking over one of the dainty feet on the rug. She gave a little start, and half withdrew her foot, but looking down at the kneeling form of her servant, recognized the self-forgetful earnestness of the boy, and submitted. With care he drew the stockings over the lovely feet, and their owner neither opposed nor assisted him. When he had done, he cast up a look in her face that seemed to say, "There now! can't I do it properly?" and rose. She thanked him, and rose also; and Cosmo conducted her to the stable, where she gave the coachman, a lad not much more than a stable-boy, her father's order.

He stared with open mouth, and speechless pointed to one of the stalls. There stood an utterly wretched horse, swathed in a cloth, with his head hanging down, heedless of the food before him. She turned and looked at Cosmo.

"The better for us, my lady!" replied Cosmo to her look; "we shall have your beautiful eyes the longer! They were lost in the dark last night, because they are made out of it, but we can see them now!"

She smiled, and without a word more they went back to the kitchen. There not a word had been spoken since they left it. Lord Mergwain was still staring into the fire; and the laird had got his Journal of George Fox, and was reading diligently: there was nothing to be done outside for the winter, but inside was the spring, and there all eternity was busy.

When lady Joan entered, her father sat up straight in his chair, as if expecting news of opposition.

"One of the horses, my lord, is quite unfit," she said.

"Then, by my soul! we'll start with the other," he answered, in a tone that sounded defiance to whatever might say him nay.

"As your lordship pleases," replied Joan.

"My lord," said the laird, lowering his book to his knee, "if I thought four cart-horses would pull you through to Howglen before night, you should have them; but you would simply stick fast in some snow-wreath."

"God damn me!" said the old man with an earnestness that was almost solemn, and said no more, but collapsed, and sat huddled up, staring into the fire.

"You must make the best of your quarters you can; they are entirely at your service, my lord," said the laird. "We shall at least not starve—either with cold or hunger. There are sheep on the place, pigs, and poultry, and plenty of oatmeal, though very little flour. There is milk too—and a little wine: I think we shall do well enough."

Lord Mergwain made no immediate response, but in his silence seemed making up his mind to the ineludible.

"Have you any more of that claret?" he asked at length.

"Not much, I am sorry to say," answered the laird; "but it is your lordship's while it lasts."

"If this weather last, the claret won't," returned his lordship with a feeble grin. "I may as well make a clean breast of it, and you my confessor: From my very childhood I have never for an hour, I do believe, known what it was not to be thirsty. Thirst is the never failing birth-mark of our family. I was what the Methodists call a drunkard before I was born. My father died of drink. So did my grandfather. You must have some pity on me if I want more than seems to you reasonable. The only faculty ever cultivated in our strain was drinking, and I am sorry to say it has not been brought to perfection yet. Perfection in drinking, as I take it, is to get drunk and never know it; but I do know it: I have bad dreams, sir! I have bad dreams! And the worst of it is, if I have a bad dream once, I am sure to have it again; and if it come in a strange place, it will come every night so long as I am in it. That is the sole cause of my anxiety to leave your hospitable house: I had a very bad dream last night—as you know. I grant it came of drinking too much yesterday; but that will not keep it from coming again to-night."

He started to his feet, the muscles of his face working frightfully.

"Send to your stables, Glenwarlock," he cried. "For God's sake have them put to—your cart-horses, I mean! Four of them, you said. At once—at once! Out of this I must go. If it be to hell itself, go I must and will."

"My lord," said the laird, "I dare not send you from my house. As your host, I am bound to do my best for you. I understand the country, and you do not. I said you should have my horses if I thought they could take you through, but I do not think it. Besides, this change in the weather is, in my judgment, a deceitful one, and to-night will probably be worse than last night. Poor as your accommodation is, it is better than the road—though, to be sure, before to-morrow morning you would, somewhere between this and Howglen, be snug in the heart of a snow-wreath."

"Look here, sir!" said lord Mergwain, and put a large-jointed, big-veined, trembling hand on the laird's arm, "—if I stop, will you pass the night with me? As I tell you, we have been drinking for generations, and my nerves are the worse for it. It's damned hard that the sins of the fathers should be visited on the children! Before God, I have enough to do with my own, let alone my father's! Every man should bear his own burden.—God! I can't bear mine. If I could, it's not much my father's would trouble me!"

"My lord, I will do anything I can for you—anything but consent to your leaving Castle Warlock to-day."

"You will spend the night with me, then?"

"I will."

"Not in that cursed room, you know!"

"Anywhere you please in the house, my lord, except my mother's room."

"Then I'll stop.—Joan, you may amuse yourself; we are not going till to-morrow."

The laird smiled: he could not flatter himself with the hope that his guest would take quite so speedy a departure. Joan turned to Cosmo.

"Will you show me over the place?" she said.

"Do you mean the castle?" returned Cosmo, glancing towards his father.

"Yes, of course," she answered.

"It is a curious old house," said the laird, "and some of it at least would interest you."

"I should like nothing better. May I go with Cosmo?"

"Certainly: he will be delighted to attend you.—Here are the keys of the cabinets in the drawing-room, Cosmo. Her ladyship may like to look at some of the things in them."

"I don't know enough about them," returned Cosmo. "Please come yourself, father, and show them to us."

"If they are not worth looking at in themselves, the facts about them cannot be of much consequence to a stranger, my boy," answered the laird, unwilling to leave the old man. "But," he added, "perhaps we may follow you by and by."

"Is the place very old, Cosmo?" asked lady Joan as they went.

"Nobody knows how old the oldest part of it is," answered Cosmo. "But you will hardly see that to-day. I do not know much of the history of it; if you want to know anything about that, you must ask my father. I know the place itself, though, as well as he does. I sometimes fancy I know every visible stone of it."

"You are very fond of it, then?"

"There's not, and there never could be, a place like it to me, my lady. I know it is not very beautiful, but I love it none the less for that. I sometimes think I love it the more for its ruggedness—its sternness—its simplicity—its ugliness, if you like. I should love my mother all the same if she hadn't been beautiful."

"Was your mother beautiful? I could well believe it," said lady Joan.

"Oh, so beautiful—and so good! There never was anybody like her."

"How old were you when she died?"

"Five."

"Then you can't remember much about her!"

"I remember everything. I have seen her so often since."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you understand that way of seeing people?"

"What way?"

"Without your eyes."

"No, I don't."

This passed on the way to the drawing-room, whither Cosmo was taking her first, in the hope his father would there join them.

When they reached it, lady Joan again dropped into the low chair by the fire, and sat staring at it. What to make of the things she saw and heard she did not know. How could people exist in such a dreary, cold, wretched country, with such poverty-stricken surroundings, and so little to amuse them! Yet they seemed happy, and seemed to love their grim home far more than she loved hers! Only that was easy to understand, for plainly they loved each other!

Lady Joan's life was not a flourishing one. She had no open fountain in herself, and but few wells around her at which to drink—some of those few very muddy and shallow, scarce better than slow-drying pools.

There are souls innumerable as dry as the Sahara desert—souls which now and then look gay and summer-like, flaunting flowers from other gardens, stuck rootless into their barren soil. Oh, the dreariness, the sandy sadness of such poor arid souls! They are hungry and eat husks; they are thirsty and drink hot wine; their sleep is a stupor, and their life a yielded decay. Only when praised, admired, or amused, do they feel as if they lived! Joan was not yet of such. She had been too much in the rains of trouble and the fogs of discomfort to have gone dead yet. There was water not far from the surface of her consciousness. Our springs would all go dry if we were not rained upon. We may not like the rain, but where should we be without our springs?

A day will come when the water given us shall be in us a well of water that needs nor rain nor snow, but now, coming from the outside, it must take the form of affliction. The gifts of God hurt us a little in the falling.

With no little pleasure and some pride, Cosmo opened one of the cabinets, and proceeded to take out, one after the other, its hoarded valuables—which, alas! were most of them common in the eyes of one who, with family also and history, lived in a much larger house, and had had amongst her ancestors more than one with a liking for antiquities, oddities, and *bibelots*. Lady Joan regarded them listlessly, willing to seem to attend to the boy, but, with her thoughts elsewhere, now and then turning a weary gaze towards the next window, from which all she saw was a great mounded country, dreary as sunshine and whiteness could make it. A storm-army, rushing in drift-whirls of spectral snow, would have been less dreary than the smiling of this cold antagonism. It was a picture of her own life. Evil viler than she knew had wrought a winter around her being. If her father suffered for the sins of his fathers, she suffered for his: because of them she had to dwell in desolation and loneliness.

"This is said to be solid silver," Cosmo remarked, setting on a chair beside her a curious little horse, trapped and adorned in Indian graving, its whole surface indeed covered with a richly involved design. Its eyes were or seemed to be rubies, and saddle and bridle and housing were studded with small gems. Beyond the engraving there was little merit in the art of it, but now first Cosmo saw the eyes of the lady show interest. They fastened upon it, and the look in them grew strange.

"That is said to be the only thing the old captain ever gave his brother, my great-grandfather," observed Cosmo. "But I beg your pardon," he added; "you have never heard the story of the old captain!"

Lady Joan took the horse in her hand, and looked at it closely.

"It is very heavy!" she remarked.

"It is said to be solid silver," repeated Cosmo.

"It is heavy enough for it," she rejoined, and laying it down, put her hand to her forehead.

That moment they heard the steps and voices of the gentlemen almost at the door of the room. Lady Joan caught up the horse, rose hastily, and handing it to Cosmo, said—

"Quick! quick! put it away. Don't let my father see it."

Cosmo, delaying not even to cast on her a look of surprise, restored it to the cabinet, and had just closed the doors of it when lord Mergwain entered the room, followed by his host.

They were a peculiar-looking pair—lord Mergwain in antiquated dress, not a little worn, and neither clean nor in good condition—a snuffy, dilapidated, miserable, feeble old man, with a carriage where doubt seemed rooted in apprehension, causing him every other moment to cast about him a glance of inquiry, in which an evil spirit seemed to come running to the mouth of each eye-cave, look out, and retreat; and the laird behind him, a head higher, crowned with his red nightcap, and dressed as I have already described, looking older than his years, but bearing on his face the repose of discomfort accepted, his eye keen and clear, and when turned on his guest, filled with compassion rather than hospitality—walking more erect than usual, either in recognition of the lady's presence, or from a feeling of protection towards her father.

"Now, my lord," he said, as they advanced from the door, "we will put you in a warm corner by the fire, and you must make the best of it. We can't have things all as we should like them: that is not what the world was made for."

His lordship returned him no answer, but threw on him a queer look from under his black wig—a look of superior knowledge—of the wisdom of this world. "You are an old fool," it said, "but you are master here! Lord! how little you know!"

He walked tottering to the fire, where Cosmo had already set for him a chair. Something in the look of it displeased him. He glanced round the room.

"Fetch me *that* chair, my boy," he said, not unkindly; and Cosmo hastened to substitute the one he indicated—that which his grandmother had used. The laird placed a tall screen behind it. His lordship dropped into the cushions, and began to rub his knees with his hands, gazing into the fire. Lady Joan resumed her seat, and for a moment the little circle looked as if about to settle down to a mild mutual enjoyment. Cosmo drew his chair as near lady Joan's as he judged politeness would permit. The laird made up the fire and turned away: he must go and see the ailing horse, he said.

"Mr. Warlock," said lord Mergwain, and spoke with a snarl, "you will not surely deprive us of our one consolation—the pleasure of your company?"

"I shall be back in a few minutes, my lord," replied his host; "but I must give some orders about dinner, as well as have a look at the horse."

"That was wonderful claret!" said his lordship thoughtfully.

"I had not forgotten the claret, my lord."

"If I *might* suggest, let us make the acquaintance of the

bottle before that of the wine. A gentle airing under my own eye, just an introduction to the fire, would improve the otherwise perfect.—And look here," he added, as, with a kindly bow of assent, the laird was going, "—you haven't got a pack of cards, have you?"

"I believe there is a pack in the house—or there may be two," replied the laird; "but they are very old, and, I fear, too much soiled for your lordship's hands."

"Oh, damn dirt!" said his lordship. "Let us have them. Cards are the only thing to make the cursed time pass."

"Have you a library?" asked lady Joan: to go and see it would be something to do; she was not particularly fond of books; like most people, she had not yet learned to read.

"What do you want with a library?" growled her father. "Books are nothing but a pack of lies—not half so good as a pack of cards. You're going to play a rubber, not look at books. That's the way to kill the time!"

"With pleasure, papa," responded lady Joan.

"I don't want to kill the time; I should like to keep it alive for ever," said Cosmo, with a worshipping look at the lovely lady —a summer-bird of heaven strayed into their lonely winter.

"Hold your tongue; you are an idiot," said his lordship angrily. "—Old and young," he went on, unaware of utterance, "the breed is idiotic! 'Tis time their game were played out."

Cosmo's eyes flashed. But the rudesby was too old to be served as he had served the schoolmaster! He was their guest too, and the father of the lady by his side!

Lady Joan's hand stole to his, and patting it gently, said, as plainly as if it had been her mouth, "Don't mind him; he is an old man, and does not know what he is saying." He looked up in her face, his anger gone.

"Come with me," he said, rising; "I will show you what books we have. There may be one you would like to take to your room with you. We shall be back before the cards come."

"Joan," cried her father, "sit still."

She glanced an appealing excuse to Cosmo, and did not move. He sat down again. A few minutes passed in silence. All stared into the fire. But into three how different worlds the fire stared! The old man rose and went to the window.

"I *must* get away," he said as he went, "if it cost me my life!"

He looked out and shuddered. The world seemed impassable —a dead world on which the foot of the living could take no hold, measure no distance, make no progress. Print of man nor beast was visible. It was like a world not yet discovered of its decreed inhabitants.

"I am tied to the stake; I hear the fire roaring!" he muttered. "My fate has found me—caught me like a rat, and is going to make an end of me! In my time nobody believed such things! They seem to be coming into fashion again!"

The laird re-entered.

"Well, have you brought the cards?" said lord Mergwain, turning from the window.

"I have, my lord. I am sorry it is such a poor pack, but we never play.—Come, Cosmo; you and I will go and see to the fires in the bedrooms."

"Damn you, laird, not in mine! I'm going to spend the night here, in your company! That was all settled! Come, let's have a rubber!"

"My son does not understand the game."

"I will teach him," said lady Joan. "He must be dummie a few rounds."

"What are the points to be?" said his lordship.

"I will not play for money," said the laird decidedly.

"I don't care what you make them," rejoined lord Mergwain, "—sixpence, if you like—so long as there is money in the game. No one but a fool cares for victory where nothing is to be got by it."

"I am sorry to disappoint your lordship," persisted the laird, "but play for money I will not. If you would like a game of draughts, or backgammon, I shall be happy to do my best not to be beaten."

"Which will you bet on?"

"On neither, my lord."

"Oh, damn you!"

He turned away and went again to the window.

"This is frightful," he muttered. "If the day goes on like this, I shall out with everything.—By God, I had better.—How the clodpoles would stare!—And that fellow somewhere about all the time, waiting for the night!—It's horrible. I shall go mad!"

"Papa!" said his daughter sharply: he had grown articulate

He started, and looked troubled: how much he might not have uttered he could not tell.

"A rubber, then," he said, approaching the fire, "—on any terms, or no terms at all!"

He took up the cards.

"By God, there's blood on them!" he cried, and dashing them on the table, turned once more to the window.

He was like a bird in a cage that knows he cannot get out, and yet keeps trying, as if he dared not admit the impossibility of

escape. Twenty times that morning he went to the window saying, "I must get out of this!" and returned again to his seat.

The laird removed the pack, and his guest said nothing more about cards. Cosmo did his best to please lady Joan, and she tried to respond; the laird did his endeavour with his lordship, but with small success. The morning crept slowly, yet crept away, for at last came Grizzie:

"Sir, an' my lord," she said, "come ye doon the stair. The kail's het, an' the cheirs is set, an' yer denner's waitin' ye there."

It may have been already remarked that, in her commonest intercourse, Grizzie occasionally rimed—sometimes very oddly. She was unaware of the peculiarity. Sound called upon sound in the caves of her being, far beyond the depth of her consciousness. And the riming that resulted might have passed unperceived by others as well as herself but for the rhythm that accompanied it. There was in Grizzie a strong tendency to poetic utterance, arising from poetic ways of thinking. She possessed indeed, in the hidden rough, every essential to the making of a poetess; yet she knew nothing about poetry, and I hardly doubt that, had any one sought to develop her gift, it would have shrunk yet farther back into her being.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE AFTERNOON.

THE laird rose, and gave his arm to lady Joan. Lord Mergwain grunted, and looked only a little pleased: no mere discomfort, mental or spiritual, could make him indifferent to a meal after which came the bottle, but the claret had not been brought to the drawing-room as he had requested!

When they reached the kitchen, he looked first eagerly, then uneasily round him: no bottle, quart or magnum, was to be seen! A cloud gathered louring and heavy on the face of the toper. The laird saw it: in his anxiety to amuse him he had forgotten his dearest delight! He vanished straightway in the region behind.

Mrs. Warlock, as was her custom, was already seated at the table. She bowed her head to his lordship, and motioned him to a chair on her right hand. He took it with a courteous acknowledgment, of which he would hardly have been capable, had he not guessed on what errand his host was gone.

"I hope your ladyship is well this morning!" he said.

"Ye revive an auld custom, my lord," returned his hostess, not without sign of gratification, "—clean oot o' fashion nooadays, excep' amang the semple. A laird's wife has no richt to be ca'd *my leddy*, 'cep' by auncient custom."

"Oh, if you came to that," returned his lordship, "three fourths of the titles in use are merely of courtesy. Joan there has no more legal right than yourself to be called *my lady*. Neither has my son Borland the smallest right to the title; it is mine, and mine only, as much as Mergwain."

The old lady turned her head a little, and fixed a stolen but searching gaze on her guest. As long as the meal lasted, she took opportunities of regarding him unobserved. Her son from the other end of the table saw her looks, and guessed her thoughts; noted also that she did not abate her courtesy, but little imagined to what the calmness of her behaviour was owing.

Mrs. Warlock, ready to welcome as supernatural upon the least show of the marvellous, had held with Grizzie much conference concerning what had passed in the night—one accidental result of which was the disappearance of rivalry and offence in the common interest of an awful impending *dénoûment*. She had never heard, or had forgotten, the title to which the lord Borland of old time was heir, but now she knew beyond a doubt the suspected identity of the man. Strain her vision as she might, she could not, through the deformation of years and vice, descry the youthful visage she had known; but she was not for that the less assured that an avenging Providence had sent their guest to Castle Warlock. It was at the same time, however, equally plain that any movement in consequence other than hospitable on the part of its bodied inhabitants, was forestalled and precluded by the presence in the house of one who had long waited his lordship's coming, and had already commenced reprisal. More would be heard ere the next dawn, she said to herself; and with things in such a train she would not interfere by the smallest show of feud or offence on her own part! The poor wretch had not long to live, and like the malefactor for whom the gallows is going up, he should have what he wanted in as much of this life as was left him, and so far as she could give it him! It was strangely stirring to the blood in her old veins to think that a certain inmate of the house, and in all righteous probability of a worse place as well—whence she hesitated to call him a member of the family—had the permitted power to raise the storm that drove Borland thither, and such storms as might be needful to detain him there! Already there were signs of a fresh onset of the elements! the wind was

rising; it had begun to moan in the wide chimney; and from the quarter whence it now blew, it was certain to bring snow!

The dinner went on. The great magnum before the fire was to lord Mergwain a lovely thing to behold—gathering genial might from the soft insinuation of limpid warmth, renewing as much of its youth as was to be desired in wine, and redeveloping relations in some degree suppressed, with the slackening nerves and parting fibres of an old man's earthly being! But there was not a drop to drink on the table except water, and the toper found it hard without other help to lay solid foundation for the wine that was to follow, and grumbled inwardly. The sight of the bottle before the fire, however, while it roused his impatience, gave him strength to suppress the shows of it. He eyed the magnum, and loved it, and held his peace. He saw the water at his elbow, and hated it the worse that it was within his reach—hated its cold staring rebuke as he hated virtue—hated it as if its well were in the churchyard where the old captain had been sixty years buried:—God damn him! why wouldn't he lie still? He made some effort to be polite to the old hag, as he called her in that not very secret chamber of his soul, whose door was so ready to fall ajar and allow its evil things to issue; and he searched his lumber-room for tales to amuse his host with, but found it difficult to lay hold on one fit for the ears of the ladies present. He felt very much out of his element, but, like a much-enduring magician awaiting the moment of power, kept eyeing the bottle, and gathering comfort.

Grizzie eyed him from behind, almost as he eyed the bottle. She eyed him as she might the devil caught in the toils of the archangel; and if she did not bring against him a railing accusation, it was more from prudence than politeness. "Ah, my fine fellow," her eyes said, "he is after you! he will be here presently!"

Grizzie afforded an exceptionally perfect instance of a relation which is sometimes one of the loveliest in humanity: her service was absolute, without a shade of servility. She would have died for her master, but even to him she must speak her mind! Her own affairs were nothing to her, and those of her master in import as those of the universe; but she always thought of herself as one of his family, for the toes belong vitally to the head. She was like a poor relation in the house, with few privileges and no end of duties; and she thought ten times more of her duties than her privileges. She would have fed, and sometimes did feed with perfect satisfaction on the poorest remnants; but a doubt of the laird's preference of her porridge to that of any maker in broad Scotland, would have given her a sore heart. She would have wept bitter tears had the honour, grown by long custom a right, of

washing the laird's feet been taken from her. If reverence for the human is an essential element of greatness, then greatness was at least possible to Grizzie. She dealt with no abstractions; she worshipped one living man, and that is the first step towards the love of all men: some will talk glowingly of humanity, and be scornful to the next needy embodiment of it. Such as Grizzie will perhaps prove to be of those last foredoomed to be first. With the tenderness of a ministering angel and mother combined, her eyes waited upon her master. She took her reward beforehand in the assurance that the laird would follow her to the grave, would miss her, and at times think nobody could do this or that so well as Grizzie. And if, like the old captain, she were permitted to creep about the place after nightfall, she desired nothing better than the chance of serving the laird still. The angels might bear him in their hands lest he should dash his foot against a stone; but it would be much the same to him if she got the stone out of the way of his foot!

When dinner was over, the laird asked his guest whether he would take his wine where he was, or have it carried to the drawing-room. Her son's offer of this alternative the old lady, to use an Elizabethan phrase, took in snuff; for although she now rarely crossed its threshold, it was yet her room; and, ladies having been banished from the dining-room while men drank, what would be left them if next, bottle in hand, the men should invade the drawing-room? But happily their guest chose to remain in the kitchen, and that on the very ground of respect for her ladyship's apartment: the consequence of which was that she nearly forgave him the murder of which she never doubted him guilty, saying to herself that, whatever he might be when disguised, poor man—and we all had our failings, he knew how to behave when sober, and that was more than could be said for everybody. So the old lord sat at the table and drank his wine, and had therein his heart's desire; and the old lady sat by the fire and knitted her stocking, went to sleep, and woke up, and went to sleep again a score of times, and enjoyed her afternoon. Not a word passed between the two. Lord Mergwain had long ceased talking over his bottle: he gave his mind to it. The laird went and came, unconsciously anxious to be out of the way of his guest, and consciously anxious not to neglect him. The old lady knitted and dozed, and glided down the westward slope of the hill; and his lordship sat and drank, and now and then, holding his glass to the light, mingled the æsthetic with the sensual. And still as he drank the braver he grew, and the more confident that the event of the past night was the foolish consequence of mixing: the

many liquors had, from the damnable state of the thermometer, grown cold in his very stomach, and bred hellish fancies!

"With two bottles like this, and nothing else, under my belt," he said to himself, "I would defy the devil! But my presbyterian, red-nightcapped curmudgeon of a host will never fetch me a second! If he had not been so damned niggardly last night, I should have got through well enough!"

Lady Joan and Cosmo had been all over the house, where the light of the snow shone sad and clear and cold in the faded chambers, and ghastly in the bare stony corners of the building: they were now in the drawing-room, sitting silent in the firelight. Lady Joan did not find Cosmo much of a companion, though she liked to have him beside her, and would have felt the dreariness more penetrating without him; but to Cosmo her presence was as marvellous and lovely as it was strange. He had never save in his dreams felt the radiance of beauty; and never a dream had shone like the reality that now folded him in bliss. For isolating winter stretched miles and miles around the old paradise of his mother's drawing-room, where, in the glowing twilight of a flamy fire, whose shadows flickered at their wild will over all the magic room, he sat at the feet of a lady, with eyes black as night, but alive with a radiance no sun could kindle, with a hand like warm snow, in garments lovely as the clouds that clothe a sunset, who inhabited an atmosphere of evanescent odours, each a dream from beyond the stars, while the darkness that danced with the firelight played endless variations on the theme of her beauty. Long had he sat lost in the dream-haunted gorgeous silence, when suddenly he bethought himself of his duty towards his heavenly visitant. Strangers and angels must be entertained, nor must the shadow of loneliness fall upon them! To that end he knew but one thing always good, always at hand, and now specially fitting the time.

"Shall I tell you a story, my lady?" he said, looking up from the stool on which he had taken his place at her feet.

"Yes, if you please," she answered, finding herself in a shoal of sad thoughts, and willing to let them drift.

"I will do my best, my lady; but oh I wish I could tell it you as Grizzie told it me! Her old-fashioned way seemed like the life of it! And then I must turn it into English for your ladyship, and English will go still worse with it!"

In the present era of human utterance, the common speech of every succeeding generation is a falling away from the pith and pathos of the preceding. It gains in scope and precision, but loses in intensity.

"There was once a girl in the Highlands," began Cosmo, "not very far from here, who was so beautiful that every young man in the neighbourhood fell in love with her. She was as good as she was beautiful, and would not let more than one be her lover. She said no to all the rest. If after that they would go on loving her, she could not help it. She was the daughter of a sheep-farmer, who had a great many sheep that fed on the hills. She helped her father to look after them, and was as good and obedient as any lamb of his flock. Her name was Mary. Her other name I do not know.

"Now her father had a young shepherd, a year or two older than Mary, and he of course was in love with her as well as the rest. But he was better in love with her than any of them, because he was the truest, that is, the most trustworthy lad, in the country-side. He was very strong, and I think Grizzie said very good-looking, which was natural, and a good shepherd. He was out on the hills all day, from morning to night, seeing that the sheep did their duty, and ate the best grass, so as to give plenty of good wool and good mutton: that's the way Grizzie tells the story, my lady, though not so that you would understand her. When any of the lambs were weakly or ill, the shepherds always brought them home to Mary that she might nurse them; and that was how the young shepherd came to know Mary, and Mary to know him. And so it came to pass that they grew very fond of each other, and saw each other as often as they could; and Mary promised, if her father would let her, she would marry Alister—that was the name of the young shepherd. But her father was too rich to show favour to a shepherd-lad; his heart was so full of money that the blood could not get room in it. If Alister had had sheep he would have given him Mary; but the thought of a poor son-in-law, however good, made him feel poor, and the thought of a rich son-in-law, if nothing but an old miser, made him feel rich. He told Alister, therefore, that he had nothing to say to him, and Mary must have nothing to say to him either. Mary felt obliged to do what her father told her, but in her heart she did not give up Alister, and felt sure Alister would not give up her, for he was a brave and honest youth.

"Alister was always wanting to see Mary, and often saw her when nobody, not even Mary herself, knew it. One day she was out rather late on the hill, for she had to stay with a few lambs till her father who had left her there came back, and something delayed him. When the gloamin came down, she wished in her heart that out of it Alister would come, that she might see him, though she would not speak to him. She was sitting or stone,

Grizzie says, the gloamin coming down like a gray frost about her. Just as it grew to a black frost, out of it came one running towards her. But, oh dear! it was not Alister; it was one very different—a rich farmer who wanted to marry her. He was a big, strong man, and good-looking—twice Mary's age. Her father was friendly to him, but people said he was a coward.

"Now at that time a terrible story was going about the country, only it had not yet reached the glen, of a beast in the hills that went biting every living thing he could get at, and whatever he bit went raving-mad. He never ate a mouthful of any creature he attacked, never stayed to kill it, but came with a rush, bit it, and was out of sight in a moment. It was only in the twilight any one ever caught a glimpse of him. He appeared—nobody ever saw from where—made his gnash, and was gone. There arose great terror and dismay wherever the story was heard. People would hardly venture across their thresholds after sundown, for fear the beast should dash out of the borders of the dark upon them, and leave his madness in them. Some said it was a sheep-dog, but some who thought they had seen it, said it was too large for any collie, and was, they believed, a mad wolf; for though there are no wolves in Scotland now, my lady, there were at one time, and this is an old story."

Lady Joan gaped audibly.

"I am wearying you, my lady!" said Cosmo penitently.

"No, no! dear boy," answered lady Joan, sorry, and a little ashamed. "It is only that I am very weary. I think the cold tires one."

"I will tell you the rest another time," rejoined Cosmo cheerily. "You must lie down on the sofa, and I will cover you up warm."

"No, no; please go on. I want to hear the rest of it."

"Well," resumed Cosmo, "the news of this wolf, or whatever it was, had come to the ears of the farmer for the first time that day at a fair, and he was hurrying home with his head and his heart and his heels full of it, when he saw Mary, sitting on a white stone by the track, feeling as safe as if she were in paradise, and as sad as if she were in purgatory.—That's how Grizzie tells it—I suppose because some of her people are catholics.—But, for as much as he wanted to marry her, you could hardly say he was in love with her—could you, lady Joan?—when I tell you that, instead of stopping and taking her and her lambs home, he hurried past her, crying out, 'Go home, Mary. There's a mad beast on the hill. Run, run—all that you can. Never mind your sheep.' His last words came from the distance, for he never stayed a step while he spoke.

"Mary got up at once. But you may be sure, my lady, a girl like that was not going to leave her lambs where she dared not stop herself. She gathered them together, and was just setting out with them for home, when a creature like a huge dog came bounding upon her from the edge of the night. The same instant, from behind a rock a few yards away, came Alister leaping, and made at the beast with his crook. He was not near enough to get between the beast and Mary, but just as he was upon her, he heaved a great blow at him. But the same instant Mary threw herself towards Alister, and the terrible blow came down upon her. She fell dead in his arms—and away went the wolf, leaping and bounding.

"Alister came staggering up to her father's door with dead Mary in his arms, carried her in, laid her on the bed, and went out again. They found the blow on her head, and when they undressed her, they found also a bite on her body. Then they guessed how it had been, and said it was well she died by Alister's crook—that was better than going mad first. It was kind of Death, they said, to come and snatch her out of the arms of Madness. But the coward farmer, because he hated Alister, and knew that Alister must have seen and heard him as he ran past, gave it out that he was himself rushing to defend Mary, and that the blow that killed her was meant for him. Nobody, however, believed him.

"What people thought about the affair was, however, of little consequence to Alister, for from that day he never spoke to human being, never slept under a roof. He left his shepherding, and gave himself to the hunting of the wolf. Some said he lived on his hate of the wolf, and never ate. But the people on the hills would set out on their window-ledges at night milk and cakes; and in the morning, sometimes, they would be gone.

"By and by was heard a strange story about the country. A certain old woman with the second sight said that one evening, as she was going home in the gloamin, she saw Alister lying in the heather; and with her other eyes, in which lay the second sight, she saw a woman sitting beside him, and his head was on the woman's lap—and that woman was Mary whom he had killed. He was fast asleep, and whether he knew what pillow he had, she could not tell; but she saw the woman as plainly as if with her bodily eyes—only with the difference which there always was, she said, and which she did not know how to describe, betwixt the things seen by the one pair of eyes and the things seen by the other. She stood and regarded them for some time, but neither moved. As it grew darker, and she saw Alister less clearly, she

saw Mary better. The sight made her heart so glad that she could not leave it till the moon rose, when she saw Alister plainly, but Mary only like a clear shadow. Through the moonlight, three times she heard a little moan, she said.

"Now the people had mostly a horror of Alister, and shunned him—even those who did not believe him to blame for what he had done—because there was blood upon him; but after the old woman's story, they felt differently towards him, and began to look askance upon Mary's father, whose unkindness had kept them asunder. They said now that it had all come through him, and that God had sent the wolf to fetch Mary, that he might give her and Alister to each other in spite of him—for God had many a way of doing a thing, every one better than another.

"All this time Alister had not found the wolf. But when the winter came, that helped him. For the snow took the trail of the beast and kept it for him to see, that he might follow it. Some said that, although the wolf was mad, he was not mad in any ordinary way, for, if he had been, he must have died long ago. He was a wolf, they said, into which an evil spirit had entered. A domestic animal, thus possessed, would have destroyed himself; but, being a blood-thirsty animal, the demon was too like himself for the wolf to know that he had another with him in the house.

"At last, one morning in the month of December, when the snow lay heavy on the ground, some men came upon a track which they all agreed must be that of the wolf. They got their weapons, and set out in chase. They followed, and followed, and better than followed, and the trail led them high into the hills. They came at length to a point where a track of bare human feet joined that of the wolf, nor left it again. Up and up they went—sometimes losing the track of the wolf, from the great springs he had taken, but never that of the bare feet, and spied at last two dark spots in a little hollow. They went on—and there before them was the wolf, dead in a trampled mass of red snow—a huge, gaunt, grey, meagre carcase, with the foam frozen about its jaws, and stabbed in many places. A little farther on lay Alister, with his face to the sky, and a smile upon it. All about his body were the marks of the brute's teeth. His dirk was lying a little way off, as if he had dropped it when the fight was over, and staggered to where he lay.

"The men who found Alister declared that, when they lifted the body to bring it away, they saw, to their amazement, that the impression of it in the snow went no farther than the shoulders: there was no mark of the head whatever! When the old woman with the second sight heard this, 'Of coorse! of coorse!' she

said. 'Gien I had been wi' them I wad hae seen mair!' When pressed to speak more plainly, she only shook her head, and muttered, 'Dull-hertit gowks!'—That's all, my lady."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE EVENING.

IN the kitchen things were going on even more quietly than in the drawing-room. With the table moved nearer to the fire the English lord still sat over his wine; Mistress Warlock sat in her armchair, knitting and dozing, between her evanescent naps wide awake, and ever and anon sliding her eyes from her stocking to her guest; the laird sat at the other corner of the fire, reading the Journal of George Fox, every now and then laying the book down to think; and Grizzie was going about her work with less noise than she liked, wishing heartily she were free of his lordship, that she might get on with it. Scarcely a word was spoken.

It began to grow dark; the lid of the night was closing upon them ere half a summer-day would have been over. Grizzie put on the kettle for her mistress's tea. The old lady turned her forty winks into four hundred, and slept outright, curtained in the shadows. His lordship became aware that the day was gone, shifted in his seat, poured out a bumper of claret, drank it off hurriedly, and hitched his chair a little nearer to the fire. His hostess saw with satisfaction: he had appeased her personal indignation, but her soul was not hospitable towards him; it loved talion, and did not wait to be gracious. Her eyes sought Grizzie's.

"Gang to the door, Grizzie," she said, "an' see what the nicht's like. I'm thinkin' by the cry o' the win', it'll be a wull mirk (*a wild darkness*) again. What think ye, laird?"

Her son looked up from his book, through the God-spell in which he had been inwardly beholding a large breadth of gently luminated spiritual sky, and answered, somewhat abstractedly, but with the sweet politeness he always showed her—

"I should not wonder if it came on to snow again."

Lord Mergwain shifted uneasily. Grizzie returned from her weather-gaging on the doorstep.

"It's black theroot, an' dingin' oot, wi' great thuds o' win'," she said.

"God bless me!" murmured his lordship, "what an abominable country!"

"Had we not better go to the drawing-room, my lord?" said

the laird. "Don't let supper be late, Grizzie, if you can help it. The sooner we are in bed in such weather the better.—And, Grizzie," he added, rising, "bring lady Joan a cup of tea to the drawing-room—if you, madam, will excuse her," he concluded, with a glance to his mother.

"An old woman is bare company for a young one, Cosmo," returned Mistress Warlock, who was longing to compare notes with Grizzie, and had no desire for the presence of lady Joan at her tea-table.

His lordship sat as if he did not mean to move.

"Will you not come, lord Mergwain?" said the laird. "We had better go before the night gets worse."

"I will stay where I am."

"Excuse me, my lord: I will carry your wine. You will finish your bottle more at your ease, and will not have to move again."

"The bottle is empty," growled his lordship—as if he would be understood, "The bait is worthless."

"Then——" said the laird, and hesitated.

"—you'll fetch me another!" adjoined his lordship, as if answering an unpropounded and unpropoundable question. The laird standing in some hesitation still however, he added definitively, "I don't stir a peg without it. Get me another bottle—another *magnum*, I mean, or I sit here till doomsday."

Yet a moment the laird reflected. He was not sure it would be right to make himself accessory to the indulgence of the poor wretch's passion. But he said to himself that the miserable man had not had nearly so much that day as the day before; that he was used to soaking, and a diminution of his customary quantity might be dangerous; and that, anyway, it was not for him to impose a regimen on a passing guest, to whom his first duty was hospitality.

"I will fetch it, my lord," he said, and disappeared in the milk-cellar, from which a steep stair sank to the ancient dungeon, now the wine-cellar.

"The maister's gane wantin' a licht!" muttered Grizzie aloud: "Guid forbid he sud see onything!"

"What the deuce should he see?" snarled lord Mergwain. "He's more likely to feel his own nose on the wall!"

"There's some things, my lord, 'at can easier shaw i' the dark," rejoined Grizzie.

His lordship held his peace, but kept every other moment turning his head towards the door of the milk-cellar—whether solely in anxiety for the appearance of the magnum, may be doubtful. The moment the laird emerged from his dive into

darkness, bearing with him the pearl-oyster of its deep, he rose, proud that he could stand steady, and straightened himself up to his height. The laird set the bottle on the table, and proceeded to wrap him in a plaid that he might not get a chill, heedless that, instead of acknowledging his care, he conducted himself like an ill-conditioned child. But he did not resist, he only grumbled. As soon as the process was finished, he caught up the old bottle, in which, notwithstanding his assertion, there was yet a glass or two; the laird resumed the greater burden of the second, and gave him an arm; Grizzie, leaving the door open to cast a little light on their way, followed close behind, to see them safe in; and Mistress Warlock remained, afresh indignant with her guest that he had taken no leave of her, indignant also with Grizzie that she had left the door open.

When they reached the drawing-room, his lordship out of breath with the "cursed stair," they found lady Joan teaching and Cosmo learning backgammon. They rose immediately, and all did what they could to seat him comfortably. They placed a small table beside him, upon it the old bottle, and the fresh one at his feet before the fire. And now, with the contents of one magnum inside him, and another coming on, he looked more cheerful than since first he entered the house. But a fluctuating trouble was scarcely the less visible in his undignified countenance.

A few attempts at conversation followed, but lord Mergwain's continuous silence was very quenching. Lost in himself, he kept his eyes fixed on the ripening bottle, waiting with heroic self-denial, and without one audible oath, for the sound of its opening to herald the outburst of the fountain of life, laved in whose waters his being would blossom yet again, in spite of age and tempest, and the terror that walked the night. But one thing hard to bear was, that there were no clean wine-glasses on the table! To use the glass he had himself brought with the old bottle would spoil the fresh one!

Grizzie came, bringing tea for lady Joan. As she set it before her, she remarked, with cunningly devised look of unconsciousness—

"It's a gurly nicht; no a pinch o' licht, an' the win' blawin' like deevils; the Pooer o' the air, he's oot wi' a rair, an' the snaw rins roon upo' sweevils."

"God damn you, woman! what do you mean? Would you drive me mad with your gibberish?" cried his lordship, getting up and going to the window.

"Ow na, my lord!" returned Grizzie as quietly as enigmatically; "mad's mad, but there's waur nor mad."

"Grizzie!" said the laird.

Lurking in Grizzie was the suspicion, a suspicion not quite latent in the mind of any one of the few who remembered the old captain, that he was robbed as well as murdered—though, in truth, nothing was ever missed that had been known to belong to him except an odd walking-stick he used to carry. Such robbery, if it had taken place, was of course to the loss of the next of kin, namely, Warlock of Glenwarlock, and hence in a large measure Grizzie's indignation with the English lord, whom, without even a passing doubt, she looked upon as the murderer of the old captain. Obedient to the least hint of her master, she left the room in silence, but cast on the old man, as she turned, such a look of inexplicable triumph and inarticulate doom as, in spite of the wine he had drunk and the wine he hoped to drink, seemed to freeze his very vitals.

The next effect of it upon him, however, was to rouse suspicion. What if he was the victim of a conspiracy? What if the frightful event of the night before had been contrived and executed by the people of the house? This horrible old hag doubtless remembered things that had else been forgotten! What if they had drugged his wine? The first half of the bottle he had yesterday was decanted!—But the one he had just drunk had not been touched! and this fresh one before the fire should not be carried from his sight! he would not take his eyes off it! He was safe so far as these were concerned! Only if after all—if there should be no difference—if something were to happen again all the same—ah, then indeed!—then it would only be so much the worse!—Better let them decant the bottle, and then he would have the drug to account for the thing!

Simultaneous with the loud bang of Grizzie's closure of the great door, the wind rushed against the house with a tremendous bellow, threatening to drive the windows into the room. An immediate lull followed, through which as instantly came strange sounds, as of a distant staccato thunder. The laird started to his feet and made for the door. He knew what those *douf thuds* meant. Cosmo rose to follow.

"Stop! stop!" shouted lord Mergwain in a voice quavering with terror, yet with terror imperative, and lady Joan gave Cosmo a glance of entreaty:—the shout was ineffectual, the glance was not. The laird hastened from the room, taking huge strides with his long thin legs; Cosmo resumed his seat as if nothing were the matter.

But lord Mergwain was trembling visibly; his jaw quivered, and seemed ready to drop.

"Don't be alarmed, my lord," said Cosmo; "it is only one of the horses kicking against his stall."

"Damn the brute! why should he kick like that?" said his lordship; and putting his hand to his chin, he did his best to hide his agitation.

"My father will tell us. He will soon set things right. He knows all about horses. Jolly may have thrown his leg over his halter, and got furious; he's rather an ill-tempered horse."

Lord Mergwain swallowed a bumper—the last glass of the first bottle, and gave a shiver.

"It's deuced cold!" he said.

Their game interrupted, lady Joan forgot it, and stared into the fire, giving Cosmo's eyes a holiday of loveliness on her beautiful face.

It was some time before the laird returned, bringing the news that one of the strange horses was very ill.

"He looked bad enough this morning," said Cosmo.

"It's not the same horse, my boy," answered his father. "I fancy he has been ailing all day though, and the state of the other has prevented the men from noticing it. He was taken suddenly with violent pain, and now lies groaning. They are doing what they can for him, but I fear, in this cold, he will not recover. The symptoms are those of severe inflammation."

"Hustled into a hole in the dark to die like a rat!" muttered his lordship.

"Don't fancy the old place a trap, my lord," said the laird cheerily. "The moment the roads will permit, I will see that you have horses."

"I don't doubt you'll do your best to get rid of me."

"We shall not, I confess, regret your departure so much, my lord, as if we had been able to make your lordship comfortable," said the laird.

With that came another great howling blast, which raved for a few moments in fierce and fiercer pulsation, then sank to a growling whine. With the first burst of it lord Mergwain started almost to his feet, but sat down instantly, and said with some calmness—

"I should be obliged to you, Mr. Warlock, if you would order a wine-glass or two. I am troublesome, I know, but I like to change my glass; and the wine there will be the worse now every moment it stands. I wish you would drink! We should make a night of it then!"

"I beg your pardon, my lord. What was I thinking of!" cried the laird. "—Cosmo, run and fetch wine-glasses—and the corkscrew."

But ere Cosmo reached the kitchen the battery of iron-shod heels against timber began again, and he ran to the stable. Just as he reached the door, the horse half reared, and cast himself against the side of the stall. With a great crash it yielded, he fell, and lay motionless. Cosmo, turning away to do his errand, met his father.

"Run, my boy," he said. "The poor old man seems to have a legion of thirsty devils in him."

Cosmo ran for the glasses and corkscrew.

The time he was gone seemed to the toper endless. He rose and moved the bottle back from the fire, rose again and set it on the table, rose a third time and placed it on the centre-spot of the rug.

A third blast, more terrible, frenzied, and imperious than those preceding it, shook the windows as a dog shakes a rat: the house itself it could shake no more than a primeval rock. The next instant Cosmo entered, saying the horse was dead.

"What a beastly country!" growled his lordship.

But the *plomp* of the cork's exody, and the gurgle of the wine from the short neck of the apoplectic magnum, speedily consoled him. He liked this bottle better than the last, and a degree of composure returned to his wine-sodden soul.

The laird returned with a book of old ballads, and offered to read from it. Lord Mergwain gave a contemptuous grunt, but lady Joan and Cosmo welcomed the proposal. For more than an hour, the laird read ballad after ballad—nobody but Cosmo, not even the laird himself, attending to them much, lord Mergwain not at all. His lordship grew sleepy, began to nod, seemed to forget his wine, and at length fell asleep. The laird rose, and with a pillow from the sofa would have settled his head more comfortably, but the moment he came near him, before he touched him, with a yell of defiance he started to his feet wide awake. Coming to himself almost immediately, he tried to laugh, sat down, said that from a child he had been furious when waked suddenly, composed himself in the chair, and again fell asleep.

The night wore on, and supper-time came. His lordship woke, but would have no supper, and applied himself again to his bottle. Lady Joan and Cosmo went to the kitchen, and the laird had his porridge brought to the drawing-room.

At length it was time to go to bed. Lady Joan retired, and Cosmo soon after, for the laird would not allow him to sit up another night. So the lord and the laird were left together, the one again asleep, and dreaming who knows what! and the other wide awake, absorbed in the story of a man whose thoughts, fresh from above, were a mockery to the fools of his generation.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THAT SAME NIGHT.

THE wind had now risen to a hurricane—a rage of swiftness. The house was like a rock assaulted by the billows of an ocean-tempest. The laird had closed all the shutters, and drawn the withered curtains across them: through windows and shutters, the curtains waved in the penetrating blasts. But for all the onset the sturdy old house did not shake; nothing under an earthquake could have made it tremble. The snow was fast gathering in sloped heaps on the window-sills, on the frames, on every smallest ledge where it could lie; in the midst of the blackness and the roaring wind, the house was being covered with spots of silent whiteness; they rested on every projection, every roughness even, of the building. A sense of fierce desolation, of foreign invasion and siege, took possession of the soul of the laird. He had made a huge fire, and had heaped up beside it a great store of fuel, but, though his body was warm and likely to be warm, his spirit felt the ravaging cold outside—remorseless, and full of mock, the ghastly power of negation, of unmaking. He had got together all the screens he could find, and with them inclosed the fireplace, so that they sat in a citadel within a fortress. By the fire he had placed for his lordship the brocade-covered sofa, that he might lie down when he pleased, and himself occupied the great chair on the other side. From the centre of this fire-defended heart, the room outside looked cold and waste: it demanded almost courage to leave the stockade of the screens, and venture into the champaign of the floor beyond. And then the hell of wind and snow that raved outside that! and the desert of air in which the clouds that garnered the snow were shaken by mad winds, whirled and tossed and buffeted to make them yield their treasures! Lord Mergwain heard the storm, and drank. The laird heard it, and lifted up his heart.

Not much passed between them. For one thing the memories of the English lord were not fit to share with the dull old Scotchman beside him who knew nothing of the world. And in truth the laird knew neither how pitilessly selfish, nor how meanly clever, a man of this world may be and bate not a jot of his self-admiration. But men who address a neighbour as a man of the world, paying him the greatest compliment they know in acknowledging him of their kind, recoil with a sort of fear from the man alien to their thoughts, and impracticable for their purposes. They

say "He is beyond me," and despise him. So is there a world beyond them with which they yet hold a frightful relationship—that of unrecognized, unattempted duty! Lord Mergwain regarded the odd-looking laird as a fool; the laird looked on him with something of the pity an angel must feel for the wretch to whom he is set to give his last chance—ere sorer measures be taken in which angels are not the ministers.

But the wine was at last beginning to work its too oft repeated and now nearly exhausted influence on the sagging and much frayed nerves of the old man. A yellowish remnant of withered rose began to smear his far-off west: he dared not look to the east—that lay terribly cold and gray; and he smiled with a little curl of his lip now and then, as he thought of this and that advantage he had had in the game of life, for alas! struggle had never with him risen to the dignity of a battle. But he was as proud of a successful ruse, as any hero of a well fought and well won field. "I had him there!" stood with him for the joy of work done and salvation wrought. It was a repulsive smile—a smile that might move even to hatred the onlooker not yet divine enough to let the outrushing waves of pity swamp human judgment: it curled the cruel upper lip, while the lower continued to hang, thick, and curveless, and drawn into a protuberance in the middle. He seemed to himself, as he drank, to be gradually recovering the common sense of his self-vaunted, vigorous nature. He assured himself that now he saw plainly the truth and fact of things—that his present outlook and impression were the genuine, and the horrors of the foregone night but fancies bred of a disordered stomach. He was a man once more, and beyond the sport of a foolish imagination!

But alas for the man who draws his courage from wine! The same *alas* for the man whose health is its buttress! The touch of a pin on some one of certain points of his mortal house will suffice to change him from a leader of armies over mountains, or a hunter of tigers in the jungle, to one who shudders at a centipede! There is but one real source of real courage. Conscience, as it ought, makes cowards of us all. The courage which is of insensibility crumbles at once before any object of terror able to stir the sluggish imagination; and there is a fear, this for one, that for another, which can appal the stoutest who is not one with the essential.

Lord Mergwain came from under the influence of his imagina tion and his fears, and went under that of his senses and *himself.* He took his place beside the Christian in his low, common moods, when the world, with its laws and its material insistence, presses

upon him, and he does not believe that God cares for the sparrow, or can possibly count the hairs of his head; when the divine power, and law, and help, seem nowhere but in a passed-away fancy of the hour of prayer. Only the Christian is then miserable, and lord Mergwain was now relieved; for had he not come to himself? and did he yet know anything better to arrive at than just that wretched self of his?

A glass or two more, and he laughed at the terror by night. He had been a damned fool not to go to bed like other people, instead of sitting by the fire with a porridge-eating and folio-reading Scotchman, who regarded him as one of the wicked, and afraid of the darkness! He was afraid of nothing—not of the devil himself!

The thought may have passed from his mind to that of his host, for the self-same moment the laird said,

"Don't you think, when you have finished your bottle, my lord, you had better go to bed?"

With the words, a cold swell, as from the returning tide of some dead sea, so long ebbed that men had ploughed and sown and built within its bed, stole in, swift and black, filling every cranny of the old man's conscious being.

"My God!" he cried, "I thought better of you than that, laird! I took you for a man of your word! You promised to sit up with me!"

"I did, my lord, and am here to keep my promise. I only thought you looked as if you might have changed your mind; and in such a night as this, beyond a doubt bed is the best place for everybody that has one to go to."

"That depends," answered his lordship, and drank.

The laird held his peace for a time, meditating—then spoke again.

"I hope your lordship will not think me rude if I go on with my book?"

"I don't want a noise. It don't go well with old wine like this. It wants attention! Sound jars the palate.—No, I thank you."

"I did not propose to read aloud, my lord—only to myself."

"Oh! that alters the matter! That I by no means object to. I am but poor company, I know!"

The laird resumed his folio, and lost and found himself in the communion of a kindred soul.

By and by the boat of his lordship's brain was again drifting towards the waste coast of such imagination as was in him. The half-tide restoring the physical mean was past, and intoxication was

setting in. He began to shoot uneasy glances towards the old folio. It certainly had a look of venerable significance, and whether it called up some association of childhood concerned in some fearful fancy, or suggested to his muddled brain the art of the necromancer, it made him uneasy.

"What's that you're reading, Glenwarlock?" he said at length. "It looks like a book of magic."

"On the contrary," answered the laird, "it is a religious book, and of the best sort."

"Oh, indeed! ah!—I have no objection to a little religion in its own place. I never was one of those mockers—those Jacobins, those sans-culottes! Arrogant fools they always seemed to me!"

"Would your lordship like to share a little of my book?"

"No, no; by no means! *In its own place*, I said. Things sacred ought not to be mixed up with things profane—with such an uncommon bottle of wine, for instance. I dictate to no one, but for my part I keep my religion for church. That is the proper place for it, and there you find yourself in the fitting mood. I beg you will not mistake me; it is out of respect I decline."

He drank, and the laird dropped back into the depths of his volume. The night wore on. His lordship did not drink fast. There was no hope of another bottle, and the wine must cover the period of necessity: he dared not encounter the night without the sustaining knowledge of its presence. His god was a Baal whom he knew finite. At last he began to nod, and by slow degrees sank back on the cushions of the sofa. Very softly the laird covered him, and resumed his book.

The storm went raging on, as if it would never cease. The sense of desolation it produced in the heart of the laird was such, that he closed his mind against it, and gave all his attention to George Fox. The minutes crawled slowly along, but he lost all measure of time, because he read with delight. At length he found himself invaded by that soft physical peace which heralds the approach of sleep. He roused himself; he did not want to sleep; he wanted to read: he was in one of the most interesting passages he had yet found! But presently the sweet enemy was again within his outworks. Once more he roused himself, heard the storm raving on—over buried graves and curtained beds, heedless of human heeding—fell a listening to its shriek-broken roar, and so into a soundless and dreamless sleep.

He woke so suddenly that for a moment he knew himself only as somebody he knew. The weight of an indefinable oppression —the horror of a darkness too vague to be combated, lay upon him. The fire had burned low, and his very bones seemed chill

with the chill of death. The candle flames were down in the sockets of the candlesticks, sunk at last into their graves and dying. The voice of the storm had risen to a scream of victory. Had the assaulting death-cold won its way into the house? Was gluttonous annihilation having its will with them all?

He rose and cast his eyes on his guest. Sleeping still, he half lay, half leaned in the corner of the sofa, breathing heavily. The laird could not well see his face, because of the flapping and flickering of the half buried candle-flames, and the shadows they sent waving huge over all like the flaunting of a black flag. Through the flicker and the shadow he was still peering at him, when suddenly the old man assumed a sitting posture—rising all of a piece, and without opening his eyes, like a wooden figure lifted from behind. The laird then saw his face: it bore the expression of one suffering from a horrible nightmare. It was terrified, wrathful, disgusted—all in one. He hastened to rouse him from some drunken dream. But ere he reached him, his eyes opened, and his expression changed—not to one of relief, but one of utter collapse—as if the sleep-dulled horrors of the dream grew veritable to him as he woke. His under lip trembled like a dry leaf in a small wind, his right arm rose slowly from the shoulder and stuck straight out in the direction of his host with the hand hanging slack from the wrist, and he stared as upon one loosed out of hell to speak of horrors. But it seemed to the laird that, although turned towards him, his eyes did not rest on him, but were focussed for something beyond him. The stare was like that of one demented, who sees what is not. It invaded the laird—possessed him. A something which I can describe only as a physical terror seized him. He felt his gaze returning that of the man before him, as a mirror returns a face. The skin of his head was contracting, his hair about to stand on end! The spell must be broken!

With a mighty self-energy of the will he forced himself forward—just a step, to lay his hand on lord Mergwain and bring him to himself. His lordship uttered a terrible cry, scream and yell in one, and sank again on the sofa. The same instant the laird was himself, and sprang to him. He lay with his mouth wide open, and just such a look as the last night when they found him on the floor. His arm stuck straight out from his body. The laird pressed it down, but it rose again. He did not for a moment doubt he was dead, but he could not have told what it was that assured him of it.

The first thought that came to him was that lady Joan might have heard his cry and she must not see him so. He bound up

his fallen jaw, laid him straight on the sofa, lighted fresh candles, and went to call Grizzie.

He felt his way down the dark stair, fought his way through the wind to the kitchen, and thence climbed to Grizzie's room. She was already out of bed, and putting on her clothes. She had not been asleep, she said, and added the obscure remark, which the laird took to mean she had been expecting a summons,

"Whan Ane's oot, nane's in."

"He's gane til's accoont, Grizzie," said the laird, nor could help a tremble in his voice.

"Say ye sae, laird?" rejoined Grizzie with perfect calmness. "Eh, sirs!"

She said no more, for if she was cool she was not irreverent. The man who had no reverence for the corpse on a gallows, I could scarce help imagining capable of the crime that brought it there.

"Ye winna wauk the hoose, will ye, sir?" she added presently. "I dinna think it wad be ony service to deid or livin'."

"I'll no du that, Grizzie. But speed ye, an' come an' luik at 'im," returned the laird, "an' tell me what ye think. I makna a doobt he's deid, but gien ye hae ony, we'll du what we can. An' we'll sit up the nicht throuw wi' the corp thegither, an' lat yoong an' auld tak the rist they hae mair need o' nor the likes o' you an' me."

It was a proud moment in Grizzie's life, one never forgotten, when the laird addressed her thus. But her private pride was almost always speechless.

"The Prence is haein' his ain w'y the nicht!" she murmured to herself, as they bored their way through the wind to the great door.

When she came where the corpse lay, she looked down upon it without uttering a sound, neither was there any emotion in her fixed gaze. She had been brought up in a stern and nowise pitiful school.

"Ye doobtna he's deid—div ye, Grizzie?" said the laird, in a voice that seemed to himself intrusive on the solemn silence.

She removed the handkerchief, and the jaw fell.

"He's gane til's accoont," she said. "It's a great amoont; an' mair on ae side nor he'll weel bide. It's sair eneuch, laird, whan ane has to gang at the Lord's call; but whan the messenger comes frae the laich yett (*low gate*), we maun jist lat gang an' forget. Sae lang's he's a man, hooever, we maun du what we can —an' that's what we did last nicht. I'll rin an' fess the watter. It 'll be het i' the b'iler yet."

She soon returned, and they used every means they could think of for his recovery. When at length they gave it up, they heaped the body over with blankets: there was yet the last chance of a spontaneous revival. Then sitting down they waited the slow-travelling, feeble dawn.

They sat in silence for nearly an hour; then the laird spoke.

"We'll read a psalm thegither, Grizzie," he said.

"Ay, du ye that, laird. It'll haud them awa' for the time bein', though it profit little i' the hin'er en'."

The laird drew from his pocket a small, much worn bible which had been his Marion's; and by the body of the sinner, in the heart of the howling storm and the dead waste of the night, rose his voice, trembling with a strange emotion, upborne on the glorious words of the ninety-first psalm.

When he ended they were aware that the storm had begun to yield. By slow degrees it sank as the morning came on. Through all the continuing darkness not a word more was said between them. But when the first faintest glimmer of dawn began to appear, Grizzie rose in haste like one that had overslept herself, and said—

"I maun to my wark, laird—what think ye?"

The laird rose also, and by a common impulse they went and looked at the corpse—for corpse it was beyond all question, cold now as the snow without. After a brief, low-voiced conference they proceeded to carry it to the guest-chamber. There they laid it upon the bed, and there, when Grizzie had done for it all that custom required, she left it covered with a sheet, lying dead in the room where it dared not sleep, a mound cold and white as any snow-wreath outside. It looked as if Winter had forced his way into the house, and left this one drift in signal of his capture.

A great awe fell upon Cosmo when he heard what visit and what departure had taken place in the storm and darkness. Lady Joan turned white as the dead. A few tears rolled from the luminous dusk of her eyes, like the dew slow-gathering in a night of stars, but she was very still. The bond between her and her father had not been a pleasant one, neither had she for him that reverence which so grandly heightens love. She had loved him pitifully—perhaps, dreadful thought! a little contemptuously. The laird persuaded her not to see the body.

All the day things went on in the house as usual, with a little more silence where had been much. The wind lay moveless on the frozen earth, the sun shone cold as a diamond, and the fresh snow glittered and gleamed and sparkled like a dead sea of lightning.

The laird was thinking which of his men he should send to the village, when the door opened and in came Agnes. Grannie had sent her, she said, to inquire after them. Grannie had had a troubled night, and the moment she woke had begun to talk about the laird and his visitors, and what the storm must have been at Castle Warlock. The drifts were tremendous, she said. Partly to give him a breath of the world of life, the laird sent Cosmo back with Aggie, instructing him to give directions to the carpenter for the making of a coffin.

How long the body might have to lie with them no one could tell, for the storm had ceased in a hard frost, and there could be no communication with England for many days, perhaps for weeks. The laird judged it better, therefore, so soon as the shell should arrive, to place the body in a death-chapel provided for it by nature herself. With their spades he and Cosmo fashioned the mound, already hollowed in sport, into the shape of a huge sarcophagus; and when the coffin came and the soul's cenotaph was laid in it, they opened wide the side of the snow-sepulchre to receive it, and closed it again with snow. Where Cosmo's hollow man of light had shone, lay the body of the vanished lord Mergwain.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### A WINTER IDYLL.

Lady Joan, the same day on which her father died, wrote to her brother Borland, now Mergwain, telling him what had taken place. But it was many days before her letter could leave Muir o' Warlock. The laird told her she must have patience, and assured her she was welcome as the summer.

And now began for Cosmo an episode of enchantment, as wondrous as any dream of tree-top- or summer-wave-city, for it had at the heart of it a live and beautiful lady.

Lady Joan was a girl of nearly eighteen, looking older—shapely, strong, and graceful. But her life-consciousness and its joy had been greatly suppressed by the home-relations in which she had lived. Her father loved her with what love was in him, and therefore was jealous; trusted, and therefore enslaved her; could make her useful, and therefore oppressed her. When his health began to decline, he would go nowhere without her, but seldom spoke a pleasant word to her, and often an unpleasant

one. To her face he never praised her, but swore deeply to her excellence in ears that cared little to hear of it. She must always be within his reach when beyond his call; but he was not slow to anger with her, which she dreaded more from nicety than either love or fear, for when angry he would say ugly things to her. One hears of ruling by love and ruling by fear, but this man ruled by disgust. At home he lived much as we have seen him in the house of another, cared for nobody's comfort but his own, and was hard to keep in good humour—such good humour as was possible to him. He paid no attention to business or management: his estates had long been under trustees; lolled about in his room, diverting himself with a horrible monkey which he taught ugly tricks; drank almost constantly, and would throw dice by himself for an hour together—doing what he could, which was little, towards the very murder of time. He kept a poor larder, but a rich cellar; almost always without money, he yet contrived to hold his bins replenished, and that from the farther end: he might have been expecting to live to a hundred and twenty! Of visitors he had none, except an occasional time-belated companion of his youth whom the faint muddled memories of old sins would bring to his door, when they would spend a day or two together, soaking, and telling bad stories, hardly restrained until Joan left the room, if her brother was not present, before whom her father was a little on his good behaviour.

The old man was in evil repute with his neighbours, and they never called upon him. This they would have found it hard to justify, seeing some who were not better they treated as quite respectable. No doubt he was the dilapidated old reprobate they counted him, but if he had not made himself poor they would have found his morals no business of theirs. They pitied the daughter, or at least spoke pityingly of her, but could not for her sake countenance the father! Neglecting thus their duty towards her, they soon came to regard her with a disapproval which was the shadow of their neglect. They thought of her as partaking in her father's defilement. The uncleansed call the pure unclean. But it was better to be so judged and so excluded than by intercourse to run the risk of growing after the pattern of her judges. I suspect the man who leads a dissolute, and the man who leads a commonly selfish life, will land from the great jump pretty nearly in the same spot. Those who have despised each the other's sins, will one day be shut up to stare at their own, until each finds his own the hateful thing.

Of the latter, the respectably selfish class, was Borland. He knew his presence a protection to his sister, yet gave himself no

trouble in consequence. As the apple of his eye would he cherish and isolate the fluid in which he hoped to surprise some secret of nature; but he was not his sister's keeper, and a drop of mud more or less cast into her spirit was to him of no consequence. Yet he would as soon have left a woman he wanted to marry unwarned in the dark by the cage of a tiger as within reach of the miasms that now and then surrounded Joan.

From the poverty of the family, then, the ill repute of her father, and the pride and self-withdrawal of her brother, she led a lonely life. Her home was as much neglected as herself. Everything around her was left to run wild. The lawn was a meadow, and the park a mere pasture; the shrubbery an impassable tangle, and the flower-garden a wilderness. She could do nothing to set things right, and lived about the place like a poor relation. She had at school, which she left at fifteen, learned nothing so as to draw from it any vital help. She returned possibly a little less capable than she went, for some of her natural perceptions could hardly escape being blunted by the artificial, false, and selfish judgments and regards which had there surrounded her; and without a mother, without a companion, without a piano in the huge house fit to play upon, had to find for herself what solace, what pastime she could. Her only cistern of amusement indoors was a library containing a large disproportion of books in old French bindings, with much tarnished gilding. But a native purity of soul kept her lovely, and capable of becoming lovelier.

The mystery of all human mysteries is the upward tendency of certain souls through so much that clogs and would defile their wings, while so many others do not even look up: how do these last ever come to raise their eyes to the hills? The keenest of us moral philosophers are but mole-eyed! But we shall yet smile at many a difficulty now insurmountable—and many another will rise as we go.

Lady Joan did not like ugly things, so shrank from evil things, and was the less in danger from liberty, because of the disgust which certain tones and words of her father had repeatedly occasioned her.

Influenced by no conventionalities, she saw no reason for making a difficulty when, the day after her father's death, Cosmo proposed a walk in the snow. He saw her properly provided for what seemed to her an adventure—with short skirts, and stockings over her shoes—and they set out together, in the brilliant light of a sun rapidly declining towards the western horizon, though it had but just passed the low noon.

The moment she stepped from the threshold, she was invaded

by an almost giddy sense of freedom. The keen air and impeding snow sent the warm blood to her cheeks, and her heart beat as if new-born into a better world. She felt annoyed. But in vain she called herself heartless; in vain she accused herself of insensibility, called herself a worthless girl: there was the sun in the sky—not warm, but dazzling bright—and shining straight into her very being! while the air, instinct with life, was to her lungs like water to a thirsty soul, making her heart beat like the heart of Eve when first she woke alive, and felt what her Maker had willed! Life was indeed good! It was a blessed thing for the eyes to behold the sun!—Let death do what it may, there is one thing it cannot destroy, and that is just life. Never in itself, only in the unfaith of man does life recognize any sway of death.—A new birth of healthy vigour seemed to answer every fresh effort. They crossed the torrent on a vault of snow, and listening could hear, far down, the noise of its hidden rushing through the white tunnel. Away and up the hill they went; the hidden torrent of Joan's blood flowed yet clearer as they ascended; her heart sang to her soul; everything began to look like a thing in a story; she was a princess, with her younger brother, travelling to meet the tide of lovely adventure. Such a brother was very different from an older one! She was the happier for his presence! there was strength and peace and a better sunshine in it! He talked very strangely, it was true—now like a child, now like an old man, but she felt a charm in both ways, and was hardly conscious that she understood neither.

Capable, through confidence in his father, of receiving wisdom far beyond what he could have thought out for himself, Cosmo sometimes said things, because he understood them, which seemed to most who heard them beyond his years. Such reception by faith turns to insight, and forms the atmosphere of individual vision.

They had been climbing a steep ascent, in the snow difficult, and had at length reached the top, where they stood for a moment panting. Beyond them rose another ascent.

"Aren't you always wanting to climb and climb, lady Joan?" said the boy.

"Call me Joan, please," rejoined the girl.

"How kind you are!—Then, Joan—don't you always want to be getting up higher?"

"No; I don't think I do."

"I believe you do, only you don't know it. When I am here, I always want to get on the top of yon hill there, and when I do, it always seems such a little way up!—and Mr. Simon tells me I

should feel much the same if it were the highest peak of the Himmalays."

She did not reply, and Cosmo was silent for a while.

"Don't you think," he began again, "though life here is so good, you would get very tired if you thought you had to live in this world always—for ever and ever and ever? You would want to get out of it, wouldn't you?"

"No, I shouldn't," answered Joan. "—Not that I think life so very good, but one keeps hoping it may turn to something better."

She counted it childish talk for a boy of his years—one so manly too beyond his years!

"That is very strange!" he returned. "Now I am quite happy, but at once I should feel in a prison, if I were told I should never leave this world; for what you can't get out of must be your prison."

"Yes—but if you don't want to get out?"

"Ah, that is true! But when that comes to a prisoner, it is a sign that he is worn out, and has not life enough left in him to look the world in the face. I was talking about it the other day with Mr. Simon, else I shouldn't have got it so plain in my mind. Our blue roof is very different from the vault of a prison, for no man ever touched the stones of it. But if you could never get away from under it, never get off the floor at the bottom of it, to me it might as well be something solid. There would be no promise in the stars then. They look like promises, don't they? For God would never show us a thing he did not mean to give us. That's the way one boy teases another."

"You are a very odd boy, Cosmo. I am almost afraid to listen to you saying such presumptuous things!"

Cosmo laughed gently. There was a tone in the laugh such as Joan seemed never to have heard before.

"How can you love God, Joan, and be afraid because one speaks of him without fear? I should no more fancy him angry with me for believing he made me for great and glad things, than my father angry with me for believing he will always do his very best for me."

"Ah, but he is your father, and that is very different!" said Joan with a sigh, of which a full interpretation, unknown to herself, may have been, that, after all, there was more difference between one father and another than between some fathers and God.

"I know it is very different," replied Cosmo; "—God is so much, much more my father than is the laird of Glenwarlock!

He is eternally more to me, eternally nearer to me than my father, though my father is the best father that ever lived. God, you know, Joan—God is more than anybody knows what to say about. Sometimes, when I am lying awake at night, my heart swells and swells in me, that I hardly know how to bear it, with the thought that here I am, come out of God, and yet not *out of* him—close to the very life that said to everything *Be*, and it was!—You think it strange I should talk so?"

"Rather, I must confess! It *can't* be good to think at your age so much about religion. There is a time for everything. If you go on like this, you will die of the blues. I know it is all very proper, but such solemnity would kill me!"

Cosmo laughed again.

"Which of us is the merrier—you or me, Joan? The instant I saw you, I thought you hadn't enough of something—you weren't happy. If you knew the great beautiful person we call God, and knew he was always with you, nearer than your own soul, and that you could talk to him any time, you could not keep sad for long together."

Joan gave a great sigh: her heart knew its own bitterness, and there was little joy in it for a stranger to intermeddle with. But she said to herself the boy would be a gray-haired man before he was twenty, and she must help him out of such morbid fancies.

"While we are in this world, Cosmo, we must live as creatures of this world," she said.

"As men and women of this world—yes; but you do not surely imagine that, when he put us here, he banished us from himself! He is the same—in this world and in every other, and no creature can do without him. Everything beautiful is but a bit of love frozen: the love that gives is to the gift as water is to ice. Ah, you should hear our torrent shout in the spring! The thought of God fills me so full of life, that I want to go and do something for everybody. I am never miserable. I don't believe I shall be when my father dies."

"Oh, Cosmo!—with such a father as yours! I am shocked."

But it was into her own heart that her words struck a pang, for she had compared his father and hers, and over hers she was not miserable! The poor old man lay forsaken among strangers, and she had grown strange to him also!

The sun was close upon the horizon, and his level rays shone through the hair of the boy, as, taking off his cap, he turned and looked at her.

"Lady Joan," he said slowly, and with a tremble in his voice, "I should just laugh with delight to have to die for my father,

But if he were to die, I should be so proud of him I should have no room to be miserable. As God makes me glad though I cannot see him, so my father would make me glad though I could not see him. I cannot see him now, and yet I am glad because he *is*—away down there in the old castle; and when he is gone from me, I shall be glad still, for he will be *somewhere* all the same—with God, as he is now. The summer of souls will come again, and we shall run at each other."

It was an odd phrase, but lady Joan did not laugh.

The sun was down, and the cold blue-gray twilight came creeping from the east. They turned and walked home through a luminous dusk. It would not be dark all night, though the moon was very late, for the snow gave out a ghostly radiance. It must be one of the substances that have the power of drinking and hoarding the light of the sun, that with their memories of it they may thin the darkness. I suspect everything does it more or less. Far below were the lights of the castle, and across an unbroken waste of whiteness, the gleams of the village. The air was keen as an essence of points and edges, and the thought of the kitchen-fire grew pleasant. Cosmo took Joan by the hand, and down the hill they sped, swiftly descending what they had toilsomely climbed. But as she ran, the thought that one of those lights was burning by the body of her father, aroused in Joan fresh self-accusation. She was not glad, and she could not be sorry! If Cosmo's father were to die, Cosmo would be both sorry and glad! But the boy turned his face, ever and again as they ran, up to hers, and his look always comforted her. An attendant boy-angel he seemed, whose business it was to rebuke and console her. If he were her brother, she could be well content never more to leave the savage place! The strange old man in the red nightcap was a thorough gentleman, and this odd boy, absolutely unnatural in his goodness, was nevertheless charming! She did not yet know that goodness is the only nature. She regarded it as a noble sort of disease—at least as something of which it was possible to have too much. She had not a suspicion that goodness is simply life and health—that what the lord and heart of the universe demands of us is just to be good boys and girls. To judge religion, we must have it—not stare at it from the bottom of a broken-rundled, interminable dream-ladder.

When she reached the door she felt as if waking from a vision, in which she had been led along strange paths by a curious angel. But not to himself was Cosmo like an angel! He was a vigorous, hopeful, trusting boy of God's this world, and would be just such

a boy in the next—one namely who did his work, and was ready for whatever should come.

When, from that great world of snow outside, Joan entered the kitchen with its red heart of fire, she knew for a moment how a little bird feels as he creeps under the wing of his mother. Those Hebrews—what poets they were! Holy and homely and daring, they delighted in the wings of the Almighty; but the Son of the Father took the lovely figure and made it more homely yet, likening himself to the hen under whose wings her chickens would not creep for all her crying and calling. Such thoughts indeed were not in Joan's mind, yet then first in all her remembered life was she aware of simple confidence, of safety and satisfaction and loss of care. The old man in the red nightcap would see to everything for her! And hardly was she seated ere she felt a new fold of his protection: he had had her room changed, that she might be near his mother and Grizzie, he said.

Cosmo heard with delight that his father had given up his room to lady Joan, and would share his. To sleep with his father was one of the greatest joys the world held for him. Such safety and comfort—such hen's wings—were nowhere else on the face of the round world! It was peace in the heart of strength, a nest of down inside a castle of stone.

They sat together round the kitchen fire. By unintended degrees the laird glided into a gentle monologue, in which, to Joan's thinking, he talked even more strangely than Cosmo. Things born in the fire and the smoke, like the song of the three holy children, issued from the furnace clothed in softest moonlight. Joan said to herself it was plain where the boy got his oddity; but what she called oddity was but sense from a deeper source than she knew anything of. Then he read them passages from his folio, and Joan wondered what attraction such a jumble of good words and no meaning could have for a man sensible in ordinary things.

After supper, for the first time in her life, she was present where a man had the presumption to speak aloud to his maker direct from his heart without the mediation of a book. This she found odder than all the rest: she had never even heard of such a thing! And for the utterance, although it was as simple in word as its matter was high, so peculiar, so unfathomable was it to her, that she never suspected the man might be meaning something; farther from her still was the thought that perhaps God liked to hear him, was listening to him and understanding him, ready to give him the things he asked for. All she heard was an extraordinary gibberish, doubtless regarded as the proper thing for

the religious observance—family prayers she took it to be! She felt confused and ashamed—so grievously out of her element that she never knew until they rose that the rest were kneeling while she sat staring into the fire. Then she felt guilty and shy, but as nobody took any notice, persuaded herself the peculiarity of her behaviour had passed unobserved. Disagreeable as all this was, it did not, however, prevent her from saying to herself as she went to bed, "How delightful it would be to live in a house where everybody understood, and loved, and thought about everybody else!" She did not know that her wish was just for the kingdom of heaven—the very thing she thought the laird and Cosmo so strange for troubling their heads about. If men's wishes are not always for what the kingdom of heaven would bring them, their miseries, at least, are all for the lack of that kingdom.

The same night Joan dreamed herself in a desert island, where she had to endure great hardships, but where everybody was good to everybody, and never thought of taking care except each of the other; and that, when a beautiful ship came to carry her away, she cried and would not go.

Three weeks of all kinds of weather, except warm, followed, ending with torrents of rain, and a rapid thaw. But during that time Joan got as careless of the weather as Cosmo, till nothing delighted her more than to encounter any sort of it with him. And as she always attended to Grizzie's precautionary injunctions, she took no harm, and grew much stronger. It is not encountering the weather that is dangerous, but encountering it when the strength is not equal to the encounter. These two would come home wet from head to foot, change their clothes, have a good meal, sleep well, and wake in the morning without the slightest cold. They would pass the hours between breakfast and dinner ascending the course of a hill stream, which, dammed by snow and swollen by thaw, was now rushing with a roar to the valley; or fighting their way through wind and sleet to the top of some wild expanse of hill-moorland, houseless for miles and miles—waste bog and dry stony soil as far as eye could reach, with here and there a solitary stalk or bush bending low to the ground in the steady bitter wind—a hopeless region, making the hope in their hearts glow the redder; or climbing a gully, deep-worn by the few wheels of a month but the many of centuries, and more by the torrents that rushed down its trench when it rained heavily or thawed after snow—hearing the wind sweep across it, but feeling not a breath of its presence, till emerging suddenly upon its plane they had to struggle with it for very foothold upon the round earth. In such contests Joan delighted. It was glorious, she

said, to have a downright good fight, and nobody out of temper! She would come back from the windy war with her face glowing, her eyes flashing, her hair challenging storm from every point of the compass, and her heart merry with very peacefulness. Her only thoughts of trouble were, that her father's body lay unburied, and that Borland would come and take her away.

When the thaw came at last, the laird had the coffin brought back into the guest-chamber, there to wait the arrival of the new lord Mergwain.

Outstripping the letter that announced his departure, he came unexpected, bringing with him his man of business. Lady Joan's heart gave a small flutter of pleasure at sight of him, then beat quietly, but felt sad and apprehensive. The cold proper salute he gave her seemed, after the life she had of late been living, rather to belong to some sunless world than the region of humanity. He uttered one commonplace concerning his father's death, and never alluded to it again; behaved in a dignified, recognizant manner to the laird, but as to an inferior to whom he was under more obligation than he liked; and, after meeting his friendly approach with a snub, took not the slightest notice of Cosmo. Seated three minutes, he began to require rather than request the laird's assistance towards the removal of the body; would accept no refreshment; had a messenger despatched at once to procure the nearest hearse and four horses; and that same afternoon started for England, taking his sister with him.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### AN INTERLUNAR CAVE.

And so the moon died out of Cosmo's heaven. But it was only the moon. The sun remained to him—his father—visible type of the great sun, whose light is too keen for souls, and heart and spirit only can bear. But when he had received Joan's last smile, when she turned away her face, and the Ungenial, who had spoiled everything at Glenwarlock, carried her with him, then indeed for a moment a great cloud came over the light of his life, and he sought where to hide his tears. It was a sickening time. Suddenly she had come, suddenly entered his heart, and suddenly departed! But such things are only clouds, and cannot but pass. Ah, reader, whose cloud has not yet passed! do you scorn to hear it called cloud, priding yourself that your trouble is eternal? Just because you are eternal, your trouble cannot be. You may cling

to it, and brood upon it, but you cannot keep it from either blossoming into a bliss, or crumbling into dust. Be such while it lasts, that, when it passes, it shall leave you loving more, not less.

There was this difference between Cosmo and most young men of clay finer than ordinary: after the first few moments of the seemingly unendurable, he did not wander about moody, nursing his sorrow, and making everybody uncomfortable because he was uncomfortable; he sought at once the presence of his father, and of Mr. Simon.

From the latter he had been much separated while lady Joan was at the castle, for such a visit was an opportunity for him precious in the eyes of the laird. With the loving insight of a true father, he perceived what the society of the girl would do for his boy—how it would at once soften and ripen and shape him, and reveal him to himself. And two days had not passed before he was aware of a gentling and clearing of his speech; of greater readiness and directness in his replies; of an indescribable sweetening of the address that had been sweet, with a rosy shadow of something like apology cast over every approach; of a deepening of the atmosphere of his reverence, which yet as it deepened grew more diaphanous. And now when the episode of angelic visitation was over, he understood the wrench her abrupt departure must have given his being, and the sick sense of lack it must have left, and by silent sympathy allowed him time to recover. Once he came upon him weeping: not with the faintest shadow of displeasure did he rebuke him, not with farthest hint suggest weakness in his tears. He went up to him, laid his hand on his head, stood thus a moment, then turned and left him. Nor because of his sorrow did he once regret the freedom he had allowed to the intercourse between them. He knew what the sharp things of life are to the human plant; that its frosts are needful as well as its sunshine, its great passion-winds as well as its gentle rains; that an imperative result is required, that his human son had to be made divine, and that in aid of this end man must humbly follow the great lines of Nature, ready to withhold his hand, anxious not to interfere. Many would foil the marvellous process, call in worldly wisdom to guide to other and worldly ends, bring the experience of their own failures to bear for the production of worse. But he who would escape the mill that grinds slow and grinds small, must yield to the hammer and chisel; for those who refuse to be stones of the living temple must be ground into mortar for it.

Mr. Simon also knew well how to treat the growing plant when beaten down by the storm. He set Cosmo to such work as in

ways remote harmonized with his condition, and so he drew him gently from his past. Mere labour would have but driven him deeper into it. Yesterday is as much our past as the bygone century, and sheltering in it from an uncongenial present, we are lost to our morrow. Thus motion slid back into its old grooves. An era of blessedness had vanished, but was not lost; it was added to his life, gathered up into his being; it was dissolved into his consciousness, and interpenetrated his activity. Where is no ground of regret, or shame, or self-reproach, new joy will not cast out the old; now that the new joy was itself old, the older joys came softly trooping back to their attendance.

But besides all this, the vanished woman left behind her a gift that had never been hers, and the youth began to be a poet. Truly it is strange! Many a woman, caring for his verses never a cambric handkerchief or pair of gloves, has yet made of a man, for the time at least, and sometimes for ever, a poet. A wretched man to whom a poem is not worth a sneer, may set a woman singing to the centuries!

Any gift of the nature of poetry, however poor or small, is of value inestimable to the development of the individual, ludicrous even though it may show itself should conceit clothe it in print. The desire of fame is the ruin of the small, sometimes of the great poet. Next motive in vileness to the love of money, is the love of fame. A man may have a wife who is all the world to him, but must he therefore set her on a throne and call on the world to worship her? Cosmo, essentially and peculiarly practical, never thought of the world and his verses together, but gathered life for himself in the making of them. The fools of the world claim to be the practical men, but the spiritual men are the only truly practical—and that it needs but a little time beyond the edge of what the world calls time to show. If the fool could stop where his ideas stop, he would but be fixed a fool. These children of Cosmo's, like all real children, strengthened his heart, and upheld his hands. In them truth took shape; in them she submitted herself to his contemplation. Thus from the days of his mourning he came out more of a man, abler to look the world in the face.

From that time also he learned and understood more rapidly. No more than his master did he ever manifest superiority in the faculties most prized of the world, but not the less desirable therefore did it seem in the eyes of his father and his tutor that he should go the next winter to college. As to how this could be managed, the laird took much serious thought, but saw no glimmer in the darkness of apparent impossibility. An unsuspected oracle was however at hand.

Old servants of the true sort have, I fancy, a kind of family instinct. From the air about them, almost from the personal carriage, from words dropped that were never meant for them, from the thoughtful, troubled, or eager look, and the sought or avoided conference, they get possessed by a notion both of how the wind is blowing, and of how the ship wants to sail. But Grizzie was capable also of reasoning from what she saw. She marked the increase of care on the brow of her master; noted that it was always greater after he and Mr. Simon had had a talk at which Cosmo, the beloved of both, was not present; and concluded that the talk and the trouble must be about Cosmo. She noted also that both were as much pleased with him as ever, and concluded therefrom that it was his prospects and not his behaviour that caused uneasiness. Then again she noted how fervently at prayers her master entreated guidance to do nothing other than the right thing; and from all put together, and considered in the light of a tolerably accurate idea of the laird's circumstances, Grizzie was able not only to arrive at a final conclusion, but to come to the resolution of offering—not advice—upon that she would never have presumed—but a suggestion.

One night the laird sat in the kitchen revolving the matter for the many-hundredth time. Was it right to spend on his son's education what might go to the creditors? Was it not better for the world, for the creditors, for all, that one of Cosmo's vigour should be educated? Was it not the best possible investment of any money he could lay hold of? For the creditors, there was the land! the worst for him would be the best for them; and for the boy it was infinitely better he should go without land than without education! But, all this granted and settled, *where was the money to come from?* That the amount required was small, made no difference, when it was neither in his hand, nor, so far as he could see, anywhere near his hand!

He sat in his great chair, with his book open upon his knees. His mother and Cosmo were gone to bed, and Grizzie was preparing to follow them: he was generally the last to go. But Grizzie, who had been eyeing him at intervals for the last half-hour, having finished her preparations for the morning, now drew near, and stood before him, her hands and bare arms under her apron. Her master taking no notice of her, she stood thus in silence for a moment, then began. It may have been noted that her proclivity to rime generally manifested itself in the start of a speech, and mostly vanished as she went on.

"Laird," she said, "ye're in trouble, for ye're sittin' double, an' castna a leuk upo' yer buik! Gien ye wad lat a body speyk

'at kens naething, 'cep' 'at oot o' the moo' o' babes an' sucklin's—an' troth I'm naither babe nor sucklin' this mony a lang, but I'm a muckle eneuch gowk to be ane o' the Lord's innocents, an' hae him perfec' praise oot o' the moo' o' me!——"

She paused, feeling it was time the laird should say something—which immediately he did.

"Say awa', Grizzie,' he answered; "I'm hearin' ye. There's nane has a better richt to say her say i' this hoose."

"I hae *no* richt," retorted Grizzie, almost angrily, "but what ye alloo me, laird; an' I wadna hae mair. But whan I see ye in tribble—eh, mony's the time I haud my tongue till my hert's that grit it's jist swallin' in blobs an' blawin' like the parritch whan it's dune makin', afore I tak it frae the fire! for I hae naething to say, an' naither coonsel nor help intil me. But last nicht, whan I leukitna for't, there cam a thoucht til my door, an' seein' it was a stranger, I bad it walcome. It micht hae come til a wysser heid nor mine, but seein' it did come to mine, it's the mair like 'at the Lord sent it—for the exaltation o' ane o' low estate, wha, gien she be a gowk, is muckle the same as he made her wi' 's ain blissit han'. Sae, quo' I, I s' jist submit it to the laird as it cam to me. The laird's the man to discern whether it be frae the Lord or only frae mysel'!"

"Say on, Grizzie," returned the laird, for again she had paused. "It sud surprise nane to get a message frae the Lord by the moo' o' ane o' his handmaidens."

"Weel, it's jist this, laird:—I hae times ower (*many times*) been i' the gran' drawin'-room, whan ye wad be lattin' the yoong laird, or some ae body or anither ye wad be special til, see the bonny things ye hae sic a fouth (*plenty*) o' i' the caibinets again' the wa's; an' I hae aye h'ard ye say o' ane o' them—yon 'at the auld captain, 'at's no laid yet, gied yer gran'father—the bit horsie, ye ken—I hae aye h'ard ye say o' that 'at hoo it was solid silver—'*said to be*' ye aye tackit to the tail o' 't."

"True! true!" responded the laird, a hopeful gleam beginning to break upon his darkness.

"Weel, ye see, laird," Grizzie went on, "I'm no sic a born idiot as think ye wad set the han'-haudin' o' a playock like yon again' the yoong laird's edication; sae I bude to conclude ye had some rizzon for no meltin' o' 't doon—seein' siller maun aye be worth siller—ay, gowd, gien there be eneuch o' 't.—But I hae yer leave, laird?"

"Gang on, gang on, Grizzie," replied the laird, almost eagerly.

"Weel, laird—I wad never alloo to mysel' 'at ye was feart, for I never saw yer lairdship"—she had got into the way of saying *yer*

*lordship*, and from that had come not unfrequently to say *yer lairdship*—"feart afore bull or bully, but I micht weel think ye wadna be wullin' to anger ane 'at the Lord lats gang up an' doon upo' the earth, whan he wad be far better intil't, ristin' in 's grave till the resurrection—only he was never ane o' the sancts to rist ony gait! But anent that, michtna ye jist ca' to min', laird, 'at a gi'en gift's yer ain, to du wi' what ye like; an' I wadna heed man, no to say cratur belangin' richtly to nae warl' ava', 'at wad play the bairn, an' want back what he had gien. For *him*, he's a mere deid man 'at winna lie still. There's mony a bairn canna sleep 'cause he's behavet himsel' ill the day afore! But gien, by coortesy like, he war to be alloot a word i' the case, he cudna objec'—that is, gien he hae onything o' the gentleman left intil 'im, the whilk nae doobt may weel be doobtfu'; for wasna he a byous expense wi' his drink, an' a' the ootlandish dishes he bude to hae! I hae h'ard auld Grannie say as muckle, an' she kens mair aboot that portion o' oor history nor ony ither body, for, ye see, I cam raither late intil the faimily mysel'. Sae, as I say, it may be jeedged but fair the auld captain sud contreebit to the needcessities o' the hoose, war it in 's richt to withhaud what I mainteen it 's no."

"Weel rizzont, Grizzie!" cried the laird. "But I thank ye mair for yer thoucht nor yer rizzons; yer thoucht I was sair in want o', yer rizzons I was na. The thing s' be luikit intil, an' that the first thing the morn's mornin'! The bit playock cam never i' my heid! I maun be growin' auld, Grizzie, no to hae thoucht o' a thing sae plain! But it's the w'y wi' a' the best things! They're sae plain whan ye get a grip o' them, 'at ye canna un'erstan' hoo ye never thoucht o' them afore."

"I'm aul'er nor you, sir, sae it's the liklier to be the Lord himsel' 'at pat it intil me."

"We'll see the morn, Grizzie. I'm no that sure there's onything mair intil the siller o' 't nor a mere fule word. For onything I ken, the thing may be but a Nehushtan. I hae thoucht, mony 's the time, it luikit, in places, unco like braiss. But I s' tak it, an' that the morn's mornin', to Sandy Merson. We'll see what he'll hae to say til 't. Gien there be ane i' these pairts o' authority in sic maitters, that ane 's Sandy. An' I thank ye hertily, Grizzie."

But Grizzie was not well pleased that the laird should pass the greater portion of her utterance so lightly by; like many another prophet, she prized more the large part of her prophecy that came from herself, than the small part that came from the Lord.

"Sae plain as he cam an' gaed, laird, I thoucht ye micht hae been in some swither (*doubt*) aboot *him*."

"Hoots, Grizzie, wuman!" replied the laird, "wasna ye jist tellin' me no to heed him a hair? An' no ae hair wad I heed him, 'cep' to gie rist til 's puir wan'erin' sowl."

"I but thoucht the thing worth a thoucht, laird!" said Grizzie, humbly and apologetically. "Guid nicht to ye, sir," she added, and turning away, went up the stair to her room.

The moment she was gone, the laird fell on his knees, and gave God thanks for the word received by his messenger—if indeed Grizzie should prove such to be.

"O Lord," he said, "with thee the future is as the present, and the past as the future. In the long past it may be thou didst provide this supply for my present need—even then preparing the answer to the prayers with which thou knewest I should assail thine ear. Never in all my need have I so much desired money as now for the good of my boy. But if this be but one of my hopes, not one of thy intents, give me the patience of a son, O Father."

With these words he rose, and taking his book, sat down, and read and enjoyed into the dead of the night.

That same night, Cosmo, who, again in his own chamber, was the more troubled with the trouble of his father that he was no longer with him in his room, dreamed an odd, confused dream, of of which he could give himself but little account in the morning—but there were in it horses shod with shoes of gold, which grew upon their heels, which they cast from them in a shoe-storm as they ran, and which anybody might have for the picking up. Throughout the dream was diffused a flavour of the old villain the sea-captain, but he did not come into the story.

At breakfast his father told him, to his delight, that he was going to Muir o' Warlock, and would like him to go with him. He ran like a hare up the waterside to let Mr. Simon know, and was back by the time the laird was ready to start.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE WATCHMAKER.

It was a lovely day. There would be plenty of cold and rough weather yet, but the winter was over and gone, and even to that late boreal region the time of the singing of birds was come. The air was soft, with streaks of cold in it. The fields lay about all wet, but there was the sun above them, whose business it was to dry them. There were no leaves yet on the few trees and hedges,

but preparations had long been made, and the sap was now rising in their many stems like the mercury in the thermometers. Up rose the larks also, joy fluttering their wings and quivering their throats. They always know when their time to praise is come, for it is when they begin to feel happy: more cannot be expected of them, nor are they therein below the level of most of us Christians, who in this mood and that praise God. And are not the birds and the rest of the creatures Christians in the same way as the mass of those that call themselves by the name? Do they not belong to the creation groaning after a redemption it does not understand? The children of God groan in misery from not being the sons and daughters of God; yet so dull of heart are they, that they regard nothing as redemption but the getting of their own way, a thing the devil only wants to give them, that being their own slaves they may be his also.

As they went, the laird told Cosmo what was taking him to the village, and the boy walked by his father's side as in a fairy-tale: they bore with them a thing that might prove the talismanic opener of many doors to treasure caves!

They went straight to the shop, if shop it could be called, of Sandy Merson, the watchmaker of the village. There all its ornamental business was done—a silver spoon was now and then engraved, new pins were put into brooches, wedding rings of sterling gold were purchased, or earrings of glass lovely as amethyst or topaz, or a second-hand watch might be had, with choice from a score. Sandy was poor, for there was not much trade in his line, and was never able to have much of a stock, but he was an excellent watchmaker—none better in the county—so at least his townfolk believed, and in a village it is soon settled whether a watchmaker has got the thing in him. He was a thin, pale man, with a mixed look of rabbit and ferret, a high, narrow forehead, and keen gray eyes. His workshop and show-room was the kitchen, partly for the sake of his wife's company, partly because there was the largest window the cottage could boast. In this window hung almost the whole of his stock, and a table before it was covered with his work and tools. When the laird and Cosmo entered he was seated at this table, stooping over it, his lens in his eye, busy with a watch, of which several pieces lay beside him protected from the dust by footless wine-glasses. He put down pinion and file, pushed back his chair, and rose to receive them.

"A fine mornin', Sandy!" said the laird. "I houp ye're weel, and duin' weel."

"Muckle the same as usual, laird, an' I thank ye, sir," answered Sandy, with a large smile. "I'm no jist upo' the ro'd to be what

they ca' a millionaire, an' I'm no jist upo' the perris—something 'atween the twa, I'm thinkin'."

"I doobt there's mair o' 's in like condition, Sandy," responded the laird, "or we wadna be comin' to tax yer skeel at this present."

"Use yer freedom, laird; I'm yer heumble servan'.—It wadna be a watch for the yoong laird?" he added doubtfully. "I kenna——"

He stopped, and turned an anxious eye towards the window where his watches hung.

"Na, na," interrupted the laird, sorry to have raised even so much of a vain hope in the mind of the man, "I'm as far frae a watch as ye are frae the bank. But I hae here i' my pooch a bit silly playock 'at's been i' the hoose this mony a lang; for jist this last nicht it was pitten intil my heid there micht be some virtue intil the chattel, seein' i' the tradition o' the faimily it's aye been hauden for siller. For my ain pairt, I hae my doobts; but gien onybody can bare the trowth o' 't, yersel' maun be the man."

"I'll du my best to lowse yer doobt, laird," returned Sandy. "Lat's hae a luik at the article."

Glenwarlock took the horse from his pocket, and handed it to him. The watchmaker regarded it with interest, and examined it with care.

"It's a bonny bit o' carved wark," he said at length; "—a bairnly kin' o' a thing for shape—mair like a timmer horsie; but whan ye come to the ornamentation o' the same, it's something better nor roon' spots o' reid paint—wi' its rubies an' stanes an' a'! This has taen a heap o' time, an' a pooer o' painsfu' labour. It's the w'y o' the haithens wi' their graven eemages, but what for wi' a horsie like this, I'm sure I dinna ken. Hooever, that's naither here nor there: ye dinna come to me to speir hoo or what for the thing was made; it's what it's made o' 's the queston. It's some yallow like for siller; an' it's unco black, which is mair like it—but that may be wi' dirt.—An' dirt I'm thinkin' it maun be, barkit until the gravin'," he went on, taking a tool and running the point of it along one of the fine lines. "Troth, ohn testit I wadna like to say what it was. But it's an unco weicht!—I doobt—na, I mair nor doobt it canna be siller."

So saying, he put it down on the table, and went to a corner-cupboard. Thence he brought a small stoppered phial. He gave it a little shake, and took out the stopper, which was followed by a dense white fume. With the stopper he touched the horse underneath, and looked closely at the spot. Replacing the stopper in the bottle and the bottle in the cupboard, he stood for a moment

gazing at nothing, then turning to the laird, said, with peculiar look and hesitating expression,

"Na, laird, it's no silver. Aquafortis winna bite upo' 't. I wad mix 't wi' muriatic, an' try that, but I hae nane handy, an', forby, it wad tak time to tell. Ken ye whaur it cam frae?—Ae thing I'm sure o'—it's no siller!"

"I'm sorry to hear it," rejoined the laird, with a faint smile and a little sigh.—"Well, we're no worse off than we were, Cosmo!—But poor Grizzie! she'll be dreadfully disappointed!—Gie me the bit horsie, Sandy; we'll e'en tak him hame again. It's no his faut, puir thing, 'at he's no better nor he was made!"

"Wad ye no tell me whaur the bit thing cam frae, or is supposit to hae come frae, sir? H'ard ye it ever said, for enstance, 'at the auld captain they tell o' hed broucht it?"

"That's what I hae h'ard said," answered the laird.

"Weel, sir," returned Sandy, "gien ye had nae objections, I wad fain hae made oot what the thing *is* made o'."

"It maitters little," said the laird, "seein' we ken what it's *no* made o'; but tak your wull o' 't, Sandy."

"Sit ye doon than, laird, gien ye hae naething mair pressin', an' see for yersel' what I mak o' 't," rejoined the watchmaker, setting a chair.

"Wullin'ly," replied the laird; "—but I dinna like takin' up yer time."

"Ow, my time's no sae dooms precious! I can aye win throu' wi' my wark ohn swatten," said Sandy, with a smile in which mingled a half comical sadness. "An' it wad set me to waur't (*puzzle me to spend it*) better to my ain min' nor servin' yersel'—i' the sma'est, sir."

The laird thanked him, and sat down. Cosmo placed himself on a stool beside him.

"I hae naething upo' han' the day," Sandy Merson went on, "but a watch o' Jeames Gracie's, up o' The Know—ane o' yer ain fowk, laird. He tells me it was your gran'father, sir, gied it til his gran'father. It's a queer auld-fashiont kin' o' a thing—some complicat; an' whiles it's 'maist ower muckle for me. Auld age is aboot the warst disease horses an' watches can be ta'en wi': there's sae little left to come an' gang upo'!"

While the homely assayer thus spoke, he was moving about, making his preparations.

"What for no men as weel's horses an' watches, Sandy?" suggested the laird.

"Men I wadna meddle wi'. I lea' them to the doctors an' minnisters," replied Sandy, with another wide, silent laugh.

By this time he had got a pair of scales nicely adjusted, a small tin vessel in one of them, and balancing weights in the other. Then he went to the rack over the dresser, and mildly lamenting his wife's absence and his own inability to lay his hand on the precise vessels he wanted, brought thence a dish and a basin. The dish he placed on the table with the basin in it, and filled the latter with water to the very brim. He then took the horse, placed it gently in the basin, which was large enough to receive it entirely, and setting basin and horse aside, took the dish into which the water had overflowed, and poured its contents into the tin vessel in one of the scales. Having thereafter put weights into the opposite scale until they balanced each other afresh, he made a note with a piece of chalk on the table. Next, he removed everything from the scales, took the horse, wiped it in his apron, weighed it carefully, and made another note on the table. These things done, he sat down, and leaning back in his chair, seemed to his visitors to be making a calculation. But the supposition did not quite fit the strange, inscrutable expression of his countenance. The laird began to think he must be plastering knowledge with mystery.

"Weel, Glenwarlock," said Sandy at length, "trowth is the responsibility ye hae laid upo' me maks me doobtfu' whaur nae doobt sud be. But I'm b'un' to say—ootside the risk o' some mistak o' the gr'un's o' which I ken naething or I wadna hae made it—'at this bit horsie o' yours, by a' 'at my knowledge or skeel, which is naither o' them muckle, warran's—this bit horsie—an gien it binna as I say, I can *not* see what for it sudna be—only, ye see, laird, whan we think we ken a'thing there's a heap ahint oor *a'thing;* an' feow ken better, at least feow hae a richt to ken better nor mysel' what a puir cratur is man, an' hoo liable to mistaks, e'en whan he's dune his best to be i' the richt; an' for oucht I ken there may hae been sic discoveries made, an' never come to my hearin', as upsets a'thing I ever was gi'en to tak an' haud by for true; an' yet I daurna withhaud the conclusion I'm driven til, for maybe whiles the hert o' man may gang the wrang gait by bein' ower wise in its ain conceit o' expeckin' ower little, jist as weel's in expeckin' ower muckle; an' sae I'm b'un' to tell ye, laird, 'at yer expectations o' this knot o' metal—for metal we maun alloo 't to be, whatever else it be or bena—yer expectations, I say, are a'thegither wrang, for it's no more silver nor my wife's kitchie-poker."

"Weel, man!" said the laird, with a laugh just touched with childlike scorn, "gien the thing be sae plain 's a' that, what gars ye gang this gait aboot the buss to say 't? Tak ye me an' Cosmo

here for bairns 'at wad fa' a greetin' gien ye tellt them their ba-lamb was naething but a fussoch o' cotton-'oo' rowed roon' a bit stick? We're naither o' 's complimentit.—Come, Cosmo.—I'm nane the less obleeged to ye, Sandy," he added as he rose, "though I cud weel wuss yer opingon had been sic as wad hae pitten't i' my pooer to offer ye a fee for't."

"The trowth's the trowth, whether it's worth peyin' for or no," replied Sandy with imperturbability, and his large, silent smile. "But afore ye gang, it's but fair to tell ye—only I wadna like to be hauden ower strickly accoontable for the opingon, seein' I dinna profess a knowledge o' a' the metals; I hae dune my best, an' gien I be i' the wrang, I naither hae nor hed ony ill design intil't."

"Bless my soul!" cried the laird, with more of impatience than Cosmo had ever seen him show, "is the man mad, or does he take me for a fool?"

"There's some things, laird," resumed Sandy, "that hae to be approcht oontil wi' circumspection an' a proaper regaird to the impression they may mak. Noo, disclaimin' ony desire to luik like an ill-bred scoon'rel, whilk I wad raither til onybody nor yersel', laird, I ventur to jaloose 'at maybe the maitter o' a poun' or twa micht be o' some sma' consequence to ye; an'——"

"Ilka fule i' the country-side kens that 'at kens Glenwarlock," interrupted the laird, not a little annoyed, and turned hastily. "Come, Cosmo."

Cosmo went to open the door, troubled to see his father troubled with the unintelligibility of the man.

"Weel, gien ye *wull* gang," said Sandy, "I maun e'en tak my life i' my han', an'——"

"Hoot, man! tak yer tongue i' yer teeth—that'll be mair to the purpose," cried the laird laughing, for he had already mastered his ill humour. "My life i' my han', quo' he!—Man, I haena cairriet a dirk this mony a day! I laid it aff wi' the kilt."

"Weel, it micht be better ye hadna, gien ye binna gaein' hame afore nicht; I saw some cairds (*gypsies*) o' the ro'd the day. Gien ye wad but hearken til ane 'at confesses he oucht to ken, even sud he be i' the wrang, I wad tell ye that horsie is *not* siller—no, nor noathing like it!"

"Dogs hunt ye!—what is 't, than?" cried the laird.

"What for didna ye speir that at me afore?" rejoined Sandy. "It wad hae set me at leeberty to tell ye—to the best o' my abeelity, that is. Whan I'm no cocksure—an' it's ower muckle a ventur to daur be cocksure aboot—I wadna volunteer onything. I wadna say a word till I was adjured like an evil speerit."

"Weel," quoth the laird, entering now into the humour of the thing, "herewith I adjure thee, thou contrairy and inarticulate speerit, to disclose, and that without further circumlocution, the substance whereof this same toy-horse is composed."

"Toy here, toy there!" returned Sandy, "sae far as ony cawpabeelity o' mine, or ony puir skeel I hae, wull able me to testifee—though min' ye, laird, I winna tak the consequences o' bein' i' the wrang—though I wad raither tak them, an' ower again, nor be i' the wrang,——"

The laird turned and went out, followed by Cosmo. He began to think the man must have lost his reason.

But when the watchmaker, who hurried to the door after them, saw them moving steadily along the street in the direction of home, looking neither to the right hand nor the left, he darted out of the house and ran and overtook them.

"Gien ye *wad* gang, laird," he said, in an injured tone, "ye micht hae jist latten me en' the sentence I hed begun!"

"There's nae en' to ony o' yer sentences the day, man!" said the laird. "The en' 's jist the ae thing 'at wasna to them—'cep' maybe the sense."

"Weel, guid day to ye, laird!" returned Sandy. "Only," he added, drawing a step closer, and speaking in a subdued, confidential voice, "dinna lat yer horsie rin awa' upo' the ro'd hame. For I sweir til ye, gien there be ony trowth i' the laws o' natur, he's no siller nor onything like it,——"

"Hoots!" said the laird, and turning away once more, walked off with great strides.

"—but," the watchmaker continued, almost running to keep up with him, and speaking in a low voice, tinged with something like terror, harsh and hurried as if he were thrusting the words into his ears, "naither mair nor less nor solid gowd—pure gowd—no a grain o' alloy!"

That said, he turned, went back at the same speed, shot himself into his cottage, and closed the door.

Father and son stopped, and looked at each other for a moment. Then the laird walked slowly on. After a minute or two Cosmo glanced up in his face, but the laird did not return the glance, and the boy saw that he was talking to another. By and by he heard him murmur to himself, "The gifts of God are without repentance!"

Not a word passed between them as they went home, though all the time it seemed to both father and son that they were holding closest converse. The minute they reached the castle, the laird went to his room—to the closet where his few books lay,

and getting out a volume of an old cyclopædia, sat down and read all he could find in it about gold. Then returning to the kitchen, he rummaged out a rusty pair of scales, and with their help arrived at the conclusion that the horse weighed about three pounds avoirdupois : it might be worth a hundred and fifty pounds sterling. This was treasure in the eyes of one whose hand had seldom closed upon more than ten pounds at once, and was indeed large provision for the four sessions of college, with a margin for the creditors by no means too small for consideration! True, the golden horse with the jewelly hair could do but little to cart away the cairn of debt that crushed Glenwarlock; but not the less was he a heavenly messenger of good will to the laird.

Some men are so pitiful over their poor neighbour that, finding they cannot lift him beyond the reach of the providence which intends they shall have the poor with them always, they will do for him nothing at all: "Where is the use?" they say. They treat their money like their children, and will not send it to a sad house. But if they had themselves no joys but their permanent ones, where would the hearts of them be? Have they no notion of the relief, the glad rebound of the heart of the poor man, the inburst of light upon him, the re-creation of the world to him, when help, however temporary, lays hold of him? If, like the laird of Glenwarlock, he be a man of large outlook, reaching beyond the widespread skirts of his poverty, he sees in every help an arc of the mighty rainbow that circles the world, a well in the desert he is crossing to the pastures of red kine and woolly sheep. It is to him a foretaste of the final deliverance. While the rich giver is saying, "Poor fellow, he will be just as bad next month again or sooner!" the poor fellow is breathing the air of paradise, reaping more joy of life in half a day than his benefactor in half a year. Help in such soil is a quick seed and of rapid growth, bourgeoning in a moment into the infinite aeons. Everything in this world is but temporary : why should temporary help be undervalued? Would you leave a drowning bather to drown because he would be sure to bathe again to-morrow? Is help help or is it not? If it be help then it is divine, and comes of God our saviour. Jonah might grumble at the withering of his gourd, but if it had not grown at all, would he ever have preached to Nineveh? It set the laird on a Pisgah-rock, whence he gazed into the promised land.

The rich man who, without pitying his friend that he is not rich also, cheerfully helps him over a stone where he cannot carry him up the hill of his difficulty, rejoicing to do for him what God allows, is like God himself, who gives to a man infinitely, but will

not take from him his suffering until strength is perfected in his weakness.

The laird called Cosmo, and they went for a stroll in the fields, to commune in quiet. They talked over the calculation the laird had made of the worth of the horse; nor did the father, like most prudent men, think it necessary to warn his son against too sure an expectation. He did not imagine that disappointment, like the small-pox, requires the inoculation of apprehension, or think it well that a man, lest he should be more miserable afterwards, should make himself miserable now. In matters of hope as well as of fear, he judged the morrow must look after itself; believed that the God who to-day is alive in to-morrow, sees to our affairs where we cannot be ourselves. Next to love of the will of God, the best preparation for a disappointment is the hope that precedes it. Let us hold fast by our hopes. All colours are shreds of the rainbow. There is a rainbow of the cataract, of the paddle-wheel, of the falling wave; none of them is the rainbow, yet they are all of it; they and the arch-rainbow itself, the bow set in the cloud, all vanish; but that which set them in their places and will set them again, the rainbow in the heart of God, vanishes never. Say not they are but hopes, for by our hopes we are saved. It is because they are not the thing hoped for that they are precious, for the thing itself would block the way of a higher gift, for which the deeper nature is longing through and beyond the hope, and which includes the object of it. The rainbow is the colour light-gendered of the dark tear-drops of the world; hope is the shimmer on the web of history, whose dingy warp of trouble is shot with the golden wool of God's intent.

> Nothing almost sees miracles
> But misery.

Cosmo never forgot that walk in the fields with his father. When the money was long gone after the melted horse, that hour, spent chiefly amongst the great *horse-gowans* that adorned the thin soil of one of the few fields yet in some poor sense their own, remained with him—his for ever—a portion of the inheritance of the meek. The joy of the golden horse had drawn their hearts yet closer to each other, for one of the lovelinesses of true love is that it may and must always be more. In a gravelly hollow, around which rose hillocks heaped by far-off tides in times afar, they knelt together on the thin grass, among the ox-eyes, and gave God thanks for the precious steed he had sent to carry Cosmo to the temple of knowledge. After praying, they sat a long time talking over the strange thing. All these years then the lump of

gold had been lying in the house, ready for their great need! For what was lands to them, or family, or ancient name, in comparison with the learning that opens doors, the handmaiden of the understanding, which is the servant of Wisdom, who reads in the heart of him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters, and the conscience of man! Then they imagined together how the thing had come thus to pass. It could not be that the old captain did not know the thing he gave! Doubtless he had intended sometime to reveal its true worth, and only in the meantime, with cunning for its better safety, had treated it as a thing of value indeed, but of value comparatively slight! How it had come into existence, they next debated—with the conclusion that either it had belonged to some wealthy prince, or the old captain had got it made for himself, in order to carry with him some immediately available portion of his property in the shape of a mere curiosity. Cosmo suggested that possibly, for better concealment, it had been silvered; and the laird afterwards learned from the jeweller to whom he sold it, that such was indeed the case. I may mention also that its worth considerably exceeded the laird's calculation, partly because of the jewels with which it was studded.

Then Cosmo—and now it seemed to himself strange he had never done it before—repeated to his father the rime he had learned from dreaming Grannie, and told him when and how he had heard it, and what Grannie herself had said about it. The laird smiled and the laird looked grave, but neither he nor Cosmo could suggest any plausible connection of the rime with this horse of gold. For one thing, great as was the wealth it brought them, the old captain could hardly have looked upon it as sufficient to embolden any one to the degree of arrogance specified. What man would call the king his brother on the strength of a hundred and fifty pounds!

When Grizzie learned the result of her advice, she said only, "Praise be thankit!" and turned away. The next minute Cosmo heard her murmuring to herself,

"Whan the coo loups ower the mune,
The reid gowd rains intil men's shune."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE LUMINOUS NIGHT.

THAT night Cosmo could not sleep. It was a warm night like one of summer—a soft dewy night, full of the genial magic of growth. It felt as if some fire-bergs of summer had drifted away out into the spring, and got melted up in it. He dressed himself, and went out. The night was cool, deliciously cool and damp, but with no shiver in it. The stars were bright-eyed as if they had been weeping and were so joyously consoled that they forgot to wipe away their tears. They were brilliant but not clear—large and shimmering, as if reflected from some invisible sea. The gulfs in which they floated were black-blue with profundity. There was no moon, but the night was yet so far from dark, that it seemed conscious throughout of some distant light that illumined it without shine. And his heart felt like the night, as if it held a deeper life than he could ever know. He wandered on till he came to the field where he had so lately been with his father. He was not thinking; the least effort would break the world-mirror in which he moved! For the moment he would be but a human plant, gathering comfort after the heat of the day from the soft coolness and the dew. They sank into him, and made his soul long for the thing that waits the asking. He came to the spot where his father and he had prayed together, and there kneeling lifted up his face to the stars. Oh, mighty, only church! whose roof is a vaulted infinitude! whose lights come burning from the maker! Church of all churches—where the Son of Man prayed! In the narrow temple of Herod he taught the people, and out of it drove the dishonest traders; but here, under the starry roof, was his house of prayer! Church where is not a mark of human hand! church that is all church, and nothing but church, built without hands, despised and desecrated more by unbelief than by any sin! church of God's own building! thou alone in thy grandeur art fitting type of a yet greater, a yet holier, yea the one real church, whose stars are the burning eyes of unutterable, self-forgetting love, whose worship is a ceaseless ministration of self-forgetting deeds—the one real ideal church, the body of the living Christ, compact of the hearts and souls of men and women of every nation and every creed through all time and over all the world—redeemed alike from Judaism, paganism, and all the self-asserting Christianities that darken and dishonour the self-forgetting Christ, and

growing together in him to one great God-reflecting family of the living Father!

Cosmo, I say, knelt and looked up. Then awoke his will, and he lifted up his heart—sent his spirit aloft upon every upward sail it could spread, on every wing it could put forth, as if, through the visible, he would force his way to the unseen.

Softly through the blue night came a gentle call:

"Cosmo!"

He started, not with fear, and looked round, but saw no one.

"Cosmo!" came the call again.

The sky was shining with the stars and that other light that might be its own: save the stars and the sky he saw nothing. He looked all round his narrow horizon—the edge of the hollow between him and the sky, where the heaven and the earth met among the stars and the grass, and the stars shimmered like glow-worms among the thin stalks: nothing was there; its edge was unbroken except by shapes of grass, daisies, ox-eyes, and stars. A soft dreamy wind came over it, and breathed once on his cheek.

The voice came again—

"Cosmo!"

It seemed to come from far away, so soft and gentle was it, and yet it seemed near.

"It has called me three times!" said Cosmo, and rose to his feet.

There was the head of Peter Simon, slow-ascending like a dark sun over the horizon of the hollow! In the faint light Cosmo knew him at once, gave a cry of pleasure, and ran to meet him.

"You called so softly," he said, "I did not know your voice."

"And you are disappointed! You thought it a voice from some region beyond this world! I am sorry. I called softly because I wanted to let you know I was coming, and was afraid of startling you."

"I confess," replied Cosmo, "a little hope was beginning to flutter in my heart that I was called from the unseen like Samuel; but I was too glad to see you to be much disappointed. I do sometimes wonder though, that, if there is indeed such a world beyond as we sometimes talk about, there should be so little communication between it and us. When I am out in the still time of this world, and there is nothing to interfere—when I am not even thinking, so as to close any doors, why should never anything come? Never in my life have I heard a whisper."

"You are saying what you cannot possibly know, Cosmo,"

answered Mr. Simon. "That you have had no open communication—one recognized by you as such—so far as that, your testimony serves. And I, who am so much older than you, must say the same. If there be any special fitness in the night, in its absorbing dimness and isolating silence, for such communication—and who can well doubt it?—I have put myself in the heart of it a thousand times, when, longing after an open vision, I should have counted but the glimpse of a ghostly garment the mightiest boon, and never therefrom has the shadow of a shade fallen upon me. Yet here I am, hoping no less, and believing no less!—yea hoping more and believing more every year—I think I might say every day I live! The air around me may be full of ghosts—I do not know; I delight to think they may somehow be with us for all they are so hidden; but so long as I am able to believe and hope in the one great ghost, the holy ghost that fills all, it would trouble me little to learn that betwixt me and the visible centre was nothing the senses of man even could not take account of. If there is a God, he is all in all, and filleth all things, and all is well. What matter where the region of the dead may be? Nowhere but here are they called the dead. When, of all paths, that to God is alone always open, and alone can lead the wayfarer to the end of his journey, why should I stop on that path to peer through the fence on either side of it? If he does not care to reveal, is it well I should make haste to know? I shall know one day, why should I be eager to know now?"

"But why might not something show itself once—just for once, if only to give one a start in the right direction?" said Cosmo.

"I will tell you one reason," returned Mr. Simon, "the same why everything else is as it is, and neither this nor that other way—namely—truism grandly true!—that it is best for us it should be as it is. But I think I can see a little way into the thing itself. Suppose some sign or wonder were granted you—one of two things, it seems to me likely, would follow:—you would either doubt it very soon after it had vanished, or it would grow to you as one of the common things of your daily life. But take it that a vision would make us sure, it follows either that God does not care about the kind of sureness it would give us, or that he does not care for our being made sure in that way. God will have us sure of a thing through knowing its source, the heart whence it comes; that is the only worthy assurance. To know, he will have us go in at the grand entrance of obedient faith. If any one thinks he has found a back stair, he will find it land him at a doorless wall. It is the assurance that comes of inmost beholding of himself, of seeing what he is, that God cares to produce in us.

He would not have us think we know him before we do. Because they think they know him when they do not, thousands are walking in a vain show. At the same time I think myself free to imagine if I imagine holily—that is, as his child. I imagine space full of life invisible, and that the young man needed but the opening of his eyes to see horses and chariots of fire encompassing his master. As I came now through this luminous night, I lost myself for a time in the feeling that I was walking in the midst of lovely people I had known. Perhaps they were with me—are with me—are speaking to me now. For if all our thoughts, whether immediately from God, or from the working of the life he has given us in ourselves, seem to enter the chamber of our consciousness by the same door, why may there not be among them some that have passed to us from other beings? It may be that the dead speak to me, and I am unable to distinguish their words from my thoughts. For the moment a thought approaches me, my own thought rushes to mingle with it, and I can no more part them. It may be that some hints from the world beyond mingle even with the stupidity and folly of my dreams."

"But if you cannot distinguish those hints as such, where is the good?" Cosmo ventured to ask.

"Nowhere for deductive certainty. Neither, if the things dreamed be not in themselves worth remembering or worthy of influencing us, is there any reason for speculating on their origin. Shall I mind a thing that is not worth minding, because it came to me in a dream, or was told me by a ghost? The quality of a thing, not how it arrived, is the first point. But true things are often mingled with things grotesque, and for aught I know, at one and the same time a spirit may be taking advantage of the door set ajar by sleep to whisper a message of love or repentance, and the troubled brain or heart or stomach may be generating fancies wild as those of fairyland, or terrible as those of the valley of the shadow. When you look at any bright thing for a time, and then close your eyes, you still see the shape of it, but in a different colour. The thing came to you from the outside world, but the brain has altered it. Even the shape itself is reproduced often with but partial accuracy: some imperfection in the recipient sense, or in the receptacle, has caused imperfection in the re-presentation. In a manner something like may contact with dwellers beyond fare in our dreams. My unknown mother may have just spoken to me in my sleep, when up comes a responsive but stupid dream-cloud of my own, to mingle with and ruin the descended grace.

"It is well, however, to remind you," Mr. Simon went on,

"that the things around us are just as full of marvel as those into which you would so gladly look. Our people in the other world, even although they have proved these earthly things before, probably feel them now somewhat strange, and full of a marvel which the things about them have in a measure lost. All is well. The only thing worth a man's care is the will of God, and that will is the same in this world as in the next. All things are ours, but each in its time. That will has made this world ours, not the next; for nothing can be ours until God has given it to us. Curiosity is but the contemptible human shadow of the holy thing wonder. No, my son, let us make the best we can of this life, that we may become able to make the best of the next also."

"And how make the best of this?" asked Cosmo.

"By walking in the fore-front with the will of God—not letting yourself be but dragged behind him in the sweep of his garment that makes the storm. To walk with God is to go hand in hand with him, like a boy with his father, desiring and doing his pleasure—falling in with his design in the making of you, a design that cannot be effected without you. As to other worlds, present sorrows, vanished joys, coming fears, all is well; for the design of the making, loving, pitiful, glorious God is ever moving towards divine completion, that is, a never ending end. Yea, even if his infinite be awful to me, yet will I face it, for it is his. Let your prayer, my son, be like this: 'Maker of me, go on making me, and let me help thee. Come, O Father! here I am; let us go on. I know that my words are those of a child, but it is thy child who prays to thee. It is thy dark I walk in; it is thy hand I hold.'"

The words of his teacher sank into the heart of Cosmo, for he was already in the high condition of being able to receive wisdom direct from another. All his height came of faith in those who were higher. He had not yet been tested; but the trials of a teachable youth must, however severe, differ greatly from those needful for one who, declining to learn through eye or ear, must be taught through the skin. The former are for growth, the latter for change.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### AT COLLEGE.

The summer and autumn had yet to pass before he should leave his home for the university of the north. He spent them in steady work with Mr. Simon. But the steadier his work, and the greater his enjoyment of it, the dearer was his liberty, and the keener his delight in the world around him. He worked so well that he could also afford to dream, and his wanderings and his imaginings alike took wide and wider sweeps; while for both, ever in the near or far distance, lay the harbour, the nest of his home. It drew him even when it lay behind him, and he returned to it as the goal he had set out to seek. It was as if, in every excursion or flight, he had but sought to find his home afresh, to approach it by a new path—had gone but that he might return.

But—the windfall?—nay, the Godsend of the golden horse gave him such a feeling of wealth and liberty that he now began to dream, no longer like a child but like a man, of things he would really do if he were rich, his fancy turning chiefly towards the enlarging and beautifying of the castle—with the impossibility understood of destroying a single feature of its ancient dignity or history

A portion of the early summer he spent in improving the garden on the south side, or back of the house. A part of the ground there seemed to have been neglected—that between the two blocks which stood at right angles to each other. But he found the rock here so nigh the surface, that he could not make much of the space, and this set him planning how it might be used for building upon. In the angle itself, the rock came above ground, and was the foundation of a thick wall connecting the two corners, built of huge stones, and looking as solid as the rock on which it stood. In the pauses of his gardening he would sit with his back against this wall, dreaming of the days to come; and here he built a small summer-house, whither he would bring his books, and where he would read or write for hours, and sometimes draw plans of the changes he would make in the house, and of additions to it, of passages and galleries to connect the various portions of it, and of its restored defences. If this was all as visionary as Tree-top-city, it yet exercised his constructive faculty, and exercise is growth.

The days glided by. The fervid Summer slid away round the

shoulder of the world, and made room for her dignified matron sister; my lady Autumn swept her frayed and discoloured robe out of the great hall-door of the world; and old brother Winter, who so assiduously waits upon the house to keep down its vermin, was creeping around it, biding his time, but eager to get to his work. The day drew near when Cosmo must leave the home of his fathers, where it was his one unchanging dream to spend the life of this world.

I will not follow his intellectual development. The *real* education of the youth is enough for my narrative. His mind was too much filled with high hopes and judgments to be tempted like a common nature in the new circumstances wherein he found himself. There are many who, believing of others what is true of themselves, represent the youth of our country as vile; but let not the pure thence imagine himself alone in his purity. There is life in the nation yet, and a future yet before her—none the less that the weak and cowardly and self-indulgent neither enter into the kingdom of God, nor believe that others are entering in.

He had few companions. Those whom he liked best yet had not much to impart to him. They looked up to him more than he knew, for they had a vague suspicion of his being a genius, but they ministered almost only to his heart. The unworthy of his fellow-students scorned him with looks askance, and called him Baby Warlock; for more than once had he literally turned his back on certain of them when their conversation displeased him; but none of them cared to pick a quarrel with him. The devil finds it easier to persuade fools that there is dignity in the knowledge of evil, and that ignorance of it is contemptible, than to give them courage. It is true that, if ignorance be the foundation of any man's goodness, it is not worth the wind that upsets it; nevertheless, in its mere self, ignorance of evil is a negative good. The grinders did not care about Cosmo, for neither was he of their sort. Now and then one of them would be mildly startled by a question from him respecting something in which, because he did not *go in* for what they counted scholarship, they could hardly believe him interested; but Cosmo regarded everything from the heart of associations of which they perceived few or none, and in his instinctive reach after life, assimilated something of all food that came in his way. While his growing life was his sole impellent after knowledge, already he saw a glimmer here and there in regions of mathematics from which had never fallen a ray into the corner of an eye of those grinding men—and that was mainly because he read books of poetry and philosophy of which they had not heard. He did all his set work first, however, and

thoroughly, before he gave himself to what he hungered after, and so passed his examinations creditably, and indeed, in more than one subject, with unexpected as unsought distinction.

Of what is called society he gained no knowledge, but amongst the shopkeepers made one or two acquaintances.

His father had been so much pleased with the jeweller to whom he parted with the golden horse, that he desired Cosmo to call upon him as soon as he was settled. Cosmo did so, and found him a dignified old gentleman—none the less a gentleman, and all the more a man, that he had in his youth worked with his own hands. He took a liking to Cosmo, and, much pleased with his ready interest, for Cosmo was never tired of listening to any one who talked of what he knew, told him many things belonging to his trade, and communicated not a few of his experiences. Indifferent to the opinion of any to whom he had not first learned to look up, nobody ever listened better than Cosmo to a story of human life, however humble. Everybody seemed to him of his own family; and the greater was the revulsion in his feeling when he encountered anything false or low. Incapable of excusing himself, he was incapable also of excusing others. But though gentleness towards the faults of one's neighbour is an indispensable fruit of life, it is perhaps well it should be a comparatively late one: there is danger of foreign excuse reacting on home behaviour. Excuse ought to be one of the blossoms of love rooted in obedience. To say anything is too small to matter, is of the devil; to say anything is too great to forgive, is not of God. He who would soonest die to divide evil and his fellows, will be the readiest to make for any one of them all *honest* excuse.

Cosmo liked best to hear Mr. Burns talk about precious stones. Upon them he was great, for he had a passion for them, and Cosmo was more than ready to be infected with it. By the hour together would he discourse of them; now on the different and comparative merit of individual stones which had passed through his hands, and on the way they were cut, or ought to have been cut; now on size, shape, and water, as determining the special way to cut a stone; now on the various settings, as bringing out the qualities of different kinds and differing stones.

One day he came upon the subject of the weather in relation to stones, and thence in relation to the trade in them: on such a sort of day you ought to buy this or that kind of stone; on such another you must avoid buying this or that kind, and seek rather to sell. Up to this moment and the mention of this last point, Cosmo had believed Mr. Burns an immaculate tradesman: here the human gem was turned at that angle to the light which revealed

the flaw in it! There are tradesmen irreproachable in regard to money by itself who are not so concerning the quality of their wares in relation to their price: they take and do not give the advantage of their superior knowledge. I imagine the laugh of such a one at the idea that his knowledge ought to be for his customer as much as for himself! for to him every customer is more or less of a pigeon.

"If I could buy my will of such sapphires," said Mr. Burns, "on a foggy afternoon like this, when the air is as yellow as a cairngorm, and sell them the first summer-like day of spring, when the air is blue enough to be their mother, I should make my fortune in a year."

"But you wouldn't do it, Mr. Burns?" faltered Cosmo, in a sudden foreboding anxiety caused by the tone of his friend: he must have an express repudiation of the advantage that could thus be gained.

"Why not?" rejoined Mr. Burns, lifting his keen gray eyes, with some wonder in them, and looking Cosmo straight in the face. His mind also was crossed by a painful doubt: was the young man a mere innocent? Was he *no a' there?*

"Because it would not be honest," replied Cosmo.

"Not honest!" exclaimed the jeweller, in a tone loud with anger,—whether at the idea that he should be capable of a dishonest thing, or at the possibility of having, for honesty's sake, to yield a money-making principle, I do not know; "I display the thing as it is, and leave my customer to judge according to his knowledge. Is mine to be worth nothing to me? There is no deception in the affair. A jeweller's business is not like a horse-dealer's! The stone is as God made it, and the day is as God made it; and if my knowledge turns the scale in my favour, who has any call to find fault?"

He ceased with an air of injured honesty.

"Then a man's knowledge is for himself alone, and not for the common advantage of himself and his neighbour?" said Cosmo.

"Mine is so far for my neighbour, that I never offer him a stone that is not all I say it is. He gets the advantage of his knowledge, let us say, in selling me wine, which he understands to fit my taste with; and I get the advantage of my knowledge in selling him the ring that pleases him. Both are satisfied. Neither asks the other what he paid for this or that. Why make any bones about it? The first principle of business is, to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest."

"Where does the love of your neighbour come in then?"

"That has nothing to do with business; that belongs to society.

No command must be interpreted so as to make it impossible to obey it. Business would come to an immediate standstill if such extravagant ideas were allowed to have any relation to it. No man would make a fortune that way."

"You think then that what we are sent here for is to make a fortune?"

"Most people do. I don't know about *sent for;* but that's what I find myself behind this counter for. The world would hardly go on upon any other supposition."

"Then the world had better stop. It wasn't worth making," said Cosmo.

"Young man," rejoined Mr. Burns, "if you speak blasphemy, it shall not be on my premises."

Bewildered and unhappy, Cosmo turned away, left the shop, and for years never entered it again.

Mr. Burns had been scrupulous to half a grain in giving Mr. Warlock the full value of his gold. Nor was this because of the liking he had taken to the old gentleman. There are not a few who will be carefully honest, to a greater or less compass, with persons they like, leaving those they do not like to protect themselves. But Mr. Burns was not of their sort; he would have treated his enemy with equal justice. His interest in the laird, and his wounded liking for Cosmo, took shape in another fashion however. Although he was willing enough to think evil of one who denounced as dishonest the main principle in his conduct of affairs, it yet gave him concern that Cosmo should speak, as he judged, blasphemously. No doubt it was in keeping with his disregard of the acknowledged laws of business, but it was sad for his old father! Possibly, however, the real source of the pain that Cosmo's words caused him was that, though scarcely yet conscious of the fact, the jeweller was more willing than able to justify to himself the mode he had defended. The same evening he wrote to the laird to the effect that he feared his son must have taken to bad company, for he had that day spoken in his shop words irreverent and indeed wicked—not to call them anything worse. The young man would never, he was certain, have dared to speak such in his father's hearing. But college was a dangerous place for the undermining of the good principles learned at home! He hoped Mr. Warlock would excuse the interest he took in his son's welfare. Nothing was more sad than to see the seed of the righteous turning from the path of righteousness!—&c. &c.

The laird made reply that he was obliged to Mr. Burns for his communication and his anxiety about his boy, but could only believe there was some mistake, as it was impossible he should

have been guilty of anything to which his father would apply the adjectives used by Mr. Burns. So little did the thing trouble the laird, that he never troubled Cosmo with a word on the matter—only when he came home asked him what the good man could have meant.

But in after days Cosmo repented of having so completely dropped the old gentleman's acquaintance: he was under obligation to him; and if a man will have to do only with the perfect, he must needs break with himself first, and then go out of the world. Mr. Burns knew nothing of art. A stone, its colour, light, quality, he enjoyed like a poet; but his settings, though good in quality, were thoroughly common. There are some with even a child's delight in pure colours who have no feeling for the melodies of their arrangement, or the harmonies of their mingling. So are there some capable of much pleasure in a single musical tone, who have but little reception for complex harmony. Whether a condition analogical might not be found in the moral world, and contribute to the explanation of Mr. Burns, I may not now inquire. But Cosmo owed him much. The very rainbow was lovelier to him after he had learned certain secrets of the precious stones. The regard he had turned upon them served also his metaphysico-poetic nature, rousing questions of the relations between beauty fixed and beauty evanescent; between the beauty of stones and the beauty of flowers; between the beauties of art and the beauties of sunsets and faces; and every question is a door-handle. He saw that where life entered, it brought greater beauty—with evanescence and reproduction—an endless fountain flow and fall. Many were the strange, gladsome, hopeful, corrective thoughts born in him through Mr. Burns and the gems in his shop, and he was the debtor therefore of the man whose friendship he had cast from him.

At college Cosmo lived as simply as at home—in some respects more barely, costing a sum for his maintenance incredibly small. It may be hinted that the education was on a par with the expense; and, if education consisted in the number and accuracy of the things learned, and the worth of money in that poor country be taken into account, the hint might pass unchallenged. But if education is the supply of assimilable material to a growing manhood, that provided was enough for a man who was man enough to aid his own growth; and for those who have not reached that point of manhood, it is of infinite inconsequence what they or their parents find or miss in any education. But I am writing of a period long gone by.

In his second year, willing to ease his father however little, he

sought engagements in teaching; and was soon so far successful as to have two hours of every day occupied—one with a private pupil, the other in a public school. The master of that school used afterwards to say the laird of Glenwarlock had in him the elements of a real teacher. But Cosmo had more teaching power than the master knew, for not in vain had he been the pupil of Peter Simon—whose perfection stood in this, that he not only taught, but taught to teach. Life is propagation. The perfect thing, from the spirit of God downwards, sends *itself* onward, not its work only, but its life. And for the reaction Cosmo found that he learned more by trying to teach what he thought he knew, than by trying to learn what he knew he did not know.

In his third year it had become yet more necessary he should gain what money he could. For the laird found that his neighbour, lord Lumbiggin, had been straining every means to get possession of his liabilities, and had in great part succeeded. The discovery sent a pang to his heart, for he could scarcely doubt his lordship's object must be to foreclose every mortgage and compel him to yield the last scrap of his ancestral inheritance. He had refused him James Gracie's cottage, and he would have his castle! But the day was not yet come; and as no one knew what was best for his boy, no one could tell what would come to pass, or say what deliverance might not be in store for them! The clouds must break, and when they broke there was the sun! So, as a hundred times before, he gathered heart, and went on, doing his best, and trusting his hardest.

The summers at home between the sessions were seasons of paradise to Cosmo. He seemed to himself each time he returned then first beginning to understand the simple greatness of his father, and value aright the teaching of Mr. Simon; each time he better descried the outline of the bases on which they stood so far above him.

And now rose the question what was he to do when he had taken his degree. It was impossible he should remain at home. There was nothing for him to do at Castle Warlock but labour on the farm. That he would have done with joy had the property been secure, for the sake of being with his father; but the only chance of relieving the land was in some way to make money. The one profession he had a leaning to was that of chemistry, at the time receiving much attention in view of agricultural and manufacturing prospects, and offering a sure income to any man borne well in front upon its rising tide. But for the realization of the possible hope, more money must first be forthcoming. A large sum must be spent before his knowledge would be of money-

value, and fit for offer in the scientific market. For that he must go to Germany to Liebig, or to Edinburgh to Gregory. His father had less than no money, and the idea could not, for the present at least, be entertained. For the same reason there was no alternative but go on teaching.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A TUTORSHIP.

It cannot but be an unpleasant change for a youth to pass from a house where he is son—ah, how much better than master!—and take the position of a servant in another; but the discipline is invaluable. To meet what but for dignity would be humiliation; to do one's work in spite of misunderstanding; and to accept the position thoroughly, rampiring it with duty, is no easy matter. As to how Cosmo stood this ordeal of honesty, I will only say that he never gave up trying to be more faithful than he was.

His great delight and consolation were his father's letters. They wrote regularly, sharing their best and deepest thoughts with each other. The letters also of Mr. Simon did much to uplift him, and enable him to endure and strive.

Nobody knows to what the relation of father and son may yet come. Those who accept the Christian revelation, are bound to recognize in it depths infinite. For is it not a reproduction in small of the loftiest mystery in human ken—that of the infinite Father and infinite Son? If man be made in the image of God, then is the human fatherhood and sonship the image of the eternal relation between God and Jesus.

One happy thing for Cosmo was that he had a good deal of time to himself. He set his face against being with the children outside of school-hours, telling their parents that if he had to act the *pedagogue* or nursemaid, it would be impossible for him to do the more important part with the freshness which was as desirable for them as for him.

The situation one of his friends in the university-senate had found for him, was in the south of Scotland, almost on the borders. The heads of the family were neither pleasant nor interesting—but more from stupidity than anything worse. Had they had some knowledge of Cosmo's history, they would have taken pains to be agreeable to him, for, having themselves nothing else, they made much of birth and family. But Cosmo had no desire to come

nearer where it was impossible to be near, and was content with what grace they accorded him as a poor student and careful teacher. They lived in the quietest way; for the heir of the house, by a former marriage, was a bad subject, and kept them drained of more than the superfluous money about the place.

Cosmo filled the office for two years, during which time he did not go home, that there might be the more money to go instead; but as he entered his third year, he began to feel life growing heavy, and longed unspeakably after his father.

One day, the last of the first quarter, Mr. Baird sent him a message desiring his presence; and with some hesitation and effort informed him that circumstances over which he had no control compelled him to dispense with further service from him. He regretted the necessity much, he said, for the children were doing satisfactorily. He would be glad to hear from him, and know how he was getting on.

Indignant for his father's sake more than his own, Cosmo remarked that it was customary to give a tutor at least a quarter's notice—which brought the reply, that nothing would please Mr. Baird better than to have him remain another quarter if it was any convenience to him; but as he had had a serious mishap within the last month, and must therefore beg him to excuse a consequent delay in the payment of his quarter's salary now due, he had thought it the kindest thing to let him look out at once for another situation. Cosmo was thereupon sorry for the man, and said what he could to make the obligation to himself press lightly. He did not know that what he had fairly earned went to save a rascal from the punishment he deserved, therefore needed. Mr. Baird judged it more for the honour of his family to come between the wicked and his deserts, than to pay the workman his wages. Of that money Cosmo never received a farthing. The worst of it was, that he had all but come to the bottom of his purse, and had not nearly enough to take him home.

He went to his room in no little perplexity. He could not, would not trouble his father. There are not a few sons, I think, who would be more considerate than they are, if like Cosmo they had been trusted from the first, and allowed to know thoroughly the circumstances of their parents. The sooner mutual confidence is initiated the better.

A servant knocked at his door, and, true to the day, there was his father's letter—this time enclosing one from lady Joan.

The Warlocks had never had sight of her since the dreary day she left them, but they had never lost hearing of each other. Lady Joan retained a lively remembrance of her visit, and to both father

and son her occasional letter was a true pleasure. Old man as was the one, and child as was the other, some impression of the dignity and end of life had been left with Joan from their influences, while to the imagination of Cosmo she was still the type of all beauty. To the inner ear of the laird her letters sent a tone of oppression for which they gave him no means of accounting; and concerning her circumstances she said so little, not even alluding to her brother, that he knew things could not be going well with her. The letter he had now sent was even sad, and had so touched his heart, that he suggested Cosmo should pay her a visit in his coming holidays. It might comfort her, he said, to see one who cared so much though he could do so little for her.

Cosmo jumped up. What better could he do than go at once! He had not known what to do next, and here was direction! It would also be much easier to find a situation in England! For the journey he had Shanks' mare, and knew well how to make a little money go a great way! He wrote therefore to his father, telling him what had occurred, and saying he would go at once. The moment he had dispatched his letter, he set about his preparations. Like a bird the door of whose cage had been opened, he could scarcely endure his captivity an instant longer. To write and wait a reply from Joan was impossible. He must start in the morning before the sun was up. It would take him days to reach Yorkshire, on the northern border of which she lived; but the idea of the journey and the end of it, not to mention the release from books and boys, was entrancing. To set out free, to walk on and on, without a notion of what at any turn of the road was to appear—it was like reading a story that came to life as you read it! And then in the last chapter to arrive at the loveliest lady in the world, her whose form and face mingled with his every day-dream—it was a chain of gold with a sapphire at the end of it—a flowery path to heaven!

The same night he took his leave of the family. The father and mother were plainly sorry; the children looked grave, and one of them cried. He wrote to Mr. Baird once, but had no answer—nor ever heard more of them than that they had to part with everything, and retire into poverty.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ON THE TRAMP.

It was a lovely spring morning when with his stick and knapsack he set out, his heart as light as that of the skylark that seemed for a long way to accompany him—for one after another of them took up the song of his heart, and made it audible to his ears, and what better convoy in such mood could man desire! He walked twenty miles that day for a beginning, and slept in a village whose cocks that woke him in the morning seemed all to have throats of silver and hearts of golden light. He increased his distance every day, and felt as if he could go on for years.

But before he reached his destination, what people call a misfortune befel him. I do not myself believe in misfortune; anything to which men give the name is merely the shadow-side of a good.

He had one day passed through a lovely district, and in the evening found himself on a dreary moorland. As night overtook him, it came on to rain, and grew very cold. He resolved therefore to seek shelter at the first house he came to. Just ere it was dark, he arrived at some not very inviting abodes on the brow of the descent from the moor, and the first of them was an inn. The landlady received him, and made him as comfortable as she could, but as his quarters were not to his taste, he rose very early and, having paid his bill the night before, started in a pouring rain, intending to break his fast with the first loaf he could buy on his way.

The clouds were sweeping along in great gray masses with yellow lights between, and ever now and then they would let the sun look out for a moment, when the valley would send back the loveliest smile from sweetest grass or growing corn, all wet with the rain that made it strong for the sun. He saw a river, and bridges, and houses, and in the distance the ugly chimneys of a manufacturing town. Still it rained and still the sun would shine out, and still he walked a lonely road. By the time he reached at length a hamlet he had grown very hungry; but presently he came to a cottage whose window displayed loaves. He went in, took up the largest he saw, and was on the point of tearing a great piece out of it, when he bethought himself it would be but polite to pay for it first, and put his hand in his pocket. It was well he did so, for there was no purse! He searched his other pockets in vain. He had lost it.

He put down the loaf.

"I am sorry," he said, thinking first of apology, "but I have lost my purse."

The woman looked him in the face with keen inquiring eyes. Apparently satisfied with her scrutiny, she smiled, and said :—

"Ne'er trouble yorsel', sir. Yo can pey mo as yo coom back. Aw hope yo'n lost noan so mich?"

"Not much, but all I had," answered Cosmo. "—I am much obliged to you, but I am not likely ever to be this way again."

"Aw'm sorry for that," said the woman.

"And I am sorry to have troubled you," said Cosmo. "—But after all I have the worst of it," he added, smiling, "for I am very hungry."

As he spoke, he turned away, and had laid his hand on the latch of the door, when the woman spoke again.

"Tak th' loaf," she said; "it'll be aw th' same in a hun'er year."

She spoke crossly, almost angrily. Cosmo understood her entirely. Had she looked well-to-do, he would have taken the loaf, promising to send the money; but he could not trouble the thoughts of a poor woman, possibly with a large family, to whom the price of such a loaf must be of consequence. He thanked her again, but shook his head. She looked more angry than before: having constrained herself to give, it was hard to be refused!

"Yo micht tak what's offered yo!" she said.

Cosmo stood thinking: was there any way out of the difficulty? He began searching his pockets; but he had very few *things* anywhere. All he encountered was a penknife too old and worn to represent any value, a stump of cedar-pencil, and an ancient family-seal his father had given him when he left home. This last he took out, glanced at it, felt that only to save his life could he part with it, put it back, turned once more, and with a *Good morning* whose cheerfulness was a little feigned, left the shop.

He had not gone many steps, when he heard the shop-bell ring, and the woman came running after him. Her eyes were full of tears. What fountain had been opened I cannot tell—perhaps only that of sympathy with a hungry youth.

"Tak th' loaf," she said again, but in a very different voice this time, and held it out to him. "Dunnot be vexed with a poor woman. Hoo dunnot knaw sometimes wheer to get th' bread for her own."

"That's why I wouldn't take it," rejoined Cosmo. "If I had thought you were well off, I would not have hesitated."

"Oh! aw'm noan so pinched for th' day," she answered with

a smile. "Tak th' loaf, an' welcome! Yo can pey mo when yo can."

Cosmo wrote her name and address in his pocket-book, and took the loaf, kissing the toil-worn hand that gave it him. She uttered a little cry of remonstrance, threw her apron over her head, and walked slowly back to the house, sobbing as she went.

The tide rose in Cosmo's heart too, but he fell to eating almost ravenously. Another might have asked himself where dinner was to come from, and spared a portion; but that was not Cosmo's way. He would at once have given half his loaf to a hungry man, but he would not save the half of it in view of a possible lack. Every minute is a to-morrow to the minute that goes before it, and is bound to it by the same duty-roots that make every moment one with eternity; but there is no more occasion to bind minute to minute with the knot-grass of anxiety, than to ruin both to-day and the grand future with the cares of a poor imaginary to-morrow. To-day's duty is the only true provision for to-morrow; and those who are careful about the morrow are but the more likely to bring its troubles upon them by that neglect of duty which care always occasions. There are who say that care for the morrow is what distinguishes the man from the beast; certainly it is one of the many things that distinguish the slave of Nature from the child of God.

Cosmo ate his loaf with as hearty a relish as ever Grizzie's porridge, and that is saying much for his appetite, if not necessarily for the bread. He had swallowed it almost before he knew, and felt at first as if he could eat another, but after a drink of water from a well by the road-side, found that he had had enough, and strode on his way, as strong and able as if he had had coffee and eggs and a cutlet, and a dozen things besides.

He was passing the outskirts of the manufacturing town he had seen in the distance, leaving it on one hand, when he became again aware of the approach of hunger. One of the features of Cosmo's character was a childlike confidence: coming to a villa with a smooth-shaven lawn, and a man leaning over the gate, he went up to him and said,

"Do you happen to have anything wants doing about the place, sir? I should like some dinner, and I have no money."

The man—with whom the world seemed to have gone to his wish, looked him all over.

"A fellow like you ought to be ashamed to beg," he said.

"That is precisely what I am not doing," rejoined Cosmo, "—except as everybody more or less must be a beggar. It is one thing to beg work, and another to beg food. I didn't ask you to

make a job for me; I asked if there was any work about the place you wanted done. Good morning, sir."

He turned—and the second time that day was stopped as he went.

"I say!—If you can be as sharp with your work as with your tongue, I don't care if I give you a job. Look here: my coachman left me in a huff this morning, and it was time too, I find! The stable is in a shocking mess: clean it out and set things to rights, and you shall have your dinner."

"Thank you, sir," returned Cosmo. "But I give you warning I'm very hungry; only on the other hand I don't care what I eat."

"All right!" said the man. "—But," he added, "your hands look a precious sight more like loafing than work! I don't believe you'll be worth your dinner."

"Then don't give me any," rejoined Cosmo, laughing. "If the proof of the pudding be in the eating, the proof of the stable must be in the cleaning. Let me look at the place."

Much pondering what a fellow scouring the country, with a decent coat and no money, could be, the dweller in the villa led the way to his stable.

In a mess that stable certainly was.

"The new man is coming this evening," he said, "and I would rather he didn't see things in such a state. He might think anything good enough after it. The rascal took to drink—and that, young man," he added in a monitory tone, "is the end of all ambition."

"I'll soon get the place decent," said Cosmo. "Let's see—where shall I find a graip?"

"A grape? How the deuce should there be grapes in a stable? And what should you want with them if there were?"

"I forgot I was in England, sir," answered Cosmo, laughing. "I am a Scotchman, and have old-fashioned names for things. A graip is what we call a three- or four-pronged fork in my country. The word comes from the same root as the German *greifen*, and our own *grip*, and *gripe*, and *grope*, and *grab*—and *grub* too, which in the present case has its significance," he added, again laughing.

"Oh! you are a scholar—are you? Then you must either be a gardener on the tramp, or a gentleman who has made a bad use of his learning!"

"Do you draw that conclusion from the fact that I have no money, or from my readiness to undertake the first job that comes to my hand?" asked Cosmo, who, having lighted on a tool to serve his purpose, was already at work. "—But never mind! Here goes for a clean stable and a good dinner."

"How do you know your dinner will be good?"

"Because I am so hungry."

"If you're so sharp-set as all that, I don't mind your having a snack before you go further. You'll be scamping the work to get at your dinner!"

"No, thank you, sir. Of the quality of my work you must judge, but I am too luxurious to sit down to my food before I have finished it."

"Not a bad way of being luxurious, that!" said the man. "It puzzles me that a young fellow with such good principles should be going about the country like—"

"Like a tinker—would you say, sir?—or like Abraham when he had no abiding city?"

"You seem to know your Bible too!—Come now, there must be some reason why you're adrift like this!"

"Of course there is, sir; and if I were sure you would believe me, I would tell it you."

"A cautious Scotchman!"

"Yes.—Whatever I told you, you would doubt; therefore I tell you nothing."

"You have been doing something wrong!"

"You are rude," returned Cosmo—quietly, and without stopping his work. "—But," he resumed, "were *you* never in any difficulty? Have you always had your pockets full? It is not just to suspect a man because he is poor. The best men have rarely been rich."

Receiving no reply, he raised his head: the man was gone.

"Somebody has been telling him about me!" he had said to himself. For the stable Cosmo was then cleaning out, the horses in it, and the house to which it belonged, were of the results of a late judicious failure.

Cosmo finished his job, set everything right as far as he could, and going to the kitchen-door, asked a maid to tell her master that the stable was ready for his inspection. But he only sent orders to the cook to give the young man his dinner, and let him go about his business.

Cosmo ate none the less heartily, for he knew the work was properly done; and cook and maid were more polite than their master. He thanked them and went his way; and in the strength of the dinner they had given him walked many miles into the night—for now he set no goal before him but the last.

It was a clear, moonless, starry night, cold after the rain, but the easier to walk in. The wind now and then breathed a single breath and ceased, but that breath was piercing. With buttoned

coat he trudged on. The hours went and went. He could not be far from Cairncarque! and hoped by break of day to be, if not within sight of it, at least within accurate hearing of it.

Midnight was long past when a pale old moon came up, and looked drearily at him. For some time he had been as if walking in a dream; and now the moon mingled with the dream right strangely. Scarce was she above the hill when an odd-shaped cloud came upon her; and in the cloud Cosmo's sleep-bewildered eyes saw the body and legs of James Gracie's cow, straddling across the poor, withered cheese-paring she was. Then another cloud, high among the stars, began to drop large drops upon his head. "That's the reid gowd rainin'!" he said to himself. He was gradually sinking under the power of invading sleep. Every now and then he would come to himself for an instant, and say he must seek shelter, and the next moment was asleep again. He had often wondered that horses could sleep and get over the road: here he was doing it himself and not wondering at all! The wind rose, and blew sharp wet stings in his face. He woke up a little, and looked about him. Was there no shelter for him? But if he had found himself in a street, who would have taken him in at that hour? and here he was in a long lane without sign of turning! It had neither beginning nor end—like a lane in a dream! It might be a lane in a dream! He could remember more than once dreaming he was overwhelmed with sleep, just as he felt now! Still he did not think he was dreaming! For one thing, although he had dreamed worse situations, he had never been so physically uncomfortable in a dream!

The land opened at last on a triangular piece of sward: it was a village-green. In the middle of it stood a great old tree, with a bench round it. He dropped on the bench, and was asleep in a moment.

The wind blew, and the rain fell. Cold and misery swayed his dim consciousness, but he slept like one of the dead. When the sun rose, he found him at full length on the bare-worn earth at the foot of the tree: he had fallen from the bench without waking. For a long time the sun, shining full upon him, did not break his sleep. When at last it yielded and he came to himself, it was to the knowledge of a body that was a burden, of a tabernacle that ached as if all its cords were strained, yet all its stakes loosened. With nightmare difficulty he compelled his limbs to raise him, but was then so ill able to govern them, that he staggered like a drunken man, and again and again almost dropped. Such a night's-rest after such a day's-weariness had but just failed of mastering him.

Spying a pond in the green, he made for it, washed his face, and felt a little revived. As he wiped it with his handkerchief, he saw on the other side of the green a little shop, in the unshuttered window of which lay bread. Mechanically he put his hand into his pocket: to his surprise he found there sixpence. Long after, he learned that the maid who waited on him at dinner had dropped it in. Rejoiced at the discovery he tried to run, hoping to rouse some life in his limbs, but had no great success: his legs would hardly move, and he had to give it up almost immediately, from exhaustion and dread of falling. He sat down, and waited—a long time—till the shop was opened. Then he spent his sixpence, learned that he was but about three miles off the end of his journey, and set out again with good courage. But alas! the moment he tried to eat, mouth and throat refused their office. As he walked, however, he got a little better, and trudged manfully though slowly on. By and by he was able to eat a mouthful of bread, and then he felt better still. But as his physical nature recovered his moral nature grew uneasy, for he became gradually aware that his appearance must be disreputable in the extreme, and how was he to approach lady Joan in such plight? If at once she recognized him, he would but be the more ashamed! What could she take him for but a weakling, whose character had given way when deprived of home-support, and who now came to sponge upon her! Better lie down and die on the roadside than be ill at Cairncarque! he thought—for the shadow of sickness was upon him.

Coming to a pool by the roadside, he sat down, and having opened his knapsack, was proceeding to make what toilet was possible, when round the near corner of a cross-road he had not observed came a lady, walking slowly, and reading as she came. It was lady Joan! and there was he without coat or waistcoat! He knelt, and began to wash in the pool. As she passed he fancied he heard her stop, felt her presence from head to foot, and washed wildly. But if she stopped at all it was but for the time of one step; and when he thought she must be at a safe distance, he caught up his garments and hastened away, drying himself as he went.

At the turn of the road, all at once he saw the towers of Cairncarque. There was a castle indeed!—with its huge square tower at every corner, and its two huger towers in front—with its moat, and its causeway across it! Yes, there once had been the draw bridge, though now the causeway was continuous! and there were the spikes of the portcullis, sticking down from the top of the gateway, like the long upper teeth of an ogre! This was a real

castle—such as he had read of in books and seen in pictures! Castle Warlock would go into half a quarter of it—would be swallowed up like a mouthful, and never seen again! Why had not lady Joan told him about her castle instead of letting him gabble on about theirs? She could not love her home as he did his! Ah, she had never had such a father in it—that must be why! It was no wonder she did not care to talk about it! But was he actually going to see her again? Would he find her the same as before? As he stood and gazed, the shadows of years far away crept nigh and folded him round: again he was the boy who climbed the wintry hills with her, and ran down with her through the snow hand in hand. He roused himself with an effort, and walked towards the great pile: it grew as he approached it, and his heart sank within him. His head began to ache; an unwonted diffidence laid hold upon him: he could not go up to the door. How could he in the guise of one just risen from his lodging on the cold ground! Would any servant in England admit a fellow like him to the presence of his mistress? He must reconnoitre a little, and find some way more covert of approaching the house! Perhaps he might come upon a corner in which to change what might be changed of his attire! He turned away therefore from the frowning front of the castle, and followed the road, skirting dilapidated fortifications too open for his purpose, till he came to a door in a brick wall, apparently that of a garden—ancient, and green and gray with lichens. In the eyes of his imagination he saw on the other side the loveliest picture of order and ancient peace—a region stately with yews and cedars, fruit-trees and fountains, gravelled walks and shady alleys. The red wall, mottled and clouded with its lichens, and tufted with many a thready weed, showed to his fancy like the reverse of a gorgeous brocade: on its sunny side must emerge all richest blossoms, the glory of great trees, spreading out obedient arms and multitudinous branches against it, like nets to gather in the hot sunshine! What a sight would such a garden be at Glenwarlock!

He lifted the latch, pushed hard at the unwilling door, and the vision vanished. Not a few visions vanish when taken for fact, instead of only for the visions of fact that must be wrought out into being.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE GARDENER.

He beheld indeed a garden, but one whose ragged desolation looked as if it had the devil for its gardener. Worse than a grief, it was a pain, a disgust to see. The fruit-trees grew wild with endless shoots; they stuck like a hog's mane up above the tops of the walls; they shot out in every direction from the faces of them, like the hair on the head of a street-urchin. All the fastenings were broken away, and only the branches with which bondage had grown habit kept their old places. Things all about seemed striving back to the dear disorder of a *salvage* liberty. The walks were covered with weeds, and almost impassable with overgrowing branches, while here lay a heap of rubbish, there a smashed flower-pot, here a crushed water-pot, there a broken dinner-plate. Following the main path for some distance, he came first to a fountain that had no water, its basin cracked, and dry as a lizard-haunted wall; then to a sun-dial without a gnomon, leaning wearily away from the sun; and then to a noseless marble statue, streaked about with green. The careless sentinels of an army of desolation, they revealed its long possession. He came next to a wing built out from the back of the inner court of the castle: it was in a dilapidated, almost dangerous condition. Beyond this, at some distance across a shrubbery, he spied a great hedge of yew, and the same moment heard some sounds of a spade. Going on to the hedge, not well knowing why, he found it very thin, like a fence of old wire with cart-loads of withered rubbish in its meshes. And now he heard an accompaniment to the spade, revealing that the implement was handled by an old man. He peeped through the hedge, and saw him. Though bent with age he appeared tough, wiry, and sound; and to Cosmo the sighs and groans, or rather grunts, which he uttered, seemed rather of impatience and discontent than of oppression or weakness. He stood regarding him, desirous of discovering with what sort of man he had to deal. A moment or two and he ceased digging, drew himself up as straight as he might, leaned on the handle of his spade, and began to speak, as if addressing his congregation of cabbages over the book-board of a pulpit.

"Wha cares for an auld man like me?" he grumbled in objectless expostulation. "I kenna what for auld men sud be cultivat! The banes o' me micht melt i' the belly o' me, an' never a sowl alive du aucht for me but beery me to get quit o' the stink! No

at I'm that dooms auld them 'at wad hae my place wad hae me!"

Here was a happy chance, thought Cosmo—a fellow-countryman! He forced his way through the hedge, and approached him. He had resumed his work in a listless fashion, and was turning over slow spadeful after spadeful, as if neither he nor the cabbages cared much, and all would be in good time if either done or overtaken by the end of the world. As he came nearer, Cosmo saw peevishness and ill-temper plain in every line of his countenance, yet advanced with confidence, for Scotsmen out of their own country are of good report for hospitality to their fellows.

"Hoo's a' wi' ye?" he cried, sending his mother-tongue as a pursuivant before him.

"Wha's speirin'? An' what richt has he to speir?" returned the old man in an angry voice, and lifting himself quickly with an aching sigh, looked at him through hard blue eyes.

"A countryman o' yer ain," answered Cosmo.

"I doobtna! Mony ane's that 'at's nane the better nor the walcomer. Gie an accoont o' yersel', an' that aff han', or the doags 'ill be upo' ye in a jiffy. Haith, this is nae houf for lan'-loupers!"

"Hae ye been lang aboot the place?" asked Cosmo.

"Langer nor ye're like to be, I'm thinkin', gien ye haudna the ceeviler tongue i' yer heid, my man!—Whaur come ye frae? Answer me this enstant."

As he spoke he dropped his spade; Cosmo took it up, and began to dig.

"Lay doon that spaud," cried its owner, and would have taken it from him, but Cosmo delayed rendition.

"Hoot, man!" he said, holding the tool at arm's length, "I wad fain pruv til ye I'm nae lan'louper. Stan' ye by a bit, an' rist yer banes, an' I s' caw throuw a triffle o' yer wark, an' lat ye see hoo I can han'le a spaud."

"An' what expec' ye o' that? Ye're efter aething or anither, as sure's the deevil at the back yett, though ye're nae freely sae sure to win in."

"What I expec' it micht be ill to say; but what I dinna expec' is to be traitit like a vaggabon.—Come, I'll gie ye a guid hoor's guid wark for a beild (*shelter*) to wash mysel' in an' put on a clean sark. That's a fair offer."

"Whaur's the sark?"

"Here i' my bag."

"An' what for du ye want to put on a clean sark? What'll ye be efter whan ye hae't on?"

"Giein' ye anither hoor's wark for the heel o' a loaf an' a drink o' watter."

"Ye're no wantin' to be taen on! Na, I s' wad (*wager*) ye a worm!" said the old man, with an expression of the uttermost sarcasm.

"Gien ye *cud* gie me a day's wark, or maybe twa,—" began Cosmo, for he thought how much better it would be if he could fall in with lady Joan about the garden.

"I weel thoucht there sud be mair intil't!" cried the gardener with the triumph of conscious sagacity. "Ye wad gie the skin o' yer teeth to be i' the auld man's shune, an' wad fain mak sure o' them afore he kickit them frae 'im! Mine's a place maks the likes o' you fidgin' fain (*restlessly eager*) as ony cat at a moose-hole. Ye think it's a' ait an' play! Gang awa' wi' ye, an' latna me see the face o' ye again, or I s' gie a ca' to them'll tak accoont o' ye."

"Hoot, man!" rejoined Cosmo, and went on turning the ground over, "ye're unco hard upon a neibour!"

"Neibour! ye're no neibour o' mine! Gang awa' wi' ye, I tell ye!"

"Did naebody never gie *you* a helpin' han', 'at ye're sae dooms hard upo' him 'at sair wants ane?"

"Gien onybody ever did, it wasna you."

"Dinna ye think a body's a kin' o' b'un' to du the like again?"

"Ay, to him 'at did it—but I tell ye ye're no the man; sae gang aboot yer business."

"Consider, man—the day may come again whan ye'll want a guid turn!"

"I hae a claim on consideration; I hae grown auld upo' the place."

"Heard ye never tell o' him 'at said: 'Ye wad du naething for nane o' mine, an' therein ye refeesed mysel''?"

"'Deed, an' I wull refeese yersel'!" returned the old man. "Sic a chield for jaw an' cheek—saw I never nane! quo' the auld sang. Whaur on this earth cam ye frae?"

As he spoke, he gave Cosmo a round punch on the shoulder next him, and when he looked up began eyeing him from top to toe, and from toe to top, in the most supercilious manner. He was a small, withered, bowed man, with a thin wizened face, crowned by a much worn fur cap. His mouth had been so long drawn down at each corner by a weight of discontent, that it formed a half-circle; the eyebrows over his red-lidded blue eyes were lifted as high as they would go, making a couple of semi-circles above to correspond, and there was a succession of small ripply wrinkles over each of them; the two concentric masses met

in the middle of his forehead, which was thus covered with arches. Below his cap stuck out enormous ears—greatly too large for his face. Huge veiny hands hung trembling by his sides—trembling more from anger than age.

"I tellt ye a'ready," answered Cosmo. "I come frae the auld cuintry."

"Deil tak the auld cuintry! What care I for the auld cuintry! It's a braid place, an' langer nor it's braid, an' there's mony ane intil't an' oot o' 't 'at's no worth the parritch his mither pat intil 'im. Eh, the fowth it breeds o' fusionless beggars like yersel'!—Ow ay! it was aye they wad hae wark—an' cud du nae mair nor a flee amo' triacle!—What coonty are ye frae? Tell me that—wi' the lang legs an' the lang back-bane o' ye!"

Cosmo told him his county. The hands of the gardener rose from his sides, and made right angles of his elbows.

"Weel," he said slowly as if considering the matter, "that's no an ill coonty to come frae. I may say *that* muckle for 't, for I come frae 't mysel'. But frae what pairt o' 't tuik ye leg-bail?"

"Frae nae pairt; I cam frae the north o' 't upo' the tap o' the co'ch," answered Cosmo, and bent again to his work.

The old man came a step nearer, and Cosmo, without looking up, was aware he was regarding him intently.

"Ay! ay!" he said at last, in a tone of reflection mingled with dawning interest, "I ance kent a terrible rascal 'at cam frae owerby that gait. What ca' they the perris ye're frae?"

Cosmo told him the name of his parish.

"Lord bless me!" he cried, and came close up to him. "—But na!" he cried again, and recoiled a pace; "it's somebody's been tellin' ye!"

Cosmo held his peace. The old man stood a moment expectant, then broke out in fresh anger.

"What for makna ye answer whan a body speirs ye a queston?" he said, with the thin fierceness of querulous age. "That wasna mainners whan I was at hame. Lord! ye micht be ceevil! It's easy eneuch to lee!"

"I will answer no man who looks for a lie from me," said Cosmo quietly.

The dignity of his English had far more effect on the man than the friendliness of his mother-tongue.

"Gien ye hae nae sairious objections, I wad fain hear frae ye what was the neist toon to ye whan ye was at hame," he said, with much altered manner and tone.

"Muir o' Warlock," answered Cosmo.

"Lord, man! come into the hoose. Ye maun be sair in want

o' something to pit intil ye! A' the gait frae Muir o' Warlock! A toonsman o' my ain! Scotlan's a muckle place—but Muir o' Warlock!—Guid guide 's! Come in, man; come in!"

He took the spade from Cosmo's hands, threw it down with a contemptuous cast, and led the way towards the house.

He had a heart after all! Strange power in that comparatively poor thing, local association! it brought out in this man a glimmer of that eternal love which was at the root of his being! Though his heart was not yet large enough to love a Scotsman, it was large enough to love a Muir-o'-Warlock-man—a beginning as good as any. It matters nothing where or how one begins—only that one do begin! There are many, doubtless, who have as yet got no farther in love than their own family; there are others to whom there is neither Frenchman nor Englishman, Jew nor Greek, white nor black—only the sons and daughters of God, only the brothers and sisters of the Lord. There may be who have learned to love the people of their own planet, but not yet to look with patience even upon those of Saturn or Mercury; others there must be, who, wherever they come upon a creature of God's making, love it up to the measure of the contact of their capacity of loving with its possibility of being loved. Some there must surely be capable of loving all life—from that of the archangel before God's throne, to that of the creeping thing he may yet have to destroy—from the beings of their own kind to those of systems never yet brought within ken of heaven-poring sage! Or is the heart of God only able for all the varied loves of his endless creations? This is sure, that, until we love all we know, we are not true men, the children of him in whose image we are being made.

Cosmo followed willingly. The exposure of the night was telling upon him more than he knew; all the time he was at work, he had been cramped by pains hitherto unknown to his limbs, and now his head throbbed and he felt strangely drowsy. Arrived at the half-ruinous wing already mentioned, his conductor opened the door of a small kitchen, shadowed by a great sloping buttress, and presented him to his wife, an English woman some ten years younger than himself. She received him with a dignified withdrawal, but had breakfast ready for him by the time his poor toilet was finished. He sat down, and drank some tea, but felt shivery, and could not eat. In dread lest, if he yielded a moment to the sickness he now knew to be threatening him, it should at once overpower him, he made haste to get again into the sun, and presently rejoined the old man in his cabbage-ground, where he pulled off his coat, and seized the spade: to work was to meet his enemy hand to hand! He had scarcely begun before he was too

hot, and the moment he stopped to breathe, he felt ready to shiver. But as long as he could stand he would not give in!

Finding the old man's interrogations troublesome, he betook himself to questioning him.

"How many years have you been gardener here?" he asked.

"Five an' forty year, an' I'm tired o' 't," was the answer.

"The present lord is a young man, is he not?"

"Ay—ower yoong. He'll be jist five an' thirty the twalt o' the incomin' month."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"Weel, it's some hard to say. He's ane o' them 'at naebody says weel o', an' naebody's begud to say ill o'—yet."

"There can't be much amiss with him then, surely!"

"Weel, I wadna gang freely sae far as say that. You 'at's a man o' sense maun un'erstan', gien 't be but frae yer carritchis (*catechism*), 'at there's baith sins o' o-mission, an' sins o' co-mission. Noo what sins o' co-mission may lie at my lord's door, I dinna ken, an' we're no to jeedge; but for the o-mission, ye hae but to luik upo' 's negleck o' that bonny sister o' his, to fa' short o' thinkin' a sanct o' 'im."

Silence followed: Cosmo would go no farther in that direction: it would be fair neither to lady Joan nor the gardener, who spoke as to one who knew nothing of the family.

"Noo the father," resumed the old man with peevish garrulity, "—puir fallow, he's deid an' damnt this mony a day!—an' eh, he was an ill ane!—but as to leddy Joan, he cud hardly bide her oot o' the sicht o' his e'en. He cudna be jist that agreeable company to the likes o' her, puir leddy! for he was a rouch-spoken, sweirin' auld sinner as ever lived; but sic as he had he ga'e her. Some wad hae 't he was a fine gentleman an' a bonny laad in 's yoong days: he was nane sic sin' ever I kenned him; an' they said he cheenged a'thegither o' a suddent, an' wad hae't it cam o' bluid-guiltiness—for 'at he had liftit the reid han' again' his neibour. An' they warnt me forby, lang as it was sin' I had left it, no to lat 'im ken whaur I cam frae, or he wad be rid o' me in a jiffey, ae w'y or anither. —Ay, it was a gran' name, yon o' Warlock, i' thae pairts! though they tell me it gangsna for muckle noo. I hae h'ard said, an' doobtless ye can tell me hoo muckle's the trowth intil 't, 'at never sin the auld lord here made awa' wi' the laird o' Glenwarlock, has the faimily there had ony luck. I wad like to ken what you, 'at 's a man o' sense, wad say to that same. It's a some contraventible kin' o' justice! No 'at I'm daurin' or wad daur say a word again' the w'y the warl' 's governnt, but there's things intil 't naebody can un'erstan'—I defy them! an' yon 's ane

o' them :—what for, 'cause oor graceless auld lord tuik the life o' the laird o' Glenwarlock, the faimily o' that same sud never thrive frae that day to this!—Read me that riddle, yoong man, gien ye can."

"Maybe it was to haud them 'at cam efter frae ony mair keepin' sic ill company," Cosmo ventured to suggest: knowing what his father was, and something of what most who preceded him were, the dispensation did not to him seem inscrutable.

"That wad be hard lines," insisted the old man, grudging to yield the unintelligibility of the ways of providence.

"But," said Cosmo, "doon there they haud it was a brither o' the laird, no the laird himsel', 'at the English lord killt."

"Na, na; they're a' wrang there, whaever says that. For auld Jean—a weel-faured wuman whan I saw her first, though doobtless no sae bonny as whan he broucht her, a yoong lass—maybe to gar her haud her tongue—auld Jean, I tell ye, said as I say. But that was lang efter the thing was ower far gane to be thoucht o' mair. An' forby, you 'at's a man o' sense, gien it wasna the laird himsel' 'at he killt, hoo wad there, i' that case, be onything worthy o' remark i' their no thrivin' efter 't! I' that case, the no thrivin' cud hae had naething ava' to du wi' the killin'. Na, na! it was the laird himsel' 'at the maister killt—the father o' the present laird, I'm thinkin'. What-aged man micht he be—did ye ever hear tell?"

"He's a man well on to seventy," answered Cosmo, with a pang at the thought.

"Ay; that 'll be aboot it! The father o' 'im it was oor lord killt—an' syne gaed doon the braid ro'd as fest 's ever he cud rin. It was jist like as Judas—he maun gang till 's ain. Some said he had sellt himsel', but I'm thinkin' it was na necessar'; the deevil was to hae him ony gait! An' troth it's baith said an' believt he cam by his deith i' some exterordnar mainner, no plain, but plainly no canny! The ae thing sure is, he was ta'en suddent i' the verra hoose whaur, mony a lang afore, he committit the deed o' darkness! Hoo ever he cam to shaw himsel' there, the Lord kens—an' maybe the ill ane."

A pause followed, but presently the narrator, or rather commentator, resumed.

"Aften I hae won'ert wi' mysel' what for it cud be, but I'm thinkin' whan he begud to ken himsel' growin' auld, his ill deed cam back upon 'im fresh-like, an' that bude to be hoo he cudna bide my leddy, if no jist oot o' the sicht o' his e'en, ony gait ayont the cry o' his tongue. Troth! he wad whiles brak oot efter her, an' appear upo' me at my wark, as it micht be the day, cursin' an

sweirin' as gien he had sellt his sowl to a' the deevils in hell thegither, an' micht jist tak his wull o' onything he cud get his tongue roon'! I never heedit him that muckle, for ye see it wasna him 'at peyt me—the mair by token 'at gien it had been him 'at had the peyin' o' me, it's never a baubee wad I hae seen o' my ain siller! but the trustees peyt me, ilka plack, an' sae I was indepen'ent like, an' luit him say his say. But it was aye an oonsaitisfactory kin' o' a thing; for the trustees they cared na a bodle aboot the dacency o' the place themsel's, an' tuik sae sma' delicht in ony pleesurin' o' my lord 'at they jist allooed him me, an' no a man mair—that is, to the gairden. Gien it hadna been for rizzons o' my ain, I wad hae gane, mony's the time, for the sicht o' the ruin gaein' on aboot me was jist 'ayont beirin'. But I bude to beir 't. Sae I bore 't, an' bore 't, till by beirin' o' 't I cam to tak it verra quaiet—ay, even to luik upo' 't as the wull o' a providence 'at wasna to be meddlet wi'. I broucht mysel' in fac' to sic a degree o' submission, 'at I gied mysel' nae mair concern, but jist confint my ainergies to the raisin' o' the kail an' ingons an' pitawtas needfu' aboot the place. An' that's hoo it comes to be in sic a disgracefu' condeetion."

"Are things no better," asked Cosmo, "under the new lord?"

"No a hair—'cep' it be 'at there's no sae mony ill words fleein' aboot the place. My lord ne'er sets his nose intil the gairden, or speirs—no ance in a twalmonth—hoo things is gangin' on. He dis naething but rowt aboot in 's boaratory, as he ca's 't—bore-a-whig or bore-a-tory, it's little to me!—makin' stinks fit to scomfish a whaul, an' gar 'im stick his nose 'aneth the watter to get a glamp o' fresh air. He's that hard-hertit he never sae muckle as chows his denner anent his ain sister 'cep' whan he has company an' wad luik like ither fowk. Gien it gaèdna ower weel wi' her i' the auld man's time, it gangs waur wi' her the noo; for sae lang as he was abune the yird there was aye somebody to ken whether she was deid or livin'. To see a bonnie lass like her strayin' aboot the park nae better companied nor wi' an auld buik—it's tantamunt to brakin' a man's hert, but 'at age kills rage."

"Do the neighbours take no notice of her?"

"Nane o' her ain dignity, like. Ye see she's naething but bonny. She *has* naething. An' for a' 'at she's as guid a cratur as ever lived, the cauld grun' o' her poverty gaithers the fog o' an ill report. Haith, for her faimily, the ill's to the fore, report or no report; but, a' the same, gien she had been rich, an' her father—I'll no say the hangman, but him 'at he last hangt, there wad be fowth (*plenty*) o' coonty-fowk wad hae her til her denner wi' them."

"Does she go nowhere then?"

"She gangs whiles to the doctor's. He's a kin' o' a freen' o' the yerl's: he likes stinks. That's the yoong doctor, I mean."

"Does the earl never take her with him anywhere?"

"Whaur sud that be? There's naebody cares a bodle aboot his lordship i' the haill country-side. Ane or twa—great men, I daursay—whiles comes doon frae Lon'on to smell the new stinks he's fun' oot; but deil a neibour comes nigh the hoose. Ow, he's a great man, I makna a doobt—awa' frae hame! He's aye writin' letters to the newspapers, an' they're aye prentin' at them—aboot this an' aboot that,—aboot beasties i' the watter, an' lectreesity, an' I kenna what a'; an' it's said he'll be a rich man the moment he's dune fin'in' oot something or ither he's been warslin' at for the feck o' a ten year or sae. But the gentry never thinks naething o' a man sae lang as he's only makin' clauchts at the siller fleein' aboot him; whan he's gotten't, it's doon they're a' upo' their knees til 'im thegither. But gien they be prood, he's prooder. Ance get his heid up, an' him rid o' the trustees, an' fowk upo' their marrow-banes til 'im, haith, he'll lat them sit there!"

"Has my lady no friends at all then?"

"She has the doctor's lass. She gangs an' sees her, as I tellt ye; an' whiles she comes here an' has her denner wi' her."

All this time, Cosmo had been busy with the spade, working the harder in the hope of working off the sickness that yet kept growing upon him. The sun was hot, and his head, which had been aching more or less all day, now throbbed violently.

The spade fell from his hands, and he on his face in the soft mould.

"What's this o' 't?" cried the old man, terrified.

He went to him, caught hold of an arm, and turned him on his back. His face was colourless, and the life seemed to have gone out of him.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### LOST AND FOUND.

When Cosmo came to himself, all was dark both around him and in him. He had not a notion where he was, hardly, indeed, knew what he was. His chief consciousness was of an emptiness and a weight combined, that seemed to paralyze him. He would have turned on his side, but some ponderous heap seemed to prevent him; he could not even raise an arm. He tried to think

back and find what he knew of himself last, but could for a long time recall only a confused dream of multitudinous discomfort and painful effort. At last, however, came the garden, the spade-work, and the old man's talk; and then it seemed as if the cracked complaining voice had never left his ears.

"I've been ill!" he said to himself. "I hope they haven't buried me!"

With a straining agony of will he got in motion an arm which he found lying like that of another man outside the coverlid, and felt feebly about him. The hand struck against something solid, and the sound of earth falling with a hollow rumble followed. He *was* in his coffin! But he was too weak, and had been wandering too long in the miserable limbo of sick fancies, to be much dismayed at the conclusion. He would not have to suffer long! He must soon go to sleep, and so die!

Fatigued with that one effort, he lay for some time motionless. By and by he became aware of something that suggested light. Thin, dim, darkly gray, a particle at a time, it grew about him, and his eyes seemed of themselves to be making inquiry of his surroundings. They discovered that, if he was buried, it must be in a large sepulchre, for the wall of it looked miles away! The light grew, and brought the conviction that he was not buried. The consolation was however but a negative one, for the still growing light revealed nothing pleasant in his surroundings. Over his head was a low, water-stained ceiling, whose plaster in parts hung slack, ready to fall, and in one place had a great hole, through which stuck skeleton ribs of lath. Around him were bare, dirty, white walls, that seemed to grow out of the gray foggy light of a wet morning as the natural deposit from such a solution. Close to the bed, at the back of it, was a hole in the wall revealing laths with intercostal protrusions of plaster; and from the hole came a wind reminding him of the gust that whistled through the bones of Death in the ears of the Ancient Mariner. Two slender poles, meant to support curtains, but without a rag upon them, rose at his feet, like the masts of a Charon's boat. He could hardly be in a workhouse, for surely no workhouse could be in such disrepair! Again he tried to turn, and this time succeeded, discovering in the process how hard was the bed, and how sharp were his bones. A wooden chair stood in the middle of the room, and on it a bottle and teacup; not another article was visible. Under the hole in the ceiling a hole was rotted in the floor, and the cold, damp air, smelling of earth and decaying wood, that filled the place, must come up there, he thought A few minutes' rest and he would rise! He must come to himself a little first!—Now he

would try!—But what had befallen him? Where was his strength? Could one night's illness have reduced him thus?

He seemed to himself unable to think, yet the profoundest thought went on thinking itself almost shapelessly in him :—Where had his strength lain before he lost it? Could that ever have been *his* which he could not keep? If a thing were ours, nothing could ever take it from us! Was his strength ever his, then? Yes, for God had given it him. Then he could not have lost it! He had it still! The branches of it were gone, but the root remained, hid in God. All was therefore well. If God chose that his child should lie there to-day, and to-morrow, or till next year—or if it pleased him that he should not rise again in this world, was that a thing to trouble him? He turned his back on the ugly room, and was presently fast asleep again.

Not a few read the poems of a certain king brought up a shepherd lad; from Sunday to Sunday they read them, and in their turn these words: "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety;" but how many of them enter into the feeling, or even imagine that David meant what he said? Deeper and grander things still, uttered by this same shepherd-warrior, do they read as truth, and yet in their wisdom will declare it preposterous that a Scotch lad should cherish any such feeling towards God! "Doth God care for oxen?" says St. Paul. Does God care for kings? I ask, or for Jew-shepherds? Does he not care all over for all of us—oxen and kings and sparrows and Scotch lairds? Is less to be expected of humanity since the Son of David came than it was capable of in his father? It is little wonder so many reject Christianity while so many would-be champions of it hold theirs from them at arm's length—in their bibles, in their creeds, in their churches, in their prayer-books, in the last devotional page they have read. They do not brood on it in their hearts on their beds in the stillness; it is not their comfort in the night-watches; it is not the strength of their days, the joy of their conscious being. From them it is a separable thing, not the essential of their life! God is nearer to us than the air we breathe, nearer to us than the heart of wife or child, nearer to us than our own consciousness of ourselves, nearer to us than the words in which we speak to him, nearer than the burning of our hearts at the story of his perfect Son—or there is no God at all. The unbelievers might well rejoice in the loss of such a God as many Christians would make of him. But if he be indeed the Father of our Lord Christ, of that Jew who lived and died doing the will of his Father, and *nothing but that will*, then the one prayer worth offering is, "Let thy will be done, O God and nothing but thy will!"

Cosmo had leen lying unconscious for seven days, and was now helplessly weak. When he dropped, the old man had gone for his wife, and when he revived a little they had between them persuaded him, all but unconscious, to exert himself so far that they managed to get him to the house. The efforts he then made he could recall—in the shape of an interminable season during which he had been supporting the heavens for Atlas, that the poor fellow might get a little sleep: he had been urging Atlantean force to carry only the aching weight of his own microcosm. They took him to the half ruinous room where he now lay, and had done their *next best* for him, sparing some of their things to clothe the skeleton bed. They put him in it, and left him, like one adrift in a rotten boat on the ebbing ocean of life, while the old woman trudged away to the village to tell the doctor.

Dr. Jermyn sent his son, who prescribed for Cosmo, and every day had come to see him. The night before, perceiving the crisis at hand, he had been with him from dark to dawn.

Lady Joan, informed that a young Scotch gardener who came seeking employment had been taken suddenly ill, and was lying in the old wing, had spoken to the housekeeper to let Mrs. Howie have whatever was wanted for him; when she saw the doctor, which was every time he came to see Cosmo, she inquired how his patient was going on; and she interfered upon the housekeeper's complaint of the difficulty she had in getting wine from the butler—who was doing his best to drink up the stock his old master had left behind him, intending to depart when it was finished; but further she had taken no interest in the affair. The castle was like a village; and what was going on in one part of it was not necessarily regarded in another.

This same morning, however, she received a letter from the laird, saying he was uneasy about his boy. He had been so inconsiderate, he wrote, as to set out to visit her without first asking her permission, or even warning her of his intent; and since the letter announcing his immediate departure, received a fortnight before, he had heard nothing of him. This had set Joan thinking—with the immediate result that she went to Mrs. Howie and questioned her concerning her patient. In the old woman's description of him she did not recognize much likeness to the Cosmo she had known seven years before, but she must see the young man to get rid of the haunting shadow of a possibility!

Cosmo lay fast asleep, and dreaming—pleasant dreams now, for, the fever gone, life was free to build its own castles. He thought he was dead, and floating through the air at his will, volition enough to propel him like a dragon-fly in the direction

he chose to take. He was about to go to his father, to tell him to make haste and die; for then the creditors would have their own, and they two and his mother be happy for ever. But first he must have one sight of lady Joan, in the hope of which he was now hovering about the battlements of the castle. But suddenly, as he was slowly circling the two great towers of the gateway, and in the act of crossing an eight-figure over the gallery of the portcullis, he dropped to the ground, and lay there bruised and heavy, unable by fiercest effort to move an inch from the spot. He was thinking how foolish to fly before making sure he was quite dead: he must be more prudent another time! when he felt a warm cloud come over him, and opened his eyes. As they cleared he saw above him the face of his dreams—a little sadder than in them, but more beautiful.

He had so much of the childlike in him that illness made him a very child again, and when he saw Joan's face bending over him like a living sky, he put his arms as any child might have done round her neck, and drew her face to his. Hearts get uppermost in sickness, and make people do as they would not in health. There lies a prayer in every spirit, generally frozen, sometimes only dumb, *to be taken like a child*, and weakness lets it out sometimes.

Till he opened his eyes lady Joan had been unable to satisfy herself whether the pale, worn, yet grand-looking youth was or was not Cosmo; she was therefore far from prepared for such precipitate familiarity, and drew back with some feeling, if not of offence, yet of annoyance. But such a smile flooded Cosmo's face, mingled with such a pleading look of apology and excuse—seeming to say, "How *could* I help it?" that she was ashamed of herself.

The youth's was the same true face as the boy's, and wore the old shine of devotion and gentle worship! She stooped and kissed his forehead.

"Thank you," murmured Cosmo, his voice sounding in his ears like that of another. "Don't be vexed with me. I am but a baby, and have no mother. When I saw you, heaven had come down into hell, and I never thought of not taking it. How beautiful you are! How good of you to come to me!"

"Oh, Cosmo!" cried Joan—and her tears were now flowing—"to think of the way you took me in, and then to think of your lying here in our house, I don't know how long, ill, and me not coming near you—in a place fit for a beggar!"

"That's just what I am!" returned Cosmo with a smile, feeling already almost well. "I have such a long story to tell you, Joan! I remember all about it now."

"Why didn't you write?" she said, and there checked herself, for, if he had written, what choice would she have had? what would she not have been compelled to do? This illness was a cloudy veil without which he could not have entered Cairncarque! "—Why didn't you send for me at once?" she went on. "They told me there was a young gardener lying ill: how could I dream it was you! But I know if you had heard a stranger was lying ill somewhere about Castle Warlock, you would have gone to him at once! It was hard-hearted of me, and I am sorely punished!"

"It's all right now," said Cosmo, his very soul in his eyes. "I have you, and it makes me well. When I see you standing there, looking just the same, all the time between is shrivelled to nothing, and the present joins right on to the past. But you look sad, Joan!—I *may* call you Joan still, mayn't I?"

"Surely, Cosmo! what else? I haven't too many to call me Joan!"

"What makes you look so sad?"

"Isn't it enough to know how I have behaved to you?"

"You didn't know it was me!"

"That is true. But if, as your father taught us, I had done it to *Him*,——"

"Ah, my father!" murmured Cosmo. "And you've been learning of him, have you, Joan? Well, one thing is certain—you will do better another time."

"I can't be sure of that; my very heart grows stupid, living here all alone."

"You won't be alone for a while anyhow! Fast as your eyes will heal me, I sha'n't be able to go for a long time," said Cosmo, who began to feel faint.

Joan's face flushed with pleasure, and then grew pale at the th ught of how little she could do for him.

"The first thing," she said, "is to write to your father. When he knows I have got you, he won't be uneasy. I will go and do it at once."

Cosmo would not have fallen asleep so soon after she left him, had he known in what difficulties he had involved her. Had he written she must have begged him not to come—therefore she was glad he had given her no warning; but she dared not tell her brother that he was in the house; and although it made her miserable to see him in such a place, yet she dared not move him, certain that the butler would carry to his master all he might come to know of the proceeding—for the less faith carried, the more favour curried! One thing only was left her—to make the wretched room he was in as comfortable as she could. The

moment therefore she had finished her hasty letter to the laird, she began a raid upon the rooms nearest the neglected part where Cosmo was, making hurried choice of this and of that piece of stuff or furniture. These, with the assistance of the gardener's wife, she carried to Cosmo's chamber; and finding him again asleep, she strained every nerve to get the aspect of the place altered before he should wake. With noiseless steps she entered and left the room fifty times. Making use of a door which had not been opened for perhaps a hundred years, she succeeded in avoiding notice and consequent observation.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A TRANSFORMATION.

When Cosmo the second time opened his eyes, he was afresh bewildered. Which was the dream—that vision of wretchedness, or this of luxury? It was marvellous as a story in the Arabian Nights! If this was no dream, how had they moved him without disturbing his sleep? Could it be the same chamber? In nothing did it seem the same, yet within him moved a doubtful denial of transportance. Yes, the ceiling was the same! the power of the good fairy had not reached to that! But the walls! Instead of the great hole in the plaster by his bed, his eyes fell on a piece of rich old tapestry! Curtains of silken damask, all bespotted with quaintest flowers, each like a page from Chaucer, hung around and behind him: the bed was like Cleopatra's barge, no more the Stygian boat; they made it as different as the vine in summer from the vine in winter. A quilt of red satin, faded into loveliness, lay where the patchwork coverlid had been. About him was colour harmonious as a sunset, beneath him was softness! No, the latter was but a fancy: before the fire he saw the feather-bed appointed to lie between him and the pebbly flock! He felt like a tended child, quiet with absolute peace and bliss—or like one just dead, still weary with the successful struggle to break forth. He seemed to recall the content, of which some few vaguest filaments, here and there a glancing line and no more, yet float in the summer-air of many a memory, wherein the child lies just awaked to consciousness and the mere bliss of being, ere wrong has begun to cloud its pure atmosphere. For the youth had nothing on his conscience to trouble it; his mind was stored with lovely images and was fruitful in fancies: in temperament,

faith, and use, he was a poet; the vapours of fever had just lifted from his brain, and were floating away in the light of the sun of life; he felt the pressure of no duty, no responsibility—was like a bird of the air lying under its mother's wing; while around him the most cherished of his childhood's dreams had grown fact: there was the sylph, the oread, the naiad of them all—a live lady before his eyes—nor the less a creature of his imagination's heart! From her, the centre of power, the marvellous transformation proceeded! And the lovely strength had kissed him on the forehead! Well might the soul of Cosmo float in rapturous quiet, like the evening star in a rosy cloud!

But I return to the earthly shore that bordered this heavenly sea.

The old-fashioned, out-swelling grate, loose and awry, had a keen little fire burning in it: summer as it was, the mustiness of the atmosphere and the damp of the walls made it as welcome as needful. The hole in the floor had vanished under a richly faded Turkey carpet; and a luxurious sofa, in blue damask, faded almost to yellow, stood before the fire, to receive him the moment he should cease to be a chrysalis. And there in an easy chair by the corner of the hearth, wonder of all beautiful wonders, sat half reclined the fairy-godmother herself, as if she had but just waved her wand, and everything had come to her will!—the fact being, however, that the poor fairy was not a little tired in legs and arms and back and feet and hands and head, and much preferred contemplating what she had already done to doing anything more for the immediate present.

Cosmo lay watching her. He dared not move a hand, lest she should move: it might be to come to him, but would it not be a change?—and what he saw he would see for ever, desiring nothing else!

She turned her eyes, and seeing the large orbs of the youth fixed upon her, smiled as she had not smiled before—smiled like her old self: a weight was off her heart now the room would give him a welcome. True, it was a hypocrite of a room—but a hypocrite after all whose meaning, deeper than its walls, was better than its looks!

Almost unconsciously he put out his hand. She rose and came to him and laid hers in it. He withdrew his. She looked a little surprised.

"I beg your pardon," he said: "I don't know when my hands were washed! The last thing I remember is digging in the garden. I should like to wash my face and hands!"

"You mustn't think of it! You can't sit up to do it yet," said

Joan. "But never mind: some people are always clean. You should see my brother's hands sometimes! I will, if you like, bring you a towel with a wet corner. I dare say that will do you good."

She poured water from a kettle on the hob, and brought him the towel. He tried to use it, but his hands would scarcely obey him. She took it from him, and herself wiped his face and hands, and dried them—gently, softly, like a mother. Then she set about preparing him tea and toast, and he lay watching her every motion. Meal like that he had never had any. After it he fell asleep once more, and when he woke next, he was alone.

An hour later, the gardener's wife brought him a basin of soup, and when he had taken it, told him she was going to leave him for the night, and if he should want anything, he must pull the string she tied to the bed-post. He was so comfortable, so quietly happy, his brain full of bright yet soft-coloured things, that he felt to be left ages alone would not trouble him.

By the middle of the night, however, the tide of returning health showed a check; then came a reaction, with delirium; terrible fancies tormented him; and through each with persistent recurrence kept passing the figure of the old captain, swinging his stick about his head, and crooning to himself the rime—

> Catch yer naig an' pu' his tail;
> In his hin' heel caw a nail;
> Rug his lugs frae ane anither:
> Stan' up, an' ca' the king yer brither.

At last, just as once more his persecutor was commencing his childish ditty, Cosmo saw, from the top of a mountain a hundred miles away, a cold cloud come journeying through the sky, and felt it descend upon him. He opened his eyes: there was Joan; the cold cloud was her soft cool hand on his forehead. The next thing he knew was that she was feeding him. He did not know that she sat by his bedside till she saw him at length in a deep and quiet sleep, when she stole away like a ghost in the gray dawn.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### RECOVERY.

The next day he was better; but every night for a week the fever returned; and all his dreams were variations on the theme of the old captain. Then followed quiet nights, and he began to recover rapidly. But for several days he felt as if he did not want to get

better—would rather lie and dream for ever in the glamoured ruin.

Every morning, afternoon, and evening, Joan visited him, and staid a longer or shorter time, waiting on him, talking, reading to him. Only once was she a whole evening absent: lord Mergwain, having some one to dine with him of the ordinary social stamp, had required her presence as lady of the house. Even then she had a peep at him before she went to bed, but found him asleep.

She did not know much about books, but would go into the library and take anything she fancied looked interesting; and Cosmo cared little what she read, so long as he could hear her voice. Often it beguiled him into the sweetest sleep, in which were sure to come visions of home and his father. If the story she read was foolish, not the less would he mingle it, as his soul sank under the waves of sleep, with his own livelier fancies, weaving all into the loveliest of foolish dreams, made up of the most reasonable incongruities: the most puzzling of things to him who would fathom his own unreason, is the sensible look in dreams of what to the waking mind is utterly, absurdly incoherent. Nor were the wild *märchenhaft* lovelinesses that then fashioned themselves in his brain—outwardly lawless, but inwardly harmonious and credible—scattered in the fluttering limbo of outlawed foolish invention, but appeared again, with gait more gracious and form less fantastic, when in after years he sought vent for the hardly utterable. In these voice-charmed slumbers he would often begin to talk verse, when Joan would stop her reading and listen. It was sometimes lovely, she said, but she never could get a hold of it to remember it; for always, just as she seemed on the point of understanding it, he would cease, and with the voice everything would go from her, leaving both her heart and her ears aching with the silence.

One warm evening, when now a good deal better, and able to sit up a part of the day, Cosmo was lying on the sofa, watching her face as she read. Through the warped and thick-dusted glass of a westerly window came the glowing beams of the setting sun, lined and dulled and blotted. They fell on her hands, and her hands reflected a pale-rosy gleam on her face.

"How beautiful you are in the red light, Joan!" said Cosmo.

"That's the light, not me," she returned.

"No, it *is* you," he insisted. "It shows you as you are—more than the common light. In the dark even *you* do not look beautiful. Then you may say, if you like, 'It is the dark, not me.' Remember how Portia puts it—

> The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark
> When neither is attended; and I think
> The nightingale, if she should sing by day
> When every goose is cackling, would be thought
> No better a musician than the wren.
> How many things by season seasoned are
> To their right praise and true perfection!

She says, you see, not that beautiful things owe their beauty, but that the seers or hearers of them owe the right seeing or hearing of their beauty to fitly related circumstance. So this red light makes me *see* you more beautiful—not than you are—that could not be—but than I could see you in another light—a gray one, for instance. Your beauty needs a beautiful light to show it."

"You mustn't flatter me, Cosmo. You don't know what harm it may do me."

"I love you too much to flatter you," he said.

She raised the book from her knees, and began to read again.

Cosmo had never narrowed the channels that lay wide and free betwixt his soul and that of his father and of his teacher; Joan had no such aqueducts to her ground, and many a bitter wind blew across its wastes; it is therefore no matter of surprise that Cosmo, although younger, should be ahead of her. The conversations they now had were to Joan like water to a thirsty soul. Where death had seemed waiting at the door, the hope of the secret of life had now crept up out of the dark. She would listen to the youth, whose bodily weakness heightened the show of his enthusiasm, as to a messenger from the land of truth. In the old time he used to say the strangest things as if they were the commonest everybody knew; now he said stranger things still, but as if he knew they must look strange, and must need explanation. She wondered whether, if his history had been like hers, he would have kept his soul shining so through all its dreariness, would have been able still to see through the dusty windows the changeless beauty of things, and save alive his glorious hope. She began to understand that she had not got at any beginning, that she had let things draw her this way and that, had put forth no righteous effort to master circumstance by accepting its duty.

On Cosmo the passion of the believer in the unseen had laid hold; and as the gardener watches for the blossom of some strange plant of whose loveliness marvellous tales have reached his ears, so did he await some unknown entrancing beauty gathering itself from the sweet twilight sadnesses of her being, its gleams that died into dusk, and the deep voiceless ponderings in which she would so often lose herself.

As he grew stronger they would talk more about the book they

happened to be reading; it mattered little yet what it was, for a stupid book may serve as well as another to set live fountains flowing: it is only mere cisterns of which a stupid book cannot turn the tap. That same afternoon of the red light, Joan was reading from one partly written, partly compiled in the beginning of the century—somewhat before its time in England, which might have been the work of an imitator at once of de la Motte Fouqué and of the old British romancers: I will set down what she read.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE STORY OF THE KNIGHT WHO SPOKE THE TRUTH.

There was a land in which dwelt a knight whom no lady therein would love, and that because he spake the truth. For the other knights of that land would say every one to the lady he loved, that of all ladies in the world she was the most beautiful and the most gracious, yea in all things the very first; and thereby the ladies of the land learned to love their own praise best, and after that each the knight who was her chief praiser, for that he best enabled her to think well of herself, and that in spite of natural doubt. So the knight who would not speak save truly, they in mockery did name Sir Verity—which name some of them would again miscall Severity; for the more this knight loved, the more it became to him impossible to speak a lie. And thus it came about that, one after another, he was hated of all those ladies. For so it was, that, the more greedy of his commendation that to their thinking it was so sparingly sparsed, this lady and that would as it were covertly lead him on to speak of the thing wherein she made it her pleasure to take to herself excellence; but nowise thus did any one of them draw from him other than his true judgment. As thus: One day said unto him a certain lady, "Which of us, think you, Sir Verity, hath the darkest eyes of all the ladies here at the court of our lord the king?" And he thereto made answer, "Verily, me thinketh the queen." Then said that lady to him, "Who, then, hath the bluest eyes of all the ladies at the court of our lord the king?"—for that her own were of the colour of the heavens when the year is young. And he answered, "I think, truly, the lady Coryphane hath the bluest of all their blue eyes." Then said she, for that she was angered greatly, "And I think truly from thine answer, Severity, that thou lovest me not; for else wouldst thou have known that mine eyes are as blue as

the eyes of Coryphane." "Truly, nay!" he answered; "for my heart knoweth well that thine eyes are blue, and that they are lovely, and unto me verily are they the dearest of all eyes; but to say they are the bluest of all eyes, that I may not, for therein should I be no true man." Then was the lady some deal shamed, and seeking to cover her vanity, did answer and say, "It may well be, sir knight, for how should I tell who see not mine own eyes, and would therefore know of thee, of whom men say, some that thou speakest truly, other some that thou speakest naughtily! But be the truth as the truth may be, yet saith every knight to his mistress that in all things she is the paragon of the world." "Then," quoth the knight, "she that knoweth every man so saith, must know also only one of them all saith the thing that is true! Verily, not of my will would I swell the multitude of lies that do go about the world!" "Now verily I know and am sure thou dost not love me!" cried the lady; "for all men do say of mine eyes—", and therewith she stinted, and held her peace, that so she might cause him again to speak. "Lady," said then Sir Verity, and spake right solemnly, "as I said before, I do say again, and in truth, that thine eyes are to me the dearest of all eyes. Therefore were they the bluest or the blackest, the greenest or the grayest, I would love them all the same. For that because of none of those colours would they be dear to me, but only because they were thine eyes. For I love thine eyes because they are thine, not thee because thine eyes are or this or that." Then that lady brake forth into bitter weeping, and would not be comforted, neither thereafter would grant the knight any speech of her. For that it was the pride of a lady's life in that land to lie lapt in praises, greedily drinking in the flatteries blown into her ears by them who would be counted her lovers. Then said the knight to himself, "Nay, verily, and yet again nay, for her eyes are not the bluest in the world! And it seemeth to me that a lady will never love man aright, who loveth not the truth from a man's lips. And for the ladies of the land, save and except each may think herself better than all the rest, then is not life dear unto them! I will forsake this land, and go where the truth may be spoken nor the speaker thereof hated." He graithed him in his armour, never lady nor squire nor page to draw thong or buckle spur, and mounted his horse, and rode forth to leave that land. And as he rode it came to pass that on his way he entered a great wood. And as through the wood he yode, he heard a sobbing and a crying in the wood. And he said to himself, "Here is some one grievously wronged, for grievously she lamenteth! I will go and succour her." So about he rode searchingly, and he came to place

whither he was led of her cries. And there, at the foot of a great oak, he found an aged woman in a gray cloak, with her face in her hands, weeping right on, neither ceased she for the space of a sigh. "What aileth thee, good mother?" he said. "I am not good, and I am not thy mother," she answered, and fell again to her weeping. "Ah," thought the knight, "here is a woman that loveth the truth, and would not that aught but the truth be spoken! —Wherein may I help thee, woman," he said, "albeit thou art not my mother, neither may I call thee good?" "In taking thyself from my sight," she answered. "Then will I ride on my way," said the knight, and turning, he rode on his way. Then rose the woman to her feet, and followed him. "Wherefore followest thou me," said the knight, "if in nothing I may do thee service?" "I follow thee," she answered him, "because thou speakest the truth, and because thou art not true." "If thou speakest the truth, truly in a mystery speakest thou it," said he. "Wherefore then ridest thou through the world?" she asked. And he replied, "Verily to succour them that are oppressed, for I have no mistress to whom I may do honour." "Nay, sir knight," said she, "but to get thee a name and great glory thou ridest about the world. Said I not well, saying thou wast no true man? Verily thou lovest not the truth so well as thine own glory!" At these words of the woman the knight clapped spurs to his horse, and would have ridden from her, for he loved not to be reviled, and so he told her. But she followed him, and laid her hand on his stirrup, and ran as he rode, and said to him as she ran, "Yea, thine own heart whispereth thee that I said but the truth! It is from thyself thou wouldest flee!" Then did the knight make a silence, and listen to the sounds within him; and, lo, in very truth his heart was telling him that what the woman said was indeed so. Thereupon instantly he drew the reins of his bridle, and looked down upon the woman, and said to her, "Verily thou hast well spoken; but if I be not true, yet would I be true. Come with me. I will take thee behind me upon my horse, and together we will ride through the world; thou shalt speak to me the truth, and I with my sword will plead thy cause. So shall it go well with thee and me, for my desire is not only to love what is truly spoken, but to be in myself a true man." So saying he reached down to her his hand, and she placed her hand in his hand, and her foot upon his foot, and so sprang she lightly up behind him, and they rode on together. And as they rode, he said unto her, "Verily thou art the first woman I have found who to me hath spoken the truth, as I to others. Only thy truth is better than mine. Therefore must thou love the truth better than

I!" But she returned him no answer. Then said he to her again, "Dost thou not love the truth?" and again she gave him no answer, whereat he marvelled greatly. Then said he unto her yet again, "Surely it may not be thou art one of those who speak the truth out of envy and ill-will, and on their own part love not to hear it spoken, but are as the rest of the children of vanity! Woman, lovest thou the truth, nor only to speak it when it is sharp?" "If I love not the truth," she answered, "yet love I them that love it. But tell me now, sir knight, what thinkest thou of me?" "Nay," answered the knight, "that is what even now I would fain have known from thyself, namely what to think of thee." "Then will I now try thee," said she, "whether indeed thou wilt speak the truth or no.—Tell me to my face what thou thinkest of that face." Then said the knight to himself, "Never surely would I, for the love of pity, of my own will say to a woman she was evil-favoured! But if she will have what I think, then must she hear the truth." "Nay, nay," said the woman, "but thou wilt not speak the truth!" "Yea, but I will," answered he. "To my face thou darest not," she said. "Yea, but I dare," he answered. "Then I ask thee again," she said, "what thinkest thou of me?" And the knight replied, "Truly I think not of thee as of one of the well-favoured among women." "Dost thou then judge," said she, and her voice was full of anger, which yet it seemed as she would hide, "that I am not pleasant to look upon? Verily no man hath yet said so of me, though many have turned from me because I spoke the thing they loved not to hear!" "Now surely thou sayest the thing that is not so," returned the knight; for he was grieved to think she should have spoken the truth but of contention, not of love to the same, inasmuch as she also did seek that men should praise her. "Truly I say that which is so," she answered. Then was the knight angered, and said to her, "Therefore, woman, will I tell thee all thou demandest of me: Verily I think of thee as, to my thinking, one the worst-favoured, and least to be desired among women; neither would I any more look upon thee again." Then laughed she aloud, and said unto him, "Nay, but did I not tell thee?—for now thou speakest it not to my face, but behind thine own back!" And in wrath the knight turned him in his saddle, crying, "I tell thee to thy ill-shaped and worse-hued countenance, that—", and there ceased, and spake no more, but with open mouth sat gazing. For he beheld a woman the glory of her kind, more beautiful than man ever hoped to see out of heaven. "I told thee," she said, "thou couldst not say the thing to my face!" "For that it would be the greatest lie ever in this world uttered," answered the knight, "seeing that verily I believe

thee the loveliest among women, God be praised! Nevertheless will I not go with thee one step farther, so to peril my soul's health, except, as thou thyself hast taught me, thou love the truth in all ways, in great ways as well as in small." "This much will I say to thee," she answered, "—that I love thee because thou lovest the truth. If I say not more, it is that mortal must be humble speaking of great things. The truth is mighty, and will subdue my heart unto itself." "And wilt thou help me to do the truth?" asked the knight. "So the great truth help me!" she answered. And together they rode on, and parted not thereafter. Here endeth the story of the knight that spoke the truth.

Lady Joan ceased, and there was silence in the chamber, she looking back over the pages, for she had not quite understood, and Cosmo, who had understood entirely, watching the lovely, dark, anxious face. He saw she had not mastered the meaning of the story, but, which was next best, knew she had not. He began therefore to search her difficulty, or rather to help it to take shape to her, whereon followed a talk neither of them ever forgot—concerning what Cosmo designated the hierarchy of truth—whose grades he showed ascending from the truth of fact to the truth of vital relation and the truth of action.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### NEW EXPERIENCE.

THE next day he was up almost the whole of it. But that very day was Joan less with him than heretofore, and thereafter came not so often, and stayed a shorter time. She would now bring him books and leave them, saying he did not require a nurse any more, and was able to feed himself; and Cosmo could not help thinking her manner towards him was a little changed. "What can have come between us?" he would ask himself twenty times a day. Had he hurt her anyhow? he pondered. Had he unconsciously donned the schoolmaster with her? Had he presumed on her kindness and made himself disagreeable? With many such questions he plagued himself, but found to none of them an answer. At times he almost imagined her a little cross with him, but the next moment she would be as sweet as ever. Each time they met, she seemed farther off than when they parted. They always got back to nearly the same place before they parted again, and Cosmo tried to persuade himself that if there was any change

it was only the result of growing familiarity; but not the less did he find himself ever again mourning over something that was gone —a delicate colour vanished from the verge of the meeting sky and sea of their two natures.

How differently the hours went when she was with him, and when he lay thinking whether she was coming! His heart swelled like a rose-bud ready to burst into flaming flower when she drew near, and folded itself together when she went, as if to save perfume and strength for her return! Everything in what he read that pleased him must be shared with Joan—must serve them as a thought-atmosphere in which to draw nigh to each other. Everything beautiful he saw in two aspects—as it seemed in his own eyes, namely, and as he imagined it in the eyes of Joan: he was always trying to see things as she must see them. He did not care to read anything she would not enjoy; yet he assured himself that everything he liked she must one day enjoy.

But between them an unrest had crept in; they were no more so sure of each other as to be certainly at ease together; though often yet, for many minutes, thought and word would go well betwixt them, and all be as simple and clear as ever.

Suddenly one day as he sat alone, Cosmo made the discovery that since his illness he had been forgetting his master. He had not once been brooding over the story of the sole true life! not once had he lost himself in prayer to the Father of Jesus and of him! not once since finding Joan had he thirsted for God, or been flooded with a glory as from the presence of the living One! neither had any fresh vision of truth filled him like the wine of the new heavens and the new earth! It troubled him greatly. When Joan came she saw that he was sad, and questioned him. But even to her he could not open his mind on such a matter; near as they were to each other they had not yet come near enough for that.

In the history, which is the growth, of the individual man, there is a constant succession of epochs of individual truth and differing moods or modes of being, the new one ever displacing that which preceded; and this must go on until the mind shall at length have gained power to blend the new at once with the antecedent whole. But this cannot be until our knowledge of the Life absolute is so full that it will flow into every possible necessity of our nature. A new mood is as a dry well for the water of life to fill. The man who does not yet understand God as the very power of his conscious as well as his unconscious being, as more in him than intensest presence of bliss or of pain, must have many a treeless expanse, many a mirage-haunted desert, many an empty

cistern and dried-up river in the world of his being! There was not much of this kind of waste in Cosmo's world, but God was not yet inside his growing love to Joan—that is, consciously to Cosmo—and his spirit was therefore of necessity troubled. That love to any lovely thing—how much more to the loveliest being God had made!—should lead him, in any smallest degree, or for any shortest time, to forget him whose will is the soul of loveliness, and grow strange to the thought of him, was reason good for perplexing dread. The cause was this, that, having found his treasure, he had not yet taken it home to his Father! Jesus himself, when first he was out of the grave, could not be altogether at home with his own, until he had first been home to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. For as God is the source, so is he the bond of all love. There are Christians who in portions of their being, of their life, of their judgment, of their carriage and action, of their aims, are absolute heathens, for with those portions, so far as their thought or will is concerned, God has nothing to do. There God is not with them, for there they are not with God. And whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### CHARLES JERMYN.

THE doctor who attended Cosmo had, after completing his course of study, travelled for some years about Europe as medical attendant on an English nobleman, gathering thereby experiences of many kinds, and after that had settled down as his father's assistant in a large country-practice. He was now about thirty years of age. Through his sister's acquaintance with her chiefly, he had seen lady Joan pretty often, and had more than begun to entertain aspiring hopes concerning her. His father, although he favoured his son's ambition, partly because he hated the earl, and would be glad to see him annoyed, partly because he liked lady Joan, and also because he was far from blind to the consequence his family would gain by such an alliance, yet had no great hope of his success; for experience, of which few have more than a country-doctor, had taught him that, in every probability, his son's first definite advance would be to lady Joan the signal for retiring within the palisades of her rank: he knew only too well that there are many who will show plentiful familiarity and friendliness with agreeable inferiors up to a certain point, but that point reached, the old Adam, or perhaps rather the old Satan, is instantly up in

full pride, like a turkey-cock with swollen neck, trembling wattles, roused feathers, and hideous gabble. His doubt, however, was nowise founded on the fact that such was precisely the reception he had himself given to a prayer for the hand of his daughter from one whom he counted her social inferior. The younger man, who had also had his experiences, reflected that the utter isolation of the lady through the character of her father, the unsociableness of her brother, and the poverty into which the family had sunk, gave him advantages.

The father had been for many years the medical adviser of the house; and although the present lord Mergwain accorded the medical practice of his day a relation to the unborn science of therapeutics such as the old alchemy bore to modern chemistry, yet, the moment he felt ill, he was sure to send for young Jermyn. Charles had also of late attended lady Joan in several illnesses: she was not in such health as when she used to climb the wintry hills with Cosmo. On those occasions she had sent for the father, but, with one excuse and another, he had always sent his son in his stead. The third time he came she was so much annoyed that she had almost refused to receive him; but from dislike of seeming to care she admitted him, and had got used both to his attendance and to himself. He managed to improve the occasional opportunity into the privilege of tolerably free access to her, on which he congratulated himself the more from confidence that he had no rival.

Nor was there anything absurd in his hope to win her. He was a man of good breeding and more than agreeable manners—with a large knowledge of places, therefore plenty to talk about, and a social experience so far from restricted that, had Joan been less ignorant of things belonging to her proper station, she would have found in him the more to interest her. He was also a man of some insight, and at the same time possessed of considerable versatility, so that, readily discovering any peculiarity, he was ready to meet it, and laid himself out to talk of the things and in the ways he judged she would like: such men are very ready to imagine that to discover is to understand. No longer young enough, as he said to himself, to be greatly interested in anything but success, he could yet easily lay his hands on many properties belonging to the part he chose as the fittest to represent him. The greater part of conventionally honest men try to look the thing they would like to be; others, along with what they would like to be, act that which they would like to appear; the downright rascal acts the part that will serve his immediate purpose; and the downright honest man thinks of being, not of appearing.

But if Jermyn merely took upon him at first to represent himself as in love with lady Joan, he must soon have imagined himself, and thereafter soon have become actually more or less in love with her. He did not therefore relax his caution, however; and so far as his attentions had yet gone, they continued to be pleasant to her;—his visits were at least a break in the ennui of the day, a help towards the oblivion of the night. She was not one of those who, unable to quicken the hour, must kill it lest it kill them; but neither was she of those who make their time so alive that the day is too short for them. Hence, by and by, she would, when he called, offer him tea; and when he took his leave would walk with him a short way through the garden, and at length sometimes accompany him as far as the lodge on his way home.

Charles Jermyn was a tall, well-made man, with a clever and refined face, which, if not much feeling, expressed great intelligence. By the ladies of the neighbourhood he was greatly admired—by some of them pronounced good-looking, by others declared to be *beautiful.* Certain of them said he was much too handsome for a doctor. He had a jolly air with him which was yet far from unrefined, and a way of shaking hands which gave an impression of honesty; and indeed I think honesty would have been comparatively easy to him, had he set himself to cultivate it; but he had never given himself trouble about anything except *getting on.* If he gave it solemnly, you might rely on his word, but not otherwise. Absolute truth he would have counted a hindrance in the exercise of his profession. His oath was better than his word.

Women, even more than men, I presume, see in one who interests them, not so much what is there, as a reflection of what they construct from glimpses that have pleased them. Some it takes a whole miserable life of marriage to undeceive; for others not even that will serve; they continue to see, if not an angel, yet a very pardonable mortal, therefore altogether loveable man, in the husband in whom everybody else sees only a vile rascal. Whether in some cases the wife or the world be nearer the truth, will one day come out: the wife *may* be a woman of insight, and see where no one else can.

In his youth Jermyn had read a good deal of poetry, enjoying it in a surface-sort of fashion, which enabled him to discover that lady Joan had a fine taste in verse: he made use of his old acquaintance with it, and effected the greater impression, that a limited experience always takes familiarity for a sign of knowledge: he, for instance, who quotes largely, must intimately understand what he quotes! whereas it had never entered the doctor's head that poetry could have anything to do with life—not in the case of

the poet himself—how much less in that of his reader or even admirer! Never once had it occurred to him to ask himself how any one could be such a fool as enjoy a thing so false as to have no being save in the brain of the poet, therefore a mere lie—for that which has nothing to do with life, what is it but a lie! And now he got down book after book, for many a day undusted on his shelves, and read and re-read passage after passage which had once borne him into the seventh heaven of feeling! Is it any wonder he was struck with a mild surprise at finding how much had lost even the appearance of the admirable, and how much of what had seemed bitter he could now thoroughly accept? He did not ask whether the change came of a true vision or a sourer judgment, but put all down to the experience that makes a man wise, none to the experience that hides the truth. He was not able to imagine himself in anything less than he had been, in anything less than he would be; and that although poetry had become to him the merest munition of war—feathers to trim the darts of Cupid! That was how the lover of poetry now to himself expressed himself: he was laying in store of weapons, he said! For when a man uses that in which he does not believe, he cannot fail to be vulgar. But lady Joan saw no vulgarity in the result; that was for the time hid behind the show-man. To her he seemed a profound lover of poetry: he knew by heart poets of whom she had never even heard! Once he contrived to spend nearly an afternoon with her in the library—for of the bindings and title-pages of books he knew something: one of his patients—with whom he first travelled, then for a time resided—was a book-collector and a student of catalogues; and this knowledge he would make opportunity to show. Judiciously poured out, it passed with lady Joan for a marvellous knowledge of books, and the country doctor began to assume in her eyes the aspect and proportions of a man of universal culture. He knew how to bring all he had to the front, and by one mean and another had succeeded in making himself of no small account in the lonely life, so ignorant and unsupported, of his patient. He could play the violin too, and that with no mean expression—caring far more for that, like many another artist, than for the feeling expressed; and this accomplishment also he contrived that accident should betray.

In the judgment of most who knew him, he was an excellent, and indeed admirable man. "No nonsense about him, don't you know?" men would say. "A thorough family-doctor!" those mammas would add who were fond of holding private confabulations about their children with doctor and clergyman.

But where his professional duty bordered on that of the nurse, the best that was in Jermyn came out. Few men could handle a patient at the same time so firmly and tenderly; few were less sparing of self in the endeavour to make him comfortable. From the moment when the simple-minded Cosmo saw him with eyes aware, his heart went out to him—from the moment, that is, when he lifted him in his arms that lady Joan and the old woman might place a feather-bed and mattress under him: from the heavenly cloud of ease on which he laid him down, his spirit rose in thanks to his minister. Nor was Cosmo one in whom gratitude was less enduring than ready. All the time he was recovering, the daily visit of the doctor was welcome to him for the doctor's sake. And the doctor never came without receiving the reward of an interview with the lady—wherein to prosecute a fresh advantage he had gained by Cosmo's illness; for Joan had found herself compelled to take him into her confidence as to her brother's ignorance of the presence of Cosmo in the house, and a secret shared is a hold given. He did not quite welcome the discovery of the Scotch cousinship, but plainly the youth was too young for Joan, and if there was any need to beware of him, he would soon find it out, by which time also he would have learned how!

For the first week Joan did not mind how often Jermyn found her with Cosmo, but after that she began to dislike being in the room when he came—she could scarcely have told why, and managed to avoid it. The doctor became suspicious, and called cunning to his aid. Arriving one morning an hour before the time of his customary visit, he walked straight into the room, as of course he might without offence where his patient was a young man. But lady Joan had heard or felt his coming, and as he entered was handing Cosmo a newspaper with the words,

"There! you are quite able to read to yourself to-day. I am sorry I could not find the book you wanted. I will go and have another look for it."

With that she turned, and gave a little start.

"Oh, Mr. Jermyn!" she exclaimed, "I did not know you were there!" and held out her hand. "Your patient is getting on wonderfully now.—You will let me see you before you leave the castle—will you not?"

She left the room, and hastened to her own. There in the mirror she saw the red stain of a lie. "What will Cosmo think?" she cried to herself—and burst into tears, the first since the day she found him.

The doctor was not taken in, but Cosmo was troubled and puzzled.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### COSMO AND THE DOCTOR.

To the eyes of Jermyn, Cosmo appeared, mainly from his simplicity, younger than he was; while the doctor's manners and knowledge of the world made Cosmo regard him as a much greater man than, in any sense or direction, he really was. Nor was this all, for, his kindness having gained the youth's heart, he was ready to see in him everything that love would see in the loved.

"You are very good to me, Mr. Jermyn," he said one day, "—so good, that I am the more sorry, though the less unwilling— " —The doctor could not keep hold of the thread of Cosmo's speech, but did not interrupt him.—"to tell you that I do not know when I shall be able to hand you your fees. All I can say is that the first money I earn you shall at least have part of."

The doctor laughed. It was a genuine relief to Cosmo to find him take it so lightly.

"You were robbed on the way, my lady tells me," Jermyn said.

"I am not sure that I was robbed," returned Cosmo; "but had I brought every penny I started with, I could not have paid you. My father and I are very poor, Mr. Jermyn."

"And my father and I are pretty well to do," said the doctor, laughing again.

"But," resumed Cosmo, "neither condition is a reason why you should not be paid. I mention mine only as the cause why you will not be paid at once."

"My dear fellow," said the doctor, laying his hand on the boy's, "it is not so long since I was a student myself—in your country too—at Edinburgh—that I should forget how scarce money was then in my own pocket."

"But I am not exactly a student now. I have been making a little money as tutor; only—— "

"Don't trouble your head about it, I beg," interrupted the doctor. "It is the merest trifle. Besides, I should never think of taking a fee from a friend. I am well paid in the pleasure of your acquaintance.—There is a way too," he added, after a pause, "in which you could make me a return."

"What is that?" asked Cosmo eagerly.

"To borrow a little money of me for a few months. I had to borrow many a time when I was in Edinburgh, but I am not hard up now."

Cosmo's heart swelled in his bosom, and for a time he could not answer. "Here is a man of the true sort!" he thought with himself; "—a man after my father's own heart! He uses the ground of his rights only to plant fresh favours in it! This is a rare man! But it would be a wrong to Joan to borrow money of him!" So, with every acknowledgment, he declined the generous offer.

Now the doctor was quite simple in treating Cosmo thus. He was a friendly man and a gentleman, and liked the youth as no respectable soul could help liking him. It had not yet come into his head to make him useful. That same night, however, he began to ask himself whether Cosmo might not serve his hope, and soon had thought the matter out.

It would be necessary to make more sure of him first, he concluded, and prepare his ground by sowing a previous crop. The grain he would scatter should be notions of himself, in the hope they might bear the winged seed of speech! He must first make himself something in the eyes of the youth, plant himself firmly in his estimation, cause his idea of him to blossom! And, first of all, for the sake of these means to his end, he must understand the boy!

Nor was it long before the doctor imagined he did understand the boy; and indeed, sceptical as his knowledge both of himself and of the world had made him, he did so far understand him as to believe him innocent as on the day he was born. His eyes could not shine so, his mouth could not have that childlike—the doctor called it childish—smile otherwise! Having put out various feelers to satisfy himself there was no pretence, he had found his allusions either pass over him like a breath of merest air, or actually puzzle him. It was not that Cosmo did not now and then know what a suggestion *might* mean, but that he could not believe Jermyn meant that—perceiving which, the doctor would make haste to alter the shadow into something definitely unobjectionable. Jermyn had no design of corrupting Cosmo; he was above that, even could he have fancied anything to be gained by it, whereas his interest lay in the opposite direction, his object being to use the lad unconsciously to himself.

He discovered also that he had lofty ideas of duty; that he was trusting, and unready to doubt; and that with him poetry was not, as with lady Joan, a delight, but an absolute passion—all which facts favoured the conclusion that it would neither be difficult to make for himself a high place in the imagination of the youth, nor to influence him farther for his purpose. To the former of these ends first, he brought to bear upon him his choicest fragments of

knowledge, and all his power to interest; set forth his acquaintance with not a few of the more delicate phases of humanity, and displayed his familiarity with the world of imagination in books; professed much admiration in the lines of Cosmo's—going into raptures, for example, over Milton's profoundest gems, although in truth he was moved only in a reflected, cold-moony way by the beauty of their external finish; directed his attention to Wordsworth's *Happy Warrior*, of which he professed, and truly, that he had pasted it on his wall when a student, that at any moment he might read it; and introduced him to the best poems of Shelley—a benefit in return for which alone Cosmo felt as if he must serve him for life.

Cosmo was himself so entire, so utterly honest, that he could not but regard the channel through which any good reached him as of like nature with that which came to him through it: how could that serve to transmit which was not one with the thing transmitted? To his eyes, therefore, Jermyn sat in the reflex glory of Shelley, and of every other radiant spirit of whom he had widened his knowledge. How could Cosmo regard him as the common man he was through whom reached him that thrilling trumpet-cry, full of the glorious despair of a frustrate divinity, the *Ode to the West Wind*, grandest of pagan-pantheistic utterances! The whole night, and many a night after, was Cosmo haunted with the æolian music of its passionate, self-pitiful self-abandonment; and for long time its "Be thou me, impetuous one!" would take embodiment to him in dream-reality; he and the wind would be one, careering wildly through the sky, combing to their length the maenad locks of the approaching storm, and answering the cry of weary poets everywhere over the world.

As he sat by his patient's bed, Jermyn would also talk of his travels, relating passages of adventure in various parts of the world, and making no secret of the share he had had in the happy issue of most of them. He came oftener, and staid longer, and talked more and more freely, until at length in Cosmo's vision, the more excitable from his weakness, his friend seemed a hero, an admirable Crichton, the paragon of doctors.

In all this, Jermyn, to draw from his own dignified imagery, was but preparing an engine of assault against the heart of lady Joan. With no really delicate feeling of the relation of man and woman, I doubt if he would, had he had the chance of using her, have hesitated much to follow the loverly custom in low plays of *cultivating* the lady's maid, and bribing her to chaunt the praises of the briber in the ears of her mistress. Something seemed always, in his intercourse with lady Joan, to come between and

prevent him from showing himself to the best, which he never doubted the truest advantage; but if he sent her a reflection of him in the mind-mirror of such an admirer as he was making of Cosmo, she would then see him as he desired to be seen, and as he did not question he was.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE NAIAD.

COSMO was at length able to go out, and Joan did not leave him without an attendant. At first he could walk only a few paces, but he sat a good deal in the sun, and rapidly recovered strength. One glorious morning Joan judged they might now attempt a little walk in the grounds.

Although she first made sure lord Mergwain was in his laboratory, she dared not lead Cosmo to any part ever visited by him. She took him therefore, through various walks, some wide and bordered with stately trees, some narrow and encroached upon by shrubs, but all grown with weeds and moss, to a part with which she soon found he had already made a passing acquaintance. It lay as when first he entered, all careless of the present, hopeless of the future, and hardly dreaming of the past. Years many had gone by since foot of lady save her own had pressed these ancient paths, since laugh or merry speech had been heard in them. Nothing is lovelier than the half neglect of great grounds when the owner's fancy has changed and his care turned to a more favoured spot; when there is moss on the walks, but the weeds are few and fine; when the trees stand in their old honour, and yet no branch is permitted to obstruct a path; when flowers have ceased to be sown or planted, but those that bloom are not disregarded; while yet it is only through some stately door that entrance is gained, nor chance foot is free to stray in. But here it was altogether different. That stage of neglect was long past; the place was quite untended, ruinous, and overgrown—half-way back to wilderness. Between that picture and this reality lay all the painful difference between stately, beautiful matronhood and the old age that, no longer possessed of the comely, has grown careless of the decent.

"At this time of the morning there is plenty of sun here," said Joan, with an inflection of voice that savoured of apology.

"I think," said Cosmo, the look of the place making him

sadder than he cared to feel just then, "the gardener told me there were parts better kept than this."

"Yes," answered Joan; "but none are what they should be: we are so poor that Mergwain requires for his experiments almost all the money the trustees allow for keeping the place in order."

"You don't know what poverty is!" said Cosmo.

"Oh, don't I!" returned Joan.

"I don't mind the wild look of it," said Cosmo; "but somehow it is all so melancholy! If I were here, I should work night and day till I had it in some sort of order."

"Are you as strong as you used to be, Cosmo—I mean when you are well?" asked Joan, willing to change the subject.

"A good deal stronger, I hope," answered Cosmo; "but I am glad not just at this moment, for then I should not be leaning on you, Joan."

"Do you like to lean on me, Cosmo?"

"It makes me very happy, Joan.—But why don't you take me to a more cheerful part?"

She made him no answer. He looked in her face. It was very pale.

"Must I tell you, Cosmo?" she said, looking up, her eyes full of tears.

"No, certainly, if you would rather not."

"But you would think it strange of me not to tell you!"

"I should never doubt you had a good reason for it."

"I have a good reason for not taking you anywhere else, but not a good enough reason for not telling you why: my brother does not know you are here."

Now Cosmo had never even suspected this, and it nearly took from him what little breath he had, to learn that he had been all this time in a man's house without the man knowing it. Lord Mergwain had not once come to see him, but nothing needed explanation less: lord Mergwain must as little desire to see Cosmo as Cosmo desired to see lord Mergwain! Doubtless in all justice the house was Joan's too, however little the male aristocracy may be inclined to admit such an assertion, but some one must be at the head of it, and that place being naturally his lordship's, he had at least a right to know whom he sheltered! Huge discomfort therefore invaded Cosmo, and a restless desire to be out of the place. For a moment he could not speak, and his silence frightened Joan.

"Are you very angry with me, Cosmo?" she said.

"Angry! No, Joan! How could I be angry with you! But I find myself where I have no business to be, and it makes me feel like a thief!"

"I am so sorry! But what could I do? You don't know my brother, or you would not wonder. He seems to have a kind of hatred to your family—I do not in the least know why. Could my father have said anything about you? No, that cannot be!—And yet my father must have known something of Castle Warlock!"

"As to how lord Mergwain may regard me," said Cosmo, "I need give myself small concern; but it would anger a saint he should behave so to you that you dared not tell him a thing. I *am* sorry I did not write first!—I don't know though, for then perhaps I should not be here now.—I can't say I am sorry I was taken ill, notwithstanding the trouble I have caused you—so much more than I had any idea of, for without that I should never have known how beautiful and good you are."

His voice trembled, and he could scarcely speak for something in his throat.

"I'm not good! and I'm not beautiful!" cried Joan, and burst into tears of humiliation and sore-heartedness. What a contrast was their house to Castle Warlock! What a reception Cosmo's to hers! "But," she resumed, choking back her sobs, "you must not think I had no right to do what I have done. My father left all his personal property to me; and I know there was money in his bureau, saved up for me—I *know* it; and I know too that my brother took it! I never said a word about it to him or any one—never mentioned the subject before, but I can't have you feeling as if you had been taking what you had no right to!"

Cosmo was almost too sad for Joan, to rejoice in the lovely way she thus made common case with him.

They had now come to the dry fountain, with its great cracked basin, in which stood the parched naiad, pouring an endless nothing from her inverted vase. Forsaken and sad she looked, and well she might! All her world had changed; she only was still the same—and her memory of old friends, vanished ways, and things forgotten of all save her! She, alas, could not alter, but must for ever stand the changeless centre of change! All the winters would beat upon her, all the summers would burn her; but never more would the glad water pour plashing from her dusty urn! never more would the birds make showers in her cool basin with their beating wings! The dead leaves would keep falling year after year to their rest, but she could not fall—must, through the slow ages, stand and stand, while storm and sunshine wasted her atom by atom away!

It was the spirit of Cosmo that had gone into the naiad, and thus made her think. For on the broad rim of the basin they

sat, Cosmo turned towards the weary statue, thoughts many such as those I have written throbbing in his brain like the pale electric pulse in an exhausted receiver, Joan with her back to the figure, and her eyes on the ground, full of dim trouble, for she fancied Cosmo was brooding vexed over his newly discovered position. It was a sad picture. The two were as the type of Nature and Art here at strife—together, but the more apart—Oberon and Titania with ruin all about them. In a chance vista stood the leaning altar of Time, forsaken of its deity—a sundial where not a sunray could reach it. "It is well," thought Cosmo. "Time is nothing, does nothing; and where progress is but disintegration, why should the mere medium in which the forces work be noted? Time can no more cure or cause our ills, than space can unite or divide our souls!"

Had Cosmo suspected Joan's thought, he would have spoken eager words to remove it; but from the naiad his own had lighted upon her urn, and that had roused the memory of the thousand thoughts and imaginations that used to gather and brood about the hidden source of the torrent that for ever wore the basement-rock of Castle Warlock. In the dry urn he saw the end of life that knows not its source: when the water of its consciousness fails, how shall it find its way back, and unite itself afresh with the self-existent parent of springs? The lamp is out that might have shown the way to the house of them that sell oil!

Then was Cosmo's mouth opened, and he began to pour out to Joan the whole metaphysical history of the development in him of the idea of life in connection with the torrent and its origin ever receding. It had been to him like a decoy-hope—is not the world well haunted with such?—ever enticing him on after the truth, until at length he came to God, found him the one only origin, the fountain of fountains, the Father of lights.

He had yet to find him the God of consolation, the healer of hurts, the righter of wrongs; not the embracer of children only, but the lifter up of men; the giver of hearts' desires, the One

Who makes the joy the last in every song.

"If we were to come upon such an urn as that," said Cosmo, pointing to the naiad's, "in whose heart the water was ever renewing itself without pipe or spring, we should call it a miracle; unable to follow the appearance farther back, we should cease thought, and wonder only in the presence of the making God: such an urn would be a true picture of the heart of God, ever sending forth life of itself, and of its own will, into the consciousness of us made by the very gift the vessels to receive it."

He grew eloquent, and talked as even Joan had never heard him before. She understood him too, for the lonely desire after life had wrought in her, making her capable of the same. She felt more than ever that he was a messenger to her from a higher region, come to make it possible for her to live her life, instead of merely longing after it.

Suddenly came a breach in the chain of association; the thought-current leaped across, and leaping became a spark; and the spark was a recollection: he had not yet sent the woman whose generous trust saved him from long pangs of hunger, the price of her loaf. He turned quickly to Joan: here was a fresh opportunity of showing his faith in her! and what so precious thing between two lives as faith—ever a new creation in midst of the old! Indebted to one, herself poor, on whom he had no claim, it would be wrong not to ask help of Joan! He told her, therefore, now for the first time, the whole story of his adventures on his way to her, and ending said,

"Lend me a half-sovereign, please, Joan. I want to put it in a letter. I've got the woman's address that gave me the loaf. I will send the girl something afterwards."

Joan burst again into tears, and it was some time before she could speak; but at last she told him she had no money, and dared not ask her brother, because, whether he let her have it or not, he would insist on knowing what she wanted it for.

"Last week I could have asked him," she sobbed, "for then I would have told a lie; but not even for your sake will I ever do that again."

Cosmo was too indignant to say a word: he must not give shape to what he thought of her brother! She looked up anxiously in his face.

"Dear Cosmo," she said, "do not be angry with me. I will borrow the money from the housekeeper. You shall send it to-morrow. Of course you must send it."

"No, no, dearest Joan!" cried Cosmo; "I will not hear of such a thing. I should be worse than lord Mergwain to lay a feather on the burden he makes you carry."

"I shouldn't mind it *much.* It would be sweet to hurt my pride for your sake."

"Joan, if you do," said Cosmo, "I will not touch it. Don't trouble your dear heart about it. God is taking care of the woman as well as of us. I will send it afterwards."

They sat silent—Cosmo thinking how he was to escape from the poverty-stricken grandeur of this heaven with one angel, where he was so little yet so delightfully welcome, and which he would

be so sorry to leave. He knew his father could not send him the sum he would require without borrowing it, and he knew also what that involved to a debtor ever struggling to pay.

He looked at Joan. Her eyes were red with weeping. She glanced up with an expression half of shame, half of pity. He put both his arms about her in vain longing to comfort her. That moment came a voice, calling her name in a loud, angry tone. She turned white as the marble on which they sat, and cast a look of agonized terror on Cosmo, who had instinctively withdrawn from her side.

"It is Mergwain!" said her lips, but hardly her voice.

The blood rushed in full tide from Cosmo's heart, colouring all his thin face, and he rose with the look of one ready for love's sake. But Joan threw her arms round him now, and held him.

"No, no!" she said in a sharp whisper; "—this way! this way!" and letting him go, she darted into the shrubbery.

Cosmo hated turning his back on person or thing, but the danger here was to Joan, and he followed her instantly.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE GARDEN-HOUSE.

REGARDLESS of thorns and striping twigs, she threaded and forced her way swiftly through the thick-grown shrubs. It was a tangled wilderness across which Cosmo with some difficulty followed her for about a furlong, when the bushes seemed to part suddenly, and he saw before him a neglected building, overgrown with ivy, whether temple or stable or dwelling it would have been hard for him to say, for it was the product of a time when everything was made to look like something else. The door, thick with many layers of green paint, stood half open, looking as if the last who left the place had failed in a hurried attempt to shut it. Like a creature pursued Joan darted in, and up the creaking stair that fronted her. Cosmo followed, every step threatening to give way under him. On the walls were great green stains; fallen plaster lay here and there in hillocks; the landings and steps, rotted with damp, were sinking this way and that; yet had there been no wanton destruction, for in the windows little glass was broken. Merest neglect is enough to make of both man and his works a heap; for speedily nature resumes or the devil usurps what the will of man is not in earnest to hold. The house had a worse

repute than mere ghost could give it—worse than Joan knew, for no one had told her about it what was all to her father's discredit.

At the top of the stair, Joan turned through a door, and keeping along the wall, went cautiously to a window, and standing at the side, so as not to be seen from without, listened anxiously.

"I don't think he will venture here," she panted under her breath. "They say his lordship is just as much afraid of the place as the rest of them. I am the only one who doesn't mind it much—and that is in the daytime only.—You are never frightened, I suppose, Cosmo?"

Here she turned on him a face which, for all the exertion she had been making, was pale as death.

"I haven't often had much cause to be frightened," replied Cosmo. "All I can venture to say is, that I hope God will keep me from turning my back on anything, however frightened I may be."

But the room they were in seemed the most fearful place he had ever beheld. His memory of the guest-room at home, in its age and outworn stateliness and evil report, showed mere innocence beside the small, ordinary, square, low-pitched apartment in which he found himself. If a room dead and buried for years then dug up again be imaginable, that is what this was like. It was furnished as a drawing-room or boudoir, and everything in it was, as to its position, plainly just as it had been left by her who last occupied it. Many things only to be seen in a lady's room, were at once recognizable here and there, but the aspect of the whole was indescribably awful. The rottenness and dust and displacement of simple decay looked enough to scare even the ghosts if they had any scare left in them. No doubt the rats had at one time had their share in the destruction, but it was long since they had forsaken the house. And there was no disorder. The only thing that suggested hasty abandonment was the door of a closet standing wide open.

Something in a corner of the closet caught Cosmo's eye, and he had taken one step towards it when a sharp moan from the lips of his companion arrested him. He turned, saw her face agonized with fresh fear, and was rushing to the window, when she ran *at* him, pushed him back, and stood visibly trembling. He thought she would fall, for she seemed, as he told her afterwards, just like what he had felt when first he tried to walk from his bed to the sofa, and made haste to support her. Together they stood, with faces like two moons in the daytime, listening, speechless. Presently Cosmo heard the rustling of twigs, and the sweep of backswinging branches. The sounds came nearer and nearer. Joan

gazed with expanding eyes of terror in Cosmo's face, gazed as if she must not look anywhere else, for there was that on every side the sight of which would kill her.

"Joan!" cried the same voice they had heard at the fountain. She shook, and held so to Cosmo's arm that she left the marks of her fingers, a dear sign to his heart for days that followed. The sympathy of her fear invaded him, and he would have darted to meet the enemy, but she held him fast and he yielded. Now, however, came a resolve, with its accompanying dawn of strength; she recovered a little, and began to pull him towards the closet. Involuntarily for a moment he resisted, fearing for her a worse discovery; but her action and look were imperative, and again he yielded.

They entered the closet, and he pulled the door to shut it upon them. It resisted; he pulled harder; a rusted hinge gave way, and the door dropped and rested on its own corner, so that he had partly to lift it to get it to. He had just succeeded, when Mergwain's voice yet again calling Joan, sent her name from the open door echoing fearfully through the mouldy silences of the house. In the darkness of the closet, where there was just room for them to stand, she clung like a child to Cosmo, trembling in his arms like one in an ague-fit. The thought of what a terror many men are to the women of their house is both horrible and sad. The woman-fear in the world is one of its most mournful and pitiful outcries after a saviour.

The sounds of hesitating steps came from below. They went from one to another of the rooms, then began to ascend the stair.

"Now, Joan, dear Joan," said Cosmo, holding her to him, "whatever you do, keep quiet. Don't utter a sound. Please God, I will take care of you."

She pressed his arm, but did not speak.

The steps had reached the top of the stair, and now entered the room. As one person Cosmo and Joan seemed to feel the eyes that looked all about it. Then the steps came towards the closet. Now was the decisive moment! Cosmo had made up his mind to keep still to the very last. He put a hand on the lock, and pressed the fallen corner of the door down against the floor. In the faint light that came through the crack at the top of it, he could see the dark terror of Joan's eyes fixed on his face. A hand laid hold of the key, tried the lock, and pulled and pulled, but in vain. It then tried the key the other way, and turned it, locking them in. The steps left the room, went down the stair, and out of the house.

"He's not gone far!" said Cosmo. "He will have the door

open! We must get out at once! Please, give me what room you can, Joan, dear!"

She drew back from him as far as the space would allow. He put his shoulder to the door, and sent it into the middle of the room with a great crash, then ran and lifted it.

"Come, Joan! quick!" he cried; "help me to set it up again."

The moment there was something that had to be done, Joan's heart returned to her. In an instant they had the door jammed into its place, with the bolt in the catch as Mergwain had left it.

"Now," said Cosmo, "we must get down the stair and hide somewhere below till he pass."

They ran to the kitchen, Joan leading, and into a dark cellar opening off it. Hardly were they in when they heard Mergwain re-enter and go up the stair. Instantly they crept out, and keeping close to the house till they got to the back of it, went softly through the thicket to a neighbouring path, which led them to a little gate opening on the highway. The hurried walk was a severe trial to Cosmo's strength now that the excitement of adventure had relaxed and left him the weaker. Again and again had Joan to urge him on; but when they reached a little wood on the other side of the highway, she made him sit on a fallen tree.

"I believe," she said, "that wicked old butler has come to suspect something, and put Mergwain on our track. I would not for the world he knew all! You can't conceive, Cosmo, what he would think—and tell me to my face too! It was not an easy life with my father, Cosmo, but I would rather be with him now, wherever he is, than here with that brother of mine!"

Her eyes flashed and her cheeks reddened with indignation as she spoke.

"What had we better do?" said Cosmo, trying to hide his exhaustion.

"I am going to take you to the Jermyns. They are the only friends I have. Julia will be kind to you for my sake. I will tell *them* all about it. Mr. Jermyn of course knows already. I had to tell him, lest he should happen to mention it."

To Cosmo it was being sent from paradise to purgatory! But we must make the best of our purgatories.

"You will come and see me, won't you, Joan?" he said sadly.

"Yes, indeed!" she answered. "It will be in some ways easier than before. At home I never was free of the dread of being found out. But how shall I keep clear of telling stories! When you are safe, though, I sha'n't be so much tempted."

In truth, although she had seemed to fear all for herself, her chief dread had been of having Cosmo insulted.

"What you must have gone through for me!" said Cosmo. "It makes my heart ache to think of it!"

"It will be pleasant to look back on," returned Joan with a sad smile; "—nearly as pleasant as those days on the frozen hills! There are the hills again every winter! will the old days ever come again, Cosmo?"

"Old days never come again," answered Cosmo. "But do you know why, Joan?"

"No," murmured Joan, very sadly.

"Because they would be getting in the way of the new days, whose turn it is, and which are better," replied Cosmo. "You tell God, Joan, all about it, and he will give us better days than those. To some it may seem absurd to believe in a great hearing Life, but it is what you and I need so much that it cannot look absurd to us!—Joan, if you should ever find you cannot pray any more, tell me, and I will try to help you. Always hitherto, when I seemed to be at the last gasp, things have taken a turn, so that it grew possible to go on again."

"Ah, you are younger than me, Cosmo!" said Joan, more sadly than ever.

Cosmo laughed. He was recovering breath, and with it his spirits.

"Now I won't submit to any airs on that ground," he said. "I've had enough of the sort from Agnes. As far back as I can remember she has always insisted she was old enough to be my mother."

"And how much older is she?"

"Two years."

"I am more than two years."

"How much—exactly?"

"Three years and a month."

"Then you must be old enough to be my grandmother!—But I don't mean to be sat upon for all that."

Whether Joan had begun to feel a little jealous of Agnes, or only more interested in her, it would be hard to say, but Cosmo had now to answer a good many questions concerning her; and when she learned what a capable girl Agnes was, understanding Euclid and algebra, as Mr. Simon said, better than any boy he had ever had to teach, Cosmo himself included, certainly my lady's heart became aware of a little pain because of the cottar's daughter.

They reached at last the village and the doctor's house, where, to Joan's relief, the first person they met was Mr. Jermyn, to whom at once she told the main part of their adventure that day. He instantly proposed the very thing Joan was wishing, and was by no

means sorry at the turn matters had taken—putting so much more of the game, as he called it, in his hands.

All that was necessary was soon told his father and sister, arrangements were speedily made, Cosmo was sent to bed, and Joan invited to take lunch with them. This she thought it better to do, especially as both Jermyn and his sister offered to walk home with her after. What he would say if they met Mergwain, she did not venture to ask him: she knew he would say anything to get her out of a scrape, whereas Cosmo would only do or endure anything—from thrashing her brother to being thrashed himself.

She did not see Cosmo again, for Jermyn told her he was asleep—which was not true, but might have been for all the doctor knew, as he had not been to his room.

She did not see her brother for a week, and when she did he made no allusion to the affair. What was in his mind concerning her she did not know—farther than that he was always prepared for the discovery that the mantle of the wickedness of his fathers, which he had himself so righteously refused to put on, had been taken up by his sister instead.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### CATCH YOUR HORSE.

When Cosmo was left alone in his room, with orders from the doctor to put himself to bed, he sank wearily on a chair that stood with its back to the light, and his eye fell upon the stick he carried: it was not his own which he had taken up when he set out with Joan. How could he have changed it? Where could he have caught up this? He had no recollection either of laying down one or of taking up one. After a time he recalled this much, that, in the garden-house, at the moment when Joan cried out hearing her brother's approach, he was going towards the open closet, where a something, dull-shining in the dusk, which he took for the hilt of a sword, had attracted his attention: the silver-handled walking-stick he now held must be that something! Either he had caught it up in obedience to some passing suggestion of defence, or in the dark his hand had come into contact with it and instinctively closed upon it.

But why was his gaze fixed on the mere head of a stick with such a strange expression of wondering interest? Because in all but size it was a very facsimile of the golden horse that had carried him to the university! The shape and ornamentation were both

so peculiar, that there could be no mistake in deciding them common to the two. The more familiar any one was with their appearance, the stronger must be his conviction that the things themselves had a common origin, and if any significance, then a common one. There was an important difference however besides that of size—that of weight, namely: the stick was a bamboo, rather thick, but, handle and all, very light.

Proceeding to examine it, Cosmo found that every joint was double-mounted and could be unscrewed. There were three of them, each forming a small box. In the first were a few grains of snuff, in the second a little of something that looked like gold dust, and the third smelt of opium. The top of the cane had a cap of silver, with a screw; this went into the lower part of the horse, and made of it a crutch-handle to the stick. He had screwed off this handle, and was in the act of replacing it, when his gaze was suddenly arrested, his heart seemed to stand still, and the old captain's foolish rime came rushing into his head. He started from his chair, took the handle to the window, and there stood regarding it fixedly.

Turning the horse upside down in his hand, to see the spot where the screw of the stick entered, ere he brought them together, his keen glance had spied, in one of the horse's delicately finished shoes, an empty hole where a nail ought to be. It was a hind shoe. In rushed the rime, as I have said—

> **Catch yer naig, an' pu' his tail;**
> **In his hin' heel caw a nail!**

"I do believe," he cried to himself, "this was the auld captain's stick, an' this is the verra horse was i' the villain's heid ilka time he cam ower the fule verse!"

There was then most likely some secret contrivance in the horse! Had that already been discovered, or did it remain for him now to discover it? A passion of curiosity seized him. But the stick was not his property: any discovery concerning or by means of it, must be made with the consent of its owner—Joan, namely, to whom her father had left his personal effects!

And now came to him an experience as strange as new: by nature and habit of a quietly expectant disposition, he began to burn with such a desire after the secret of the stick as seemed to savour of *possession*. Both angry and ashamed to feel so unlike himself, he replaced the handle, set the stick aside, and went to bed as the doctor had directed him. But the haunting eagerness would not let him rest; he kept tossing from side to side in utter lack of repose. Then came and mingled with the longing an

equally obtrusive and persistent dread lest the stick should vanish as mysteriously as it had come—lest when he woke he should find it nowhere. This at least he was able so far to encounter: he got up, unscrewed the horse, and taking it with him placed it under his pillow. But though the fear of losing it was less, the longing to penetrate its mystery seemed now doubled in force; under his head he felt the thing through the pillow, and it tormented him like an aching spot. It kept drawing him, tempting him, mocking him. His hand *would* go to it. A hundred times he resolved he would not touch it again, and as a matter of course kept his resolution so long as it was present to him; but the moment he forgot it the horse would be in his hand before the memory of it had time to return. Invariably on waking from however brief a slumber, he would find it in his grasp. Why, oh, why did not Joan come to him! He began almost to hate the thing. A servant brought him food, but he did not touch it, and kept constantly falling asleep and waking again.

On his return from accompanying lady Joan, Jermyn found him feverish, and brought him a draught. But when he learned that Joan was gone, disappointment displaced curiosity so entirely that he could not even recall how he had so lately felt, and never imagined the possible return of the passion. Neither did it return so long as he was awake, but all his dreams were about the stick and the old captain, who was continually telling him that it was his own, and saying, "Do it; do it; don't put off," with incessant repetition. As often, however, as Cosmo asked him what it was he would have him do, he became unintelligible or inaudible, and Cosmo would wake yet again with the horse in his hand. In the morning he screwed it on, and set the stick by his bedside.

## CHAPTER XL.

### PULL HIS TAIL.

ABOUT noon the next day Joan came, and was more like her former self than for a long time. Hardly was she seated when he showed her the stick and said,

"Did you ever see that before, Joan?"

"Do you remember a horse just like it, only larger?" she returned. "You showed it me in the drawing-room at Castle Warlock."

"I remember showing it you quite well," he answered. "That was the golden horse we wrote to you about afterwards. I should never have reached college but for that horse."

"I know," she returned. "Well, at the time, it made me think of the one you have in your hand. I had often seen it in that same closet where, I suppose, you found it yesterday."

Cosmo told her he never knew he had taken it till he was in his room. How he had come to take it he could only conjecture. He then unscrewed the joints and showed her the different boxes.

"There's nothing in them," he said; "but I suspect there is something in the stick. Do you remember the silly rime you told me I said in my sleep once when I was ill?"

"Yes, very well," she answered.

"It was one that a grand-uncle of my father's, not yet forgotten in our part of the country, and spoken of as the old captain, used to repeat very often."—Joan started a little, and turned pale, but her back was to the light, and Cosmo saw in her face only what he took for a natural interest.—"I will repeat it presently in English; but first I must tell you that I am all but certain this stick once belonged to that same great grand-uncle of mine; and last night, as I was looking at it, I saw something that made me all but certain also that this must be the horse, insignificant as it looks, on which the rime was made to run."

"How very odd! Show me, will you?"

"I can't be sure, you know, because I couldn't try it without your leave."

"Try what?"

"The stick with the rime."

"I don't understand."

"I will soon show you, if you will allow me."

"Why should you need my permission?"

"Because the stick is your property."

"How should that be, if it belonged to your great uncle?"

"Because it has been more than fifty years in your family, and your father left it to you. Besides, I cannot be absolutely certain it is the same."

"Do what you like with it, Cosmo. I give it back to you."

"I will not accept it, Joan—at least before you know what it may be.—And now for the rime! This is how it goes in English:

> Catch your nag and pull his tail;
> In his hind heel drive a nail;
> Pull his ears from one another:
> Stand up and call the king your brother.

If you allow me, I will do to this horse what the rime says, and if the rime and the horse belong to each other, we shall have some result, I fancy."

"Do whatever you please, Cosmo," returned Joan, with a tremble in her voice.

Cosmo began to screw off the top of the stick. Joan left her chair, drew nearer to the bed, and presently sat on the edge of it, gazing with great wide eyes, and a shadow of horror in her look. She dreaded some frightful revelation: her father's habit of unconscious utterance had given her many things she dared not put together lest she should understand something. When the horse was free, Cosmo set the stick aside and said,

"The first direction the rime gives, is to pull his tail."

He pulled the horse's tail—of silver, apparently, like the rest of him—pulled it hard; but it seemed of a piece with his body, and there was no result visible.

"He doesn't seem to mind it," he said. "We'll try the next thing—which is to drive a nail in his hind heel. Now look here, Joan!—here, in one of his hind shoes, is a hole that looks as if a nail had come out of it! That is what brought the rime to my mind."

"Perhaps a tack would go in," said Joan, rising. "I shall pull one out of the edge of the carpet."

"It would be much too large," said Cosmo. "Perhaps a brad out of the gimp of that chair—— No, that might be larger still. Stay, I know! Have you got a hair-pin about you?"

She sat down again upon the bed, took off her bonnet, and soon found a hair-pin. Cosmo took it eagerly, and applied it to the hole in the shoe. Nothing the least larger would have gone in. He pushed it gently, then a little harder—felt as if something yielded a little, returning his pressure, and pushed a little harder still. Something gave way, and a low vibrant noise followed, as of a watch running down. The two faces looked at each other, one red, and one pale. The sound ceased. They waited a little, in almost breathless silence. Nothing followed.

"Now," said Cosmo, "for the last thing!"

"Not quite the last," returned Joan, with what was nearly an hysterical laugh, for she felt her fear growing upon her, and must make an effort to shake it off: "the last thing is to stand up and call the king your brother."

"That much, as a mere tag and non-essential, I dare say we shall in any case omit," replied Cosmo. "—The next then is to pull his ears from each other."

He took hold of one of the tiny ears betwixt the finger and thumb of each hand, and pulled. The body of the horse came asunder, dividing down the back, and showed inside a piece of paper. It was crushed, rather than folded, round something soft. Cosmo took it out and handed it to Joan.

"It is your turn now, Joan," he said. "I have done my part. You open it."

Cosmo's eyes were now fixed on Joan's fingers as hers had been on his. In the paper was a piece of cotton wool. She dropped the paper, and opened the wool. Bedded in it were two rings. The eyes of Cosmo fixed on one—the eyes of Joan on the other. One was a large diamond; the other a bloodstone, engraved.

"This is a valuable diamond," said Cosmo, who had taken it, and was regarding it closely.

"It shall be your share of the spoil, Cosmo," returned Joan. "I will keep this, if you don't mind."

"What have you got?" asked Cosmo.

"My father's signet-ring, I believe," she answered. "I have often heard him lament the loss of it."

Lord Mergwain's ring in the old captain's stick!—Things began to put themselves together in Cosmo's mind. He lay thinking. Here and there he saw the glimmer of a theory. By degrees, though not just yet, it took form, and its form was this:

The old captain had won these rings from the young lord and put them for safety in the horse; Borland suspected, probably charged him with false play; they fought, and his lordship carried away the stick to recover his own; but he had failed to find the rings, probably taking the boxes in the bamboo for all its stowage.

He was not a little disappointed. Was this the great mystery of the much berimed horse? It was as if a supposed opal had burst and proved but a soap-bubble!

Joan sat silent, looking at the signet-ring, and the tears came slowly in her eyes.

"I *may* keep this ring, may I not, Cosmo?" she said.

"My dear Joan!" exclaimed Cosmo, "the ring is your own, not mine. If you will give me the stick, I shall be greatly obliged to you."

"But you *will* take the other ring, Cosmo?" answered Joan. "I do not care about rings. The stick of course is yours."

"I do care about rings," answered Cosmo; "but sooner than take this from you, Joan, I would part with the hope of seeing you again. Why, dear Joan, you don't know what this diamond is worth!—and you have no money!"

"Neither have you!" retorted Joan.. "—What is the thing worth?"

"If I could weigh it, I should be better able to tell you. But its worth must anyhow be, I think—somewhere towards two hundred pounds."

"Then take it, Cosmo. Or give it to your father, with my dear love."

"My father would say—'How could you, Cosmo!' and from him that would be terrible to me. But I will give him the spirit of it, the message of the gift. That he will be delighted to have."

"But, Cosmo! it is of no use to me. How could I get money for it? If I made the attempt, Mergwain would hear of it. I had far better give it him at once."

"That difficulty is soon got over," answered Cosmo. "I know where to get a fair price for it, and will send you the money. You will be quite rich for a little while!"

"My brother opens all my letters," replied Joan.

"I could send it to Mr. Jermyn."

Joan hesitated a moment, but did not object. The next instant they heard the doctor's step at the door, and his hand on the lock. She rose hastily, caught up her bonnet, and took a chair a little way off. Cosmo hid the ring and the horse under the bedclothes.

Jermyn cast a keen glance on the pair as he entered, and took for confusion the remains of excitement: he must make haste, he said to himself. He felt Cosmo's pulse, pronounced him feverish, and turning to Joan, said he must not talk, for he had not got over yesterday: it would be awkward if he were to have a relapse. Joan rose and took her leave, saying she would come again the next morning. Jermyn went down with her, and sent Cosmo a draught.

As soon as he had taken it almost, he felt inclined to sleep, and turned from the light. But in so doing he knocked down the stick, which was leaning against the bed, and the noise it made roused him. Then he bethought him he must put the ring in a place of safety before he went to sleep—and where better than in the horse! He refolded it in the cotton wool, replaced them in the horse, and set about discovering how to close it again. But spring, nor notch, nor any sign of possible attachment between the two halves of the animal could he find. At length however he noted that the tail had slipped a little way out, and was loose; and experimenting with it, by and by found that by holding the parts together, and turning the tail three or four times round, the horse—though how he had not an idea—was restored to its former apparent solidity.

And now where would the horse be safest from possibly prying eyes? Clearly, in its own place. He got out of bed therefore to pick up the stick, and seeing on the carpet the piece of paper which had been round the cotton, picked that up also, and having replaced the handle, smoothed out the paper to get a look at what

seemed a diagram of some sort. It was plainly a lineation of something—but of what, or even of what kind of thing, he could not tell. It might be of the fields constituting a property; it might be of the stones in a wall; it might be a schoolboy's exercise in trigonometry applied to the measuring of land. He did not think it could have anything to do with nautical matters. It must mean something; but that something could hardly be of consequence to anybody! In all probability it had merely been caught up as a wrap to hold the cotton about the rings lest they should rattle and betray a hollow. Still there could be no harm in replacing it also where he had found it. Once more he unscrewed the horse, opened it again with Joan's hair-pin, deposited the paper, and reclosed the horse, then lay down, glad that Joan had such a diamond, but thinking the old captain had made a great fuss about a small matter. In a few moments he fell fast asleep—slept soundly, and woke much better.

In the evening came the doctor and spent the whole of it with him, interesting and pleasing him more than ever, displaying one after another traits of character which Cosmo, more than prejudiced in his favour already, took for additional proofs of an exceptional elevation of character and aim. Nor am I capable of determining how far Jermyn may not have attributed the same to himself.

And now that Joan had a diamond of such value, Cosmo gladly recalled the offer Jermyn had made of lending him money. He had but to take the ring to Mr. Burns on his way home, and Joan would repay him out of what he sent her for it. He told Jermyn, therefore, as he sat by his bedside, that he found himself obliged to accept his generous proposal, but would repay the money within a week or so after his departure.

The doctor smiled—with some grounds of satisfaction unsuspected of Cosmo, and taking out his pocket-book, said as he opened it,

"I have just cashed a cheque, fortunately; so you had better have the money at once.—Don't bother yourself about it," he added, as he handed him a few notes; "there is no hurry. I don't want it."

"This is too much," said Cosmo.

"Never mind; better too much in your pocket than too little. You needn't spend a penny the more."

Cosmo thanked him and put the notes under his pillow. The doctor bade him good night and left him.

The moment he was alone, a wild longing sprang up in his heart to see his father. The first minute he was able to travel, he

would set out! His brain haunted with flashing water and speedwells and daisies and *horse-gowans*, he fell fast asleep, and dreamed that his father and he were defending the castle from a great company of pirates with the old captain at the head of them.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE THICK DARKNESS.

THE next day he was still better, and could not think why the doctor would not let him get up. But as the hours went on, he wondered yet more why Joan did not come to him. The thought never crossed him that it was the doctor's doing. Jermyn would have as little intercourse between them as might be till he should have sprung his spiritual mine. But he did all he could to prevent him from missing her, and the same night opened his heart to Cosmo—that is, the show-part of it.

In terms extravagant, which he seemed to use only because he could not repress them, he revealed to his half frozen listener that his whole nature, heart and soul and brain, had been for years bound up in lady Joan; that he had again and again been tempted to escape despair by death; and that if he had to live without her, his use in the world would be over, for he must cease to care for anything, and could no longer endure life. He begged therefore his friend Cosmo Warlock, seeing he had so much influence with the lady, to speak what he honestly could in his behalf. He had often been driven to doubt whether there was indeed a God that cared for his creatures; and if he were now disappointed of his soul's desire, it would be impossible for him to believe at all any longer.

Such words at any former time would have been sufficient to displace any man from such a pedestal as that on which Cosmo had set Jermyn. What if all the ladies in the world should forsake him, was not God yet the all in all? But now as he lay shivering, the words that entered his ears seemed to issue from his own soul. Listening he lay like one whom the first sting has paralyzed, but who only feels the more every advance in the invasion of death. It was a silent, seemingly a nerveless, yet in truth an agonizing wrestle of life with death, raising a storm in his soul whose waves went deeper than his consciousness. He held down his heart like a wild beast which, if he let it up for a moment, would fly at his throat and strangle him. Nor could the practised

eye of the doctor fail to perceive what was going on in his patient. He said to himself—"Better him than me! He is young and will get over it." He read nobility and self-abnegation in every shadow that crossed the youth's countenance—indication ah how faint of the hail mingled with fire that swept his universe!—and said to himself that he had neither mistaken the lad nor presumed on his own faculty a hair's breadth. He took care to give no sign that he saw Cosmo's heroic efforts to hide his sufferings, leaving him to imagine them successful. How Cosmo longed for his departure that he might in peace despair! Hardly had he closed the door behind him when a cry half of agony half of relief broke from his tortured heart. It reached the ears of Jermyn: he said "Poor boy!" and went quietly down the stair.

What is it in suffering that makes man and beast long for loneliness? I think it is an unknown something, more and deeper and nearer than self, calling out of solitude—"Come to me!—come!" How little of the tenderness that human souls need, and after which consciously or unconsciously they hunger, do we give or receive! The cry of the hurt heart for solitude, seems to me the call of the heart of God—changed by the echo in the hollows of that of his creature, and sounding to it like its own—"Come out from among them; come to me and I will give you rest!" In him alone broods waiting the profound repose of perfect love—the one only peace after which our nature, unrevealed to itself, yearns. Hurt by the selfishness and greed and lying to which more or less we have contributed our share, and to escape which it were useless to go out of the world; worse hurt by our own indignation at wrong and lack of patience under it, each one of us has in his house a door of escape—how seldom opened, although haunted with the knockings of the hand of Love! The right God claims as his affair, and he will see it done; but the wrong is by us a thousand times well suffered, if it but drive us to open that door into the infinite quiet—not the solitude the wounded spirit imagines, least of all a waste, for there the silence itself is God.

That was a terrible night to Cosmo—a night billowy with black fire. It reminded him afterwards of nothing so much as that word of the Lord—*the power of darkness.* It was not merely darkness with no light in it, but darkness alive and operative. He had hardly dared suspect the nature, only now knew the force, and had not yet proved the strength of the love with which he loved Joan. Great things may be foreseen, but they cannot be known until they arrive. Disease and weakness and love had been ripening him; now only was such loss and suffering possible to him. Some

hearts must break that they may blossom. Cosmo's heart was now in blossom—I may not say in *full* blossom, for what the full blossom of the human heart is, the holiest saint with the mightiest imagination cannot know, he can but feel its radiance from afar—and it was not broken.

It was a severe duty that was now required of him. I do not mean the performance of his *friend's* final request, namely, that he would speak to Joan on his behalf; that he had forgotten, for it was not to be done; it could not have been attempted with honesty even towards Jermyn: inevitable emotion would have pleaded for himself and not his friend. It was enough that he must yield the lady of his dreams, become the lady of his living soul. Whether she loved Jermyn or not he did not know, and neither could alter the case: Jermyn was his friend and had trusted in him—had confessed that his soul was bound up in the lady: one of them had to go to the torture-chamber; and when the *question* lay between him and another, Cosmo knew what must follow. Cosmo alone was in Cosmo's hands; his own self was all he held, all he had power over, all he could offer, could yield. Mr. Simon had taught him that as a mother gives her children money to put in the plate on a Sunday, so God gives his children *selves*, with wishes and choices, that they may have the true offering to lay upon the true altar; for on that altar nothing will burn but *selves*.

"Very tyrannical! A cruel theory and a hard!" says my reader? So will it ever appear to the man who has neither the courage nor the sense of law to obey it. He shall be the eternal slave who says to Duty *I will not*. What use to tell such a man of the "*thousandfold*," or set forth to him the fact that that altar is in truth the nest of God's heart, and that there the poor, unsightly, callow offerings shall lie, brooded upon by divinest love, until they come to shape and loveliness, and wings grow upon them to bear them back to the sacrificer divinely precious? Cosmo was not able to *think* such things now; the memory even of what he had thought and been taught was gone from his consciousness, but the truth of it all was alive in his life, and moved in his action; he did not feel, he *did* it—did it when nothing seemed worth doing.

The things he was able to think were such as these: how much greater a man than he was Jermyn!—how much more worthy of the love of a woman like Joan! How good he had been to him! What a horrible thing it would have been had Jermyn saved his life and he destroyed Jermyn's! Perhaps Joan might have come one day to love him; but how miserable she

was with her brother, and when could he have delivered her! Here was one who would, the moment he might, give her a house of her own, make her a free woman! For him to come in the way would be to put his hand to the rack on which the life of Joan lay stretched!

But for what he *felt* all through the fearful night, that must remain formless in its own chaos. His suffering was too intense, and conviction of duty too strong, to leave room for anything that was really thought. The darkness billowed and rolled about him, and life was a frightful thing.

For where was God this awful time? He was not within the ken of the banished youth! Cosmo's consciousness was outside the city of life—not even among the dogs—outside with bare nothingness—cold negation. Alas for him who had so lately offered to help another to pray, thinking the hour would never come when he could not pray! It had *come!* He did not try to pray. The thought of it did not wake in him. But let no one say he was punished for his presumption! There was no presumption concerned—only ignorance. He did not know—nor does any one know save in part—what awful possibilities lie in us. He had but spoken from what he knew—life seemed to him inseparable from prayer. And was it then separable? Surely not. He could not now pray—but was he alive? To live, one must choose to live. He was dead in himself, though his angel was alive with God. His was not the real death. There is a death that is content and suffers nothing: that is death indeed. But annihilation is not death—is nothing like it—is one of the opposites of death—would be a refuge from it. Cosmo's condition was more like annihilation. It had no evil in it—only a ghastly imperfection—an abysmal lack—an exhaustion at the very roots of being. God seemed away. True, God could never be away and be God; neither could man be man with God away; but every common day, he who would be a live child of the living has to fight the God-denying look of things, to believe that, in spite of their look, they are God's, and God is in them, and working his saving will in them! Cosmo had not turned his back; he had but fallen in the fight, and God seemed gone, and *things* had rushed in and overwhelmed him. He was dead, as one in a swoon is dead. Although he did not yet know it, it was not the loss of Joan, but the seeming loss of his God that had hollowed the last depth of his misery. But such a shadow is of all ills the surest to pass; for God changing not, his life must destroy every false show concerning him. Cosmo was now as one of those holy children bound hand and foot in the furnace, ere the fire had consumed

their bonds and let them pace their glowing prison. Stifled with the smoke and the heat, he must yet for a time lie helpless: not yet could he lift up his voice and call upon the ice and the cold, the frost and the snow, to bless the Lord, to praise and exalt him for ever. But God was not far from him. Feelings are not scientific instruments for that which surrounds them; they but speak of themselves when they say, "I am cold; I am dark." The final perfection will be when our faith is utterly and absolutely independent of our feelings. I dare to imagine such the final victory of our Lord—when he followed the cry of *Why hast thou forsaken me?* with—*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*

Shall we then bemoan ourselves in any darkness? Shall we not rather gird up our strength to encounter it, that we too from our side, as well as God from his, may break the passage for the light beyond? He who struggles with the darkness all the night shall know the gentleness that makes man great—the face of God bringing the dawn. But the night must fulfil its hours. Men are meant and sent to be troubled—that they may rise above the region of storm, above the possibility in themselves of being troubled.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE DAWN.

STRANGE to say, there was no return of the fever. He seemed through the utter carelessness of agony so to have abandoned his body that he no longer affected it. To be aware of his body at all a man must have some hope. As the darkness began to yield, he fell asleep.

Then came to him a curious dream.—For ages Joan had been persuading him to go with her, and the old captain to go with him—the latter angry and pulling, the former weeping and imploring. He would go with neither. At last they vanished both, and he sat solitary on the side of a bare hill. Below him in the valley stood all that remained of Castle Warlock. He had been dead so many years that it was now but a half-shapeless ruin of roofless walls, haggard and hollow and gray and desolate, sticking up from its ridge of rock like a solitary tooth from the jaw of some skeleton beast. But where was his father? If he had been so long dead, how was it he had not yet found him? He must rise and seek him! He must be somewhere in the universe! He rose. But

therewith came softly stealing, at first hardly audible, a strain of music up from the valley below. He listened. It grew as it came, and held him bound. Like an upward, a fountain river it rose, and grew with a strong rushing. Heart and brain it flooded all, working in him a marvellous good, a calm glory, a live peace, which yet he did not understand. And all the time that the music filled him thus, his eyes were upon the dead home of his fathers. But, wonder of wonders! what did he see? The ruin began to change! it grew before his eyes! It was growing out of the earth like a plant! It grew and grew until it was high as in the old days, and then it grew higher! A roof gathered upon it! Up went towers and turrets, with bartizan and battlements, growing still—all to the sound of that creative music! Like fresh shoots from their stem, out from it went wings and walls, with rampart and ravelin, bastions and glacis! Like some water-plant in the great mere of the universe it was rushing visibly on to a blossom of unknown grandeur, of aeonian perfection—when the music dropped, the dream glode away, and he woke.

But instead of the enemy coming in like a flood at the gate the dream left open behind it, to his astonishment he found, as his consciousness returned, his soul as calm as it was sad. God had given him while he slept, and now he knew him near as his own heart. The first *thought* that came was, that his God was Joan's God too, and therefore all was well; so long as God took care of her, and was with him, and his will was done in them both, all was on the way to be well so as nothing could be better. And with that he knew what he had to do—knew it without thinking—and proceeded at once to do it. He rose and dressed himself.

It was still the gray sunless morning. The dream, with its dream-ages of duration, had not crossed the shallows of the dawn. Quickly he gathered his few things into his knapsack, took his bamboo, made sure he had his money safe, stole quietly down the stair and softly out of the house, and had left the village by the southward road ere any of its inhabitants were astir.

When he had gone about a mile, coming to a road that led eastward, he turned into it, with the design of going a few miles in that direction, and then going as straight north as he could. When he had walked what to his weakness was a long distance, all at once, with the dismay of a perverse dream, he saw among the trees before him the towers of Cairncarque. Was he never to escape them in the body any more than in the spirit? He turned back, and again southwards.

But disappointment increased both weakness and weariness; as he measured back the way he had come, he had often to sit down;

as often, however, he got up again and walked. Coming at length to a village, he learned that a coach for the north would arrive within an hour; he went to the inn, had some breakfast, and waited for it. Finding it would pass through the village he had left, he took an inside place. When it stopped for a few moments in its one street, he saw Jermyn cross the road a little way off, and that was the last he saw of him.

After travelling some fifty miles, he left the coach, and betook himself to his feet, partly to save his money, partly because he felt the need of exercise—not to stifle thought, but to clear it. Alternately walking and riding, he found his strength increase as he went. His sorrow continued in general that of a cloudy summer day, nor ever again, so long as the journey lasted, rose to the passion of the wintry tempest.

At length he drew night the city at whose university he had studied. On foot, weary and dusty and worn, he entered it like a returning prodigal. Few Scotchmen would think he could have made good use of his learning! But he had made the use of it God required of him; and there are Scotchmen capable of believing that in itself a sufficient success, seeing a man is sent into the world neither to make money nor to gain position, but to seek the kingdom and righteousness of God.

He walked straight into Mr. Burns's shop.

The jeweller did not know him at first, but the moment he spoke, recognized him. Cosmo had been dubious what his reception might be, but Mr. Burns held out his hand as if they had parted only the day before, saying,

"I thought you would get to me before Death! Man, you ought to give a body time."

"Mr. Burns," replied Cosmo, still holding his hand, "I am very sorry I behaved to you as I did. I am not sorry I said what I said, but I am sorry I never came again to see you. Perhaps we did not quite understand on either side."

"We shall understand each other better now, I fancy," rejoined Mr. Burns. "I am glad you have not changed your opinions, for I have changed mine. If it weren't for you, I should be retired by this time, and you would have found another name over the door. But we'll have a talk about it all by and by. Allow me to ask whither you are bound."

"I am on my way home," answered Cosmo. "I have not seen my father for more than two years."

"You'll do me the honour to put up at my house to-night, will you not? I am a bachelor, as you know, but I will do my best to make you comfortable."

Cosmo gladly assented, and as it was now evening, Mr. Burns hastened the shutting of his shop. In a few minutes they were seated at supper.

As soon as they were alone, they began an earnest talk. And now indeed they found that they understood each other. Much was said between them concerning divine righteousness in business, and its special operation in that of the jeweller. Then Cosmo told him about the ring—how he had found it, the position of lady Joan with regard to it, that he had brought it to him, and why he had done so.

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Warlock," responded the jeweller, "for placing such confidence in me, and that notwithstanding the mistaken principles you heard me advocate. The words you then spoke, and I took so ill, kept returning, in spite of my scorn of them, and that always at the most inconvenient moments, until at last I resolved to look the thing in the face, and think it fairly out. The result is that, although I dare say nobody recognizes any difference in my way of doing business, there is a great difference. I now think of my neighbour's side of the bargain as well as my own, and abstain from doing what it would vex me to find I had not been sharp enough to prevent him from doing. In consequence, I am not so rich as I might have been, but I enjoy life more, and hope the days of my ignorance God winks at."

Cosmo could not reply for pleasure. Mr. Burns saw his emotion, and understood it. From that hour they were friends who loved each other.

"And now for the ring!" said the jeweller.

Cosmo produced it.

Mr. Burns looked at it as if his keen eyes would pluck out the heart of its mystery, turned it all ways, examined it in every position relative to the light, removed it from its setting, went through the diamond-catechism with it afresh, weighed it, thought over it, and said,

"What do you take the stone to be worth, Mr. Warlock?"

"I can only guess, of course," replied Cosmo; "but the impression on my mind is that it is worth nearer two hundred than a hundred and fifty pounds."

"You are right," answered Mr. Burns. "You ought to be in the trade. I could make a good jeweller of you. This ring is worth two hundred guineas, fair market-value. But as I must sell again, and cannot ask more than it is worth, I must take my profit off you: do you think that fair?"

"Perfectly," answered Cosmo.

"Then I must give you only two hundred pounds for it, and

take the shillings myself. You see it may be some time before I get my money again."

As soon as the bargain was concluded, Cosmo sat down and wrote to Joan. So long as there was nothing that must be said, he had feared writing.

"My dearest Joan,

"As you have trusted me hitherto, so trust me still, and wait for the reason of my going away without bidding you good-bye till the time for giving it comes. It must come one day, for the Master says there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed. I know therefore I shall be allowed to tell you everything.

"I enclose a cheque, as good as bank-notes, and much safer to send. Mr. Jermyn will easily turn it into money for you.

"I borrowed of him fifteen pounds—a good deal more than I wanted. I have therefore given Mr. Burns, the jeweller, five pounds to add to the two hundred he pays for the ring; and I beg you, Joan, to pay for me the fifteen pounds to Mr. Jermyn, because I would rather be your debtor than his. The ten pounds I will pay you when I can—perhaps not in this world. In the next—but for that we must wait—who more earnestly than I!

"To all eternity, Joan, I shall never cease to love you—first for yourself, then for your great lovely goodness to me. May Love take you to his heart—as he is always trying to do with all of us!

"I mean to let him have me out and out.

"Dearest Joan,

"Your far-off cousin, but near friend,

"Cosmo Warlock."

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### HOME AGAIN.

Early the next day, while the sun was yet casting huge diagonal shadows across the wide street, Cosmo climbed to the roof of the Defiance coach, his heart swelling at the thought of being so soon in his father's arms. It was a lovely summer-morning, cool and dewy, fit for any Sunday. But the eyes and mind of Cosmo turned to the remnants of night that banded the street, and thence he sank into the workshop of his own peculiar metaphysics, where the twilight of his thinking was shaken by the champing clank of

the bits, the voices of the ostlers, passengers, and guard, but sustained by the perpendicular silence of the coachman, who sat like a statue in front of him.

How dark were the shadows the sun was casting!

Absurd! the sun casts no shadows—only light.

How so? Were the sun not shining, would there be one single shadow?

Yes; there would be just one single shadow; all would be shadow.

There would be none of those things we call shadows.

True; all would be shade; there would be no shadows.

By this little stair was Cosmo landed at a door of deep question. For now *evil* took the place of *shadow* in his solo-disputation, and the law and the light and the shadow and the sin went thinking about with each other in his mind. He saw for the first time clearly how the Jews came to assign evil to the hand of God as well as good, and what St. Paul meant when he said that the law gave life to sin; for by the sun is the shadow; where no light is there is no darkness, where no life, no death. He saw too that in the spiritual world what we need is a live sun strong enough to burn up all the shadows by shining through the things that cast them, and compelling their transparency—and that sun is the God who is light and in whom is no darkness at all—which truth is the gospel according to St. John. And where there is no longer anything covered or hid, shall sin be able to live? Can it go on without dens and caves and shadows? These and such like thoughts held him long—till the noisy streets of the granite city lay far behind. Swiftly the road flew from under the sixteen flashing shoes of the thoroughbreds that bore him along.

The light and hope and strength of the new-born day were shining, mounting, swelling in the heart of the sad lover—even there! In every *honest* heart, more or less, whether it be young or old, feeble or strong, the new summer-day stirs, and will stir while the sun has heat enough for the life of men. Surely the live God is not absent from the symbol and birth and garment of his glory! the resurrection, the reviving strength, and the hope are not there without him! When conscious power awakes in my heart, shall I be the slave to imagine it comes only as a sap rising in the stem of a human plant, or the mercury in the tube of the thermometer? that there is no essential life within my conscious life, no spirit within my spirit? I will accept the figure only if you grant the bulb of my thermometer infinite and filled with Godhead. If my origin be not life, I am the poorest of slaves!

Cosmo had changed since first he sat behind such another four

on his way to the university. It was the change of growth, but he felt it like that of decay—felt that he had been young and now was old. Little did he imagine what genuine age means! He had not an idea how much more than he his father felt his dependence on, that is his strength in God, therefore how much stronger was his father. Years many had yet to pass ere he could know the splendour of an existence rooted in changeless life, and but ripening through the gathering weaknesses of the body. It is the strength of God that informs every muscle and arture of the youth; but that strength is so much his own—looks so natural to him—as well it may, being God's idea for him—that, in the glory of its possession, he does not feel it as the energy of the present God. But when weakness begins to show itself—a shadow-back-ground against which the strength is known and outlined; when every movement begins to demand a distinct effort of the will, and the earthly house presses, a conscious weight, not upon its own parts only, but upon the spirit within, then must a man *have* God, believe in him with an entireness independent of feeling, and going beyond all theory, or be devoured by despair. In the growing feebleness of old age, a man may come to accept life, not for its own sake, only because it is the will of God; but the weakness of such a man is the matrix of a divine strength, whence a gladness unspeakable shall ere long be born—the conscious glory, namely, of the life God would share with his children.

Cosmo was on the way to know all this, but in the meantime his trouble sat not seldom heavy upon him. Indeed the young straight back, if it feel the weight less, feels the irksomeness of the burden more than the old bowed one. With strength goes the wild love of movement, and the cross that prevents the free play of a single muscle is felt grievous as the fetter that chains a man to the oar. But this day—and what man has to do with yesterday or to-morrow?—the sun shone as if he knew everything, and that all was well: Cosmo was going home, and the love of his father was a deep gladness even in presence of love's lack. Seldom is it so; between true father and true son it must be so.

When he came within a mile of Muir o' Warlock, he left the coach, and would walk the rest of the way. He desired to enjoy in unruffled flow the thoughts that like swallows kept coming and going between him and his nest. Everything, the commonest, that met him as he went, had a strange beauty; now first, although he had known it so long, its innermost seemed lighted up by some polarized radiance from source unseen. How small and poor the cottages looked—but how home-like! and how sweet the smoke of their chimneys! How cold they must be in winter—but how warm

were the hearts inside them! There was Jean Elder's Sunday linen spread like snow on her gooseberry bushes! there was the shoemaker's cow eating as if she would devour the very turf that bordered the road! there was a light-haired, brown-faced child he did not remember, holding her back from the corn by a chain! and there was the first dahlia of the season in Jonathan Jopp's garden!

As he entered the village, the road, which was at once its street and the queen's highway, was empty of life save for one half-grown pig—"prospecting," a hen or two picking about, and several cats that lay in the sun.

"There must be a redemption for the feline races," thought Cosmo, "when the cats have learned so much to love the sun!—But is it his light, or only his heat they love?"

He looked neither on this side nor on that as he walked, for he was in no mood for the delay of converse. He wondered nevertheless that he saw nobody. It was the general dinner-hour, true, but that could hardly account for the deserted look of the street! The passing of any stranger was usually enough to bring people to their doors—their windows were not of much use for looking out of! Lurking behind rose-tree or geranium or hydrangea, however, not a few faces of which he saw nothing were peering at him out of those windows as he passed. The villagers had learned from some one on the coach that the young laird was coming, but a feeling was abroad amongst them to his prejudice. They had looked to hear great things of their favourite; he was not the success they had expected; and from their own disappointment they imagined his blame. It troubled them to think of the old man, so loved and honoured, sending his son to college on the golden horse, whose history had ever since been the cherished romance of the place, and after all getting no good of him. So when they saw him coming along dusty and shabby—not so well dressed indeed as would have contented one of themselves on a Sunday, they sighed as they stared, but none went to the door to greet his return. They feared to shame him, never doubting that before himself he was ashamed.

Nothing of this did Cosmo suspect, but held on his way unconscious of the regards that pursued him as a prodigal—returning the less satisfactorily that he had not been guilty enough to repent!

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

EVERY step he took after leaving the village was like a revelation and a memory in one. When he turned out of the main road, the hills came rushing to meet and welcome him, yet it was only that they stood there changeless, eternally the same—just as they had been : that was their best and intrinsic welcome to the heart that had always loved them. When first he opened his eyes, they were as the nursing arms the world spread out to take him, and now returning from far countries where they were all but unknown, they spread them out afresh to receive him home. The next turn was home itself, for it was up the ridge on which the castle stood.

The moment he took the turn a strange stillness came over him, and as he went on it deepened. By the time he entered the gate of the close, the feeling had grown a sense, and become almost appalling With sudden inroad his dream returned. Was there no life in the place? Was it empty utterly? He had not heard a sound; there was no sign from cowhouse or stable. A cart with one wheel stood in the cart-shed; a harrow lay, spikes upward, where he had hollowed the mound of snow. The fields had an unwonted, a haggard sort of look. A crop of oats was ripening in that nearest the close, but they covered only half of it : the rest was in potatoes, and amongst them, welcome though lonely show of life and labour, was Aggie, pulling the plums off their stems. The doors were shut all round the close, except that of the kitchen—wide open as usual. A sickening fear came upon him. It was more than a week since he had heard from home : his father might be dead, and the place indeed desolate! He dared not enter the house. He would go first into the garden, and there pray, and gather courage.

He went back, and round the kitchen-tower, and entering the garden, made for his oldest seat, the big fallen stone. Some one was sitting there, with his head bent forward on his knees! By the red nightcap it must be his father, but how changed the whole aspect of the good man! His look was that of a worn-out labourer —one who has borne the burden and heat of the day, and already half asleep, is waiting for the night. Moveless as a statue of Weariness he sat; on the ground lay a spade as if it had dropped from his hand as he sank on the stone; and beside him lay his Marion's bible. Cosmo's heart failed within him, and for a moment he stood as motionless.

The first movement he made, the old man lifted his head expectantly, then rose in haste, and, unable to straighten himself, hurried, stooping, with short steps, to meet him. Putting his hands on his son's shoulders, he raised himself up, and laid his face to his; and for moments they were silent, each in the other's arms.

The laird drew back his head and looked his son in the face. A heavenly smile crossed the sadness of his countenance, and his wrinkled old hand closed tremulous on Cosmo's shoulder.

"They canna tak frae me my son!" he murmured—and from that moment rarely spoke to him save in the mother-tongue.

He led him to the stone, where there was just room for two that loved each other. They sat down, and the laird put his hand on his son's knee, as, when a boy, Cosmo used to put his on his father's.

"Are ye the same, Cosmo?" he asked. "Are ye my ain bairn?"

"Father," returned Cosmo, "I loe ye mair nor ever. I'm come hame to ye, no to lea' ye again sae lang 's ye live. Ony want, I s' better 't gien I can, an' share 't ony gait. Ay, I may weel say I'm the same, only mair o' 't."

"The Lord's name be praist!" murmured the laird. "—But du ye loe *him* the same as ever, Cosmo?" he asked.

"Father, I dinna loe him the same—I loe him a heap better. He kens noo 'at he may tak his wull o' me. Naething 'at I ken o' comes 'atween him an' me."

The old man raised his arm, and put it round his boy's shoulders: he was not one of the many Scotch fathers who make their children fear more than love them!

"Noo, Lord, lat me depairt in peace," he said, "for mine eyes hae seen thy salvation!—But ye dinna *luik* freely the same, Cosmo!—Hoo 's that?"

"I hae come throuw a heap o' late, father," returned Cosmo. "I hae been ailin' in body, an' sair herrassed in hert. I'll tell ye a' aboot it whan we hae time—an' o' that we'll hae plenty, I s' warran', for I tell ye I winna lea' ye again; an' gien ye had only latten me ken ye was failin', I wad hae come hame lang syne. It was sair agen the grain 'at I baid awa'."

"The auld sudna lie upo' the tap o' the yoong, Cosmo, my son."

"Father, I wad wullin'ly be yer bed to lie upo', gien that wad ease ye; but I'm thinkin' we may baith lie saft upo' the wull o' the great Father, e'en whan it's hardest."

"True as trowth!" responded the laird. "—But ye're luikin' some tired-like, Cosmo!"

"I *am* some tired, an' unco dry. I wad fain hae a drink o' milk."

The old man's head dropped on his bosom, and so for the space of about a minute he sat. Then he lifted it up and said, looking with calm, clear eyes in those of his son,

"I winna greit, Cosmo; I'll say *yet*, the will o' the Lord be done, though it be sair upo' me the noo, whan I haena a drap o' milk aboot the place to set afore my only-begotten son, whan he comes hame to me frae a far country! 'Though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.'—Eh, Lord! whan yer ain son cam hame frae his sair warstle an' lang sojourn amo' them 'at kenned na him nor thee, it wasna til an auld shabby man he cam hame, but til the Lord o' glory an' o' micht! An' or lang we'll a' win hame til the Father o' a'—the leevin' stren'th o' the universe.—Cosmo, the han' o' man 's been that heavy upo' me 'at coo efter coo 's gane frae me; the last o' them, Bonny Yally, she left thestreen.—Ye'll hae to drink cauld watter, my bairn!"

Again the old man's heart overcame him; his lip quivered, he covered his face with his hands, his head sank, and he murmured, —"Lord, I haena a drap o' milk to gie my bairn—me 'at wad gie 'im my hert's bluid!—But, Lord, wha am I to speyk sae to thee, wha lootest thine ain poor oot his verra sowl for him an' me!"

"Father," said Cosmo, "I can du wi' watter as weel's onybody. Div ye think I'm nae mair o' a man nor to care what I pit intil me? Gien ye be puirer nor ever, I'm prooder nor ever to share wi' ye. Bide ye here, an' I'll jist rin an' get a drink, an' come back to ye."

"Na; I maun gang wi' ye, man," answered the laird, rising. "Grizzie's a heap taen up wi' yer gran'mither. She's been weirin' awa' this fortnicht back. She's no in pain, the Lord be praised! an' she'll never ken the straits her hoose is come til! Cosmo, I hae been a terrible cooard—dreidin' day an' nicht yer hame-comin,' no submittin' 'at ye sud see sic a broken man to the father o' ye! But noo it's ower, an' here ye are, an' my hert 's lichter nor it's been this mony a lang!"

Cosmo's own sorrow drew back into the distance from before the face of his father's, and he felt that the business of his life must henceforth be to support and comfort him. It was as if a fountain of water broke forth suddenly in his being.

"Father," he said, as they went walking arm in arm towards the kitchen, "we'll haud on thegither i' the stret ro'd. There's room for twa abreist in't—ance ye're in!"

"Ay! ay!" returned the laird with a smile; "that's the bonniest word ye cud hae to come hame wi' til me! We maun e'en perk up a bit, an' be patient—that patience may hae her perfet wark. I s' hae anither try—an' weel I may, for the licht o' my auld e'en is this day restored til me!"

"An' ye say gran'mother 's weirin' awa', father?"

"To the lan' o' the leal, laddie."

"Wull she ken me?"

"Na, she winna ken ye; she'll never ken onybody mair i' this warl'; but she'll ken plenty whaur she's gaein'!"

They reached the kitchen. Nobody was there, but they heard steps going to and fro in the room above. Before the laird, however, could lay his hand on a vessel, for he would himself get for Cosmo the water he desired, Grizzie appeared on the stair, descending. She hurried down, almost ran across the floor to meet Cosmo, and seizing him by the hand, looked him in the face with the anxiety of an angel-hen. Her look said what his father's voice had said just before—"Are ye a' there?—a' 'at used to be?"

"Hoo's gran'mamma?" asked Cosmo.

"Ow, duin' weel eneuch, sir—weirin' awa' bonny—naither pang nor knowledge o' sorrow to trible her! The Lord grant the sowls o' 's a' sic anither lowsin'!"

"Hae ye naething better nor cauld watter to gie 'im a drink o', Grizzie, wuman?" asked the laird, but in mere despair.

"Nae 'cep' he wad condescen' til a grainie meal intil 't," returned Grizzie mournfully, and looked at him again, with an anxious deprecating look now, as if before the heir she was ashamed of the poverty of the house, and dreaded his blame. "But, laird," she resumed, turning to her master, "ye hae surely a drap o' something i' yer cellar! Weel I wat ye hae made awa' wi' nane o' 't yersel'!"

"Weel, there ye wat wrang, Grizzie, my bonny wuman!" replied the laird, with the flicker of a humorous smile on his wrinkled face, "for I sellt the last boatle oot o' 't a month ago to Stronach o' the distillery. I thoucht it cudna du muckle ill there; it wadna mak his nose sae reid as his ain whusky. Whaur, think ye, wad the sma' things ye wantit for my mother hae come frae gien I hadna happent to hae that property left? We're weel taen care o', ye see, Grizzie! That *wad* hae tried my faith, to hae my mither gang wi'oot things! But he ne'er suffers man to be tried ayont what he's able to beir; an' sae lang as my faith hauds the grup, I carena for back no' belly! Cosmo, I can bide better 'at ye sud want. Ye're mair like my ain nor even my mother, an' we bide it thegither. It maun be 'cause ye're pairt o' my Mar'on as

weel's o' mysel'. Eh, man! but this o' faimilies is a won'erfu' God-like contrivance! Gien he had taen ony ither w'y o' makin' fowk, whaur wad I hae been this day wantin' you, Cosmo!"

While he spoke, his son was drinking the water Grizzie had brought him. She had sprinkled a little meal on the top of it, and it made him think of his old mare, now long departed to the place prepared for her.

"There's this to be said for the watter, father," he remarked, as he set down the wooden bowl in which Grizzie had handed it to him, "that it comes mair direc' frae the han' o' God himsel'—maybe nor even the milk. But I dinna ken; for I doobt organic chymistry maun efter a' be nearer his han' nor inorganic! Ony gait, I never drank better drink; an' gien ae day he but saitisfee my sowl's hunger efter his richteousness as he has this meenute saitisfeed my body's drowth efter drink, I s' be a happier man nor ever sat still ohn danced an' sung."

"It's an innocent cratur' at gies thanks for cauld watter—I hae aye remarkit that," said Grizzie. "But I maun awa' to my bairn up the stair; an' may it please the Lord to lift her or lang. They maun be luikin' for her yont the burn by this time. Whan she wauks i' the mornin', the' 'll be nae mair scornin'!"

This was Grizzie's last at her mistress. The laird took no notice of it. He knew Grizzie's devotion, and, well as he loved his mother, could not but know also that there was some ground for her undevised couplet.

Scarcely a minute had passed when the voice of the old woman came from the top of the stair, calling aloud and in perturbation,

"Laird! laird! come up direc'ly. Come up, lairds baith! She's comin' til hersel'!"

They hastened up, Cosmo helping his father, and approached the bed together.

With smooth, colourless face, unearthly to look upon, the old lady lay motionless, her eyes wide open and looking as if they saw something beyond the tester of the bed, and her lips moving, but uttering no sound. At last came a murmur, in which Cosmo's ears alone were keen enough to discern the articulation.

"Mar'on, Mar'on," she said, "ye're i' the lan' o' forgiveness. I hae dune the lad no ill. He'll come hame to ye nane the waur for ony words o' mine. We're no a' made sae guid to begin wi' as yersel', Mar'on!"

Here the sound became a mere murmur, so far at least as human ears could distinguish, and presently ceased. A minute or so more and her breathing grew intermittent. After a few long respirations at long intervals, they listened in vain for another.

"She'll be haein' 't oot wi' my ain mistress!" remarked Grizzie to herself as she closed her eyes.

"Mother! mother!" cried the laird, and kneeled by the bed-side. Cosmo kneeled also, but no word of the prayers that ascended was audible. The laird was giving thanks that another was gone home, and Cosmo was praying for help to be to his father a true son, such as the Son of Man was to the Father of Man. They rose from their knees, and went quietly down the stair. As they left the room they heard Grizzie say to herself—

"She's gane whaur there's mair—eneuch an' to spare!"

The remains of lady Joan's ten pounds sufficed to bury her. They invited none, but all the village came to her funeral.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE LABOURER.

THE following is the answer Cosmo received from Joan to his letter concerning the ring.

"My dear Cosmo,

"Of course I cannot understand why you went away as you did. It makes me very unhappy, lest I should be somehow to blame. But I trust you *entirely.* I too hope for the day when it will be impossible to hide anything. I always wake trying to understand why you went away so, and one reason after another comes, but I have not got the real one yet—at least I think not. I will pay Mr. Jermyn the money with all my heart. I should have done so by this time, but two days after you left, he was called to London upon medical business, and is not yet returned.

"Give my love to your father. I hope you are safe and happy with him by this time. I wish I were with you! Will that happy day ever come again? I cannot tell you how I miss you—not very wonderful, is it? I hope, dear Cosmo, it was not my fault that you went away. I know my behaviour was such as would to most people have seemed strange, but you are not most people, and I did and do think you understood it, and made all the allowance for me you could.

"I had almost forgot to thank you for the money. I do thank you, Cosmo, but I should have been much more grateful had you kept it. It is all so stupid—and next to no use without you or your father! And to have such a large sum in the house that my

brother knows nothing about, frightens me. I wish you had left me the horse to hide it in! I feel like a thief, and I am sure my brother would look on me as one if he came to know. I have a strange sensation as if there were a demon in the drawer where it lies. Mind you do not make the slightest allusion to it in any of your letters, and ask your father not to do so either. It has just one comfort in it—that I *could* run away now. My love to your father.

"Your loving cousin, Joan."

Long before this letter arrived, Cosmo had told his father everything; and he, although he could not believe Joan cared or would care for the doctor, quite approved of his son's conduct.

"Wait upon the Lord," he said, after listening with the excitement of a young heart, the ache of an old one, and the hope of a strong one, to his son's narrative; "wait patiently for him; he will give thee thine heart's desire."

They waited, and patiently.

Such power had been accumulated and brought to bear upon Glenwarlock, that at length he was reduced almost to the last extremity. He had had to part with his horses before even his crops were all sown, and had therefore dismissed his men. He had tried to sell what was in the ground as it lay, and to get some neighbouring farmer to undertake the rest of the land for the one harvest that alone seemed left him; but those who might otherwise have bought and cultivated were afraid of offending lord Lick-my-loof, whose hand was plainly recognized in the condition of the laird's affairs, as well as of involving themselves in an unsecure agreement. So things were at a bad pass with the household of Castle Warlock. A small crop of oats and one of potatoes were coming on, for which the laird did what little he could, assisted by Grizzie and Aggie at such times when they could leave their respective charges; but in the meantime the stock of meal was getting low, and the laird did not see where more was to come from. He and Grizzie had only porridge, with a little salt butter, for two of their daily meals, and not unfrequently for the third also. Grizzie managed for a while to keep alive a few fowls that picked about everywhere, but finally made of them broth for her invalid, persuading the laird to eat the little that was not boiled away. Now was neither cackle nor crow about the place. To Cosmo it seemed dying out of sound into absolute silence—after which would come the decay and the crumbling, until the castle stood at length like the great hollow mammoth-tooth he had looked down on in his dream.

He proceeded to do what little could yet be done for the oncoming crops, and resolved to hire himself out for the harvest to some place later than Glenwarlock, so that he might mow the oats before leaving, when his father and Grizzie with the help of Aggie would secure them.

Nothing could now prevent the closing of the net of the last mortgage about them; and the uttermost Cosmo could hope for thereafter was simply to keep his father and Grizzie alive to the natural end of their days. Their shelter was secure, for the castle was free. The winter was indeed drawing on, but there would be the oats and the potatoes, with what kail the garden would yield them, and they had, he thought, plenty of peats. Yet not unfrequently, as he wandered aimless through the dreary silence, he would find himself speculating how long, by a judiciously ordered consumption of the place, he could keep his father warm. The stables and cow-houses would afford a large quantity of fuel; the barn had a great deal of heavy wood-work about it; and there was the third tower of the castle, for many years used only for stowage, whose thick floors and roof would make many a glorious fire! Yet how gladly would he save the house! In the spring there would be no land left to it; but so long as he had the house and garden and could keep his two alive in them, he would be ashamed to grieve for that!

Agnes was at last a little shy of Cosmo—he had been away so long! but now and then her shyness would yield, and she would talk to him with much the same freedom as of old when they went to school together. Nor would Cosmo in his rambles ever pass her grandfather's cottage without going in to inquire after him and his wife, and having a little chat with Aggie. Her true-hearted ways made her, next to his father and Mr. Simon, the best comforter he had.

She was now a strong, well-grown sunburnt woman, with rough hands and tender eyes. Occasionally she would yet give a sharp, merry answer, but life and its needs and struggles had made her grave, and in general she would, like a soft cloud, brood a little before she yielded reply. She had by nature such a well balanced mind, and had so long strenuously set herself to do the right thing, that her cross seemed the choice of her whole being, as it was in truth of her deepest nature. In her Cosmo always found what strengthened him for any duty; though nothing that could be required of him now could be called hard, so long as at any moment he might have his father's company, and saw the old man plainly reviving in his presence. The only hard thing was that he could not make him as easy as he would.

When the laird heard that his son, the heir of Glenwarlock, had hired himself for the harvest to a neighbouring farmer, he was dumb for a season. It was heavy both on his love and his pride, which here were one, to know his son a hired servant,—and that of a rough, swearing man, who had made money as a butcher. Also the farm was at such distance that he could not well come home to sleep! But the season of the laird's dumbness, measured by the clock at least, was but a few minutes; for presently he was on his knees thanking God for a son who would be an honour to any family out of heaven:—in there, of course, every one is an honour to every other.

Before the arrival of harvest at the farm of Stanewhuns, Cosmo, to his desire, had cut their own corn, with Grizzie to gather, Aggie to bind, and his father to stook, and so got himself into some measure of training. He found the labour harder, indeed, at Stanewhuns, where he must keep up with more experienced scythe-men, but, just equal to it at first, in two days he was more than equal, and able to set his father's heart at ease concerning his toil.

It had been a blessed time, notwithstanding his sad thoughts, while he spent most of the day and every evening in his father's company. Not unfrequently would Mr. Simon make a third with them in the old drawing-room or on some hill-side, taking wisest share in every subject that came up. In their little council of the kingdom Cosmo represented the young generation with its new thought, its new need, and its new difficulty; and was delighted to find how readily his notions were received, how far from strange they were to his old-fashioned friends, especially his preceptor, and how largely old experience in truth may enable and suffice for the hearing and understanding of new cries after it. For what all men need is the same—only the look of it changes as its nature expands before the enlarging eyes of the growing soul or the growing generation, with a growing hunger and thirst within it. And, coming from the higher to the lower, it must ever be in a garment of difficulty that the most precious revelations first appear. Even Mary, to whom first the highest revelation came, and came closer than to any other, had to sit and ponder over the great matter, yea and have the sword passed through her soul, ere the thoughts of her own heart could be revealed to her. But Cosmo of the new time found himself at home with those two men of the next older time because both he and they were true; for in the truth there is neither old nor new save in the process of its revelation, and the shapes in which the human creative clothes its else incommunicable essence. He who has learned aright its last lesson is

not only best prepared for its next, but readiest to cast away the falsehood of necessity mingled with it in the human figures and human speech wherein the human imagination, itself led into many blunders by the self-asserting intellect, had to clothe it. The well instructed scribe of the kingdom will be familiar with the new as well as the old shapes of its truth, and ready to bring either kind from his treasury. There was not a question Cosmo could start, but Mr. Simon had something at hand to the point, and plenty more within digging-scope of his thought-spade.

But now that he had to work all day, and at night saw no one with whom to take sweet counsel, Cosmo did feel lonely. It was an unfailing comfort, however, to remember that his father was within his reach, and he would see him the next Sunday. And in the interval he was at least free of the one thing he had dreaded—namely, having to share a room with several other men, who might prove worse than undesirable company. For the ex-butcher, a byword in the country-side for his rough speech, herein showed himself capable of becoming a gentleman, that he had sympathy with one: he would neither allow Cosmo to eat with the rest of the labourers—to which Cosmo himself had not the smallest objection, nor would have him put in any other than the best bedroom in the house. Nor were these by any means all the courtesies he showed him: from respect to the heir of a decayed family and valueless inheritance, he even modified several objectionable personal habits, besides almost ceasing to use bad language in his presence. Appreciating such genuine kindness, Cosmo in his turn tried to be agreeable; and during their short evenings, for the severe labour of the day sent them early to bed, would make such good use of his superior knowledge as to interest the whole family so much that most of them afterwards would declare that harvest the pleasantest they had ever had.

Perhaps it was a consequence of this successful endeavour, that the youngest daughter, who had been to a boarding school, and had never before appeared in any harvest field, betook herself to that in which they were at work towards the end of the first week, and *gathered* behind Cosmo's scythe. But Cosmo was far too much occupied—thinking and sometimes perhaps riming to the rhythmic swing of his scythe, to be aware of the honour done him. Still further was he from suspecting that it had anything to do with the appearing of Agnes one afternoon, bringing him a letter from his father.

The harvest began upon a Monday, and the week passed without his once seeing the laird. On the Sunday he rose early, and set out for Castle Warlock. He would have gone the night

before, but at the request of his master had remained to witness the signing of his will.

As he walked he discovered that the week had given him a consciousness of power such as he had never had before: with the labour of his hands he now knew himself capable of earning bread for more than himself, and every muscle in his body seemed to know itself stronger than hitherto. On the other hand he was conscious in his gait of the intrusion of the workman's plodding swing upon the easy walk of the student.

His way was mostly by footpaths, often up and down hill, now over a moor, now through a valley, alongside of a stream. The freshness of the morning he found no less reviving than in the old boyish days, and sang as he walked, taking huge breaths of the life that lay on every heathery height. And as he sang the words came. He had never wondered at the powers of the improvvisatori; it was easy to him to extemporize. One of the songs he sung was nearly like this:

"Win' that blaws the simmer plaid
Ower the hie hill's shouthers laid,
Green wi' gerse, an' reid wi' heather,
Welcome wi' yer sowl-like weather!
Mony a win' there has been sent
Oot 'aneth the firmament;
Ilka ane its story has;
Ilka ane began an' was;
Ilka ane fell quaiet and mute
Whan its angel wark was oot.
First gaed ane oot throuw the mirk,
Whan the Maker gan to work;
Ower it gaed an' ower the sea,
An' the warl' begud to be.
Mony ane has come an' gane
Sin' the time there was but ane:
Ane was grit an' strang, an' rent
Rocks an' muntains as it went
Afore the Lord, his trumpeter,
Waukin' up the prophet's ear;
Ane was like a steppin' soon'
I' the mulberry taps abune—
Them the Lord's ain steps did swing,
Walkin' on afore his king;
Ane lay doon like scoldit pup
At his feet, an' gatna up—
Whan the word the Maister spak
Drave the wull-cat billows back;
Ane gaed frae his lips, an' dang
To the yird the sodger thrang;
Ane comes frae his hert to mine,
Ilka day to mak it fine.

Breath o' God, eh ! come an' blaw
Frae my hert ilk fog awa' ;
Wauk me up, an' mak me strang,
Fill my hert wi' mony a sang,
Frae my lips again to stert,
Fillin' sails o' mony a hert,
Blawin' them ower seas dividin'
To the only place to bide in."

"Eh, Mr. Warlock, is that you singin' o' the Sawbath day?" said the voice of a young woman behind him, in a tone of gentle raillery rather than expostulation.

Cosmo turned and saw Elspeth, his master's daughter already mentioned.

"Whaur's the wrang o' that, miss Elsie?" he answered. "Arena we tellt to sing an' mak melody to the Lord?"

"Ay, but i' yer hert, no lood oot—'cep' it be i' the kirk, or at worship—that is, upo' Sundays. Ye can sing as ye like upo' ither days 'at 's nae holy. An yon wasna a psalm-tune!"

"Maybe no. Maybe I was a bit ower happy for ony tune i' the tune-buiks, an' bude to hae ane 'at cam o' 'tsel'!"

"An' what wad hae made ye sae happy—gien a body micht speir?" said Elspeth, peeping from under long lashes, with a shy, half-frightened, consciously daring, sidelong glance at the youth.

She was a handsome girl of the milkmaid type, in a bonnet with pretty ribbons, who thought herself a young lady, and had many admirers, whence she had grown a little bold, and did not know it.

"Ye haena ower muckle at hame to mak ye blithe, gien a' be true," she added sympathetically.

"I hae a'thing at hame to mak me blithe—'cep' it be siller," answered Cosmo; "an' that may come neist—wha kens?"

"Ay! wha kens?" returned the girl with a sigh. "There's mony ane doobtless wad be ready eneuch wi' the siller ye haena, anent the thing ye hae!"

"I hae naething but an auld hoose—no sae auld as lat the win' blaw throuw 't, though!" rejoined Cosmo, amused. "But whaur are ye for sae ear, miss Elsie?"

"I'm for Muir o' Warlock, to see my sister, the schuilmaister's wife. Puir man! he's been dowie ever sin' the spring. I little thoucht I was to hae sic guid company upo' the lang ro'd!—Ye hae caused an unco cheenge upo' my father, Mr. Warlock. I never saw man sae altert in ae ook!"

She had heard Cosmo remark that he preferred good Scotch to would-be English, and therefore spoke with what breadth she could compass. But in truth she despised all homely ways, for she had

been to school in the great town, and had learned the ambition to *appear:* of *being* she had as yet no notion. Of what really goes to make *a lady*—the goal of her ambition, the star of her aspiration—she had no more idea than the swearing father of whom, while she loved him, as did all his family, she was not a little ashamed. She had an affectionate heart—small for her size, but lively. She was an honest girl too in a manner, and had by nature a fair share of modesty; but now her heart was sadly fluttered, and its action was scarcely to be counted upon, for the week that had wrought the change of which she spoke in her father, had not been without its effect upon her.

"Your father is very kind to me," said Cosmo. "My father will be very grateful to him when I tell him. You are all good to me."

"Some wad be gien they daured!" faltered Elspeth. "—Was ye content wi' my getherin' to ye—to yer scythe, I mean, laird?"

"Wha cud hae been ither, miss Elsie? Ye was aye close ahin' me."

"Did ye wuss me far'er?" rejoined Elsie, with another sidelong look and a blush Cosmo never saw. "Maybe ye didna like my han's?"

The relevance of the suggestion I must leave to the discovery of my reader—for what could it matter to the mower what sort of hands the woman had who gathered his swath? Neither were Elspeth's hands very pretty. But they were small, and smallness was the only merit she knew of in a hand.

What Cosmo would have answered, or in what perplexity between truth and unwillingness to hurt she might have tangled him before long, I need not surmise: the danger vanished suddenly at the sound of a second voice addressing him.

They had just passed a great stone on the roadside, at the foot of which Agnes had been for some time seated waiting for him. She had come thus far in vain the night before, and sat there till it was dark. Recognizing the voices that neared her, she waited until the pair had gone by without seeing her, and then addressed Cosmo with a familiarity she had not used since his return.

"Cosmo!" she said, rising as she spoke, "winna ye bide for me? Ae word sairs whaur twa hae lugs."

The moment Cosmo heard her voice, he turned—glad enough.

"Eh, Aggie," he said, "I'm pleased to see ye! It's richt kin' o' ye to come an' meet me! Hoo's your father, an' hoo's mine?"

"They're baith brawly," she answered, "an' blithe eneuch, baith, at the thoucht o' seein' ye. Gien ye cudna luik in upo' mine the day, he wad stap doon to the castle. Sin' yesterday

mornin' the laird, Grizzie tells me, hasna ristit a meenute in ae place, 'cep' in 's bed. What for camna ye thestreen?"

As he was answering her question, Agnes cast a keen searching glance at his companion: Elsie's face was as red as fire could have made it, and tears of vexation were gathering in her eyes. She turned her head away, and bit her lip.

The two girls were hardly acquainted, and as to familiarity, Elsie would have disdained it with the daughter of a cottar. Aggie seemed much farther below her than she below the young laird of Glenwarlock. Yet here was the rude girl addressing him as Cosmo—with the freedom of a sister! and he taking it as matter of course! It was unnatural! Indignation grew fierce within her. The shameless hussy!

"Ye'll be gaein' to see yer sister, miss Elsie?" said Agnes, after a moment's pause.

Elspeth kept her head turned away, and made no answer. Agnes smiled to herself, and reverting to Cosmo, presently set before him a difficulty, for, with the help of Mr. Simon, she still prosecuted, at odd spare times, the study of algebra; and Elsie, who understood nothing of the subject, was thrown out. She dropped a little behind, and took the rôle of the forsaken one. Becoming aware of this, Cosmo stopped.

"Are we gaein' ower fest for ye, miss Elsie?" he said when she came up.

"Not at all," she answered, English again; "but I would be sorry to interrupt such an interesting conversation."

Cosmo turned to Agnes and said,

"Aggie, we're i' the wrang. We hae no richt to speyk aboot things only twa ken, whan three 's gaein' thegither.—Ye see, miss Elsie, her an' me was at the schuil thegither, an' happent to tak up maistly wi' the same things, in partic'lar wi' algebra an' geometry, an' sae can ill haud oor tongues frae them whan we forgaither. It's been to the prejudice o' oor mainners the day, an' I beg ye to owerluik it."

"I only thought it wasn't very profitable conversation for the Sabbath day," said Elsie, with a smile meant to be chastened, but Agnes took it for bitter, and laughed in her sleeve.

Again they walked on together, though seldom, from the narrowness of the path, all three abreast, and sometimes in single file. But in a few minutes the two more learned were afresh absorbed, this time with a point in conic sections, and again Elsie was left out. It occurred, however, neither through forgetfulness on the part of Agnes, nor from the naturally strong undertow of the tide of science in her brain: it was with positive intent, this

time as well as the former, that she produced her difficulty. Once more Elsie adopted the rôle of the neglected, and finding herself allowed to play it, dropped farther and farther behind, until its earnest grew heavy on her soul. Then she sat down by the roadside, and having wept a while, rose in anger, turned back some distance, and took what was in reality the shorter way to Muir o' Warlock.

Poor girl-heart! How many tears do not fancies doomed to pass cost those who give them but as it were a night's lodging! And the tears may be bitter, although neither the love, nor there fore the sorrow, may have had time to develop much individuality. One fairest soap-bubble, one sweetly devised planet-world vanishes with those tears; and it may be never another is blown with so many colours, and such enchanting changes! Some individuality there must have been, for what is the bubble itself but air parted from the air, individualized by thinnest skin of slightly glutinous water? But do not swift comfort and ready substitution show first love rather the passion between man and woman than between a man and a woman? How speedily is any Romeo consoled for the loss of a Rosaline by the gain of a Juliet! Yet may we not mourn a little over even such evanishment—and that although the bubble of paradise, swift revolving to annihilation, is never a wasted thing? Itself is gone, but its influence, its educating power on the human soul, which must at all risks be freed of its shell and taught to live, remains in that soul, to be, I trust, in riper worlds, an eternal joy. Therefore neither would I be too sad over such as Elsie, seated on her way in a solitary hollow, alone with her mortification—bathing her red eyes with her handkerchief soaked in the heedless babbling stream, and dreading the inquisition of the sister whom marriage has not made more tender, or children more sympathetic.

But how is it that girls ready to cry more than their eyes out for what they call love when the case is their own, are so often hard-hearted when the case is that of another? There is something here that wants looking into—if not by an old surmiser, yet by the young women themselves! Why are such who would themselves dare not a little upon occasion so relentless towards every slightest relax of self-restraint in another? Here was Agnes, not otherwise an ill-natured girl, positively exultant over Elsie's discomfiture and disappearance! The girl had done her no wrong, and she had had her desire upon her, and yet she gloried over her!

"The impident limmer!" she said to herself. "Wha 's she to mak up til a gentleman like the yoong laird! Cudna he be doon i' the warl 's sicht ae meenute, but she maun be upo' 'im to devoor

'im as gien he was a reid worm—an' her father naething but the cursin' flesher o' Stanewhuns!—forby 'at a'body kens she promised hersel' to Jock Rantle, ower at Braefit, an' wad hae had him gien the father o' her hadna sworn at them that awfu' 'at naither o' them daured gang a fit further! Gien I hed loed a lad like Jock, wad I hae latten him gang for a screed o' ill words! They micht hae sworn—I wad hae latten them sweer! Na! Cosmo 's for Elsie's betters!"

Elsie appeared no more in any field that season, but staid at Muir o' Warlock till harvest was over.

A blessed day was that Sunday to Cosmo! Labour is the pursuivant of Joy to prepare the way before him. His father received him like a king come home with victory. And was he not a king? Had he not done the true thing? And did not the Lord say his own kinghood lay in this that he came into the world to bear witness to the truth?

They walked together to church and home again to dinner as happy as two boys let out of school—their poor dinner of new potatoes and a little milk, the latter brought by Agnes with her father's compliments "to his lairdship," as Grizzie transmitted and transmuted the message. But what! was I traitor enough to call such a dinner a poor one! Truth and Scotland forgive me, for I know none so good? And after dinner—immediately, for the laird had long ago given up his toddy—they went to the drawing-room, an altogether pleasant place now in the summer. It was full of the scent of the homely flowers Grizzie had stuck in the old vases on the chimney-piece, and their scent harmonized strangely with the slow-vanishing colours of the room. The laird laid himself down on the brocade-covered sofa, and Cosmo sat close beside him on a low chair, and talked, and told him this and that, and read to him, till at last the old man fell asleep, and then Cosmo, having softly spread a covering over him, sat brooding upon things sad yet pleasant, until he too fell asleep, and went to Joan in his dreams.

At length the harvest was over, and Cosmo returned to his home, and in poverty-stricken Castle Warlock dwelt a peaceful, contented, hopeful household. But the stillness of it was almost awful. So deep was the silence that Grizzie averred she had to make much more noise than was necessary to her affairs that she might not hear the ghosts. She did not mind them, she said, at night; they were natural then; but it was *ugsome* to hear them in the daytime!

The old woman was more of an angel than ever. The poorer their fare, the more pains she took to make it palatable. The

gruel the laird had for his supper was cooked with love rather than fuel. With what a tender hand she washed his feet! What miracles of the laundress-art were the old shirts he wore! Now that he had no other woman to look after him, in all but the mother's familiarity she treated him as if he had been her delicate child. But the cloud was cold to her also; she seldom rimed; and except when unusually excited, never returned a sharp answer.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE SCHOOLMASTER.

WHAT was there now Cosmo could do to earn a little money? With Mr. Simon he held many an anxious conference on the matter, but nothing certain could either think of; while the only possible thing seemed the heart-wearing endeavour after favour with one or other of the magazines—involving an expense of much time, a sick deferment of hope, and general discouragement; for how small were the chances of his work proving acceptable to this or that man who, with the best intentions for the *success* of the magazine in his charge, and a keen enough perception of the unworthy in literature, had probably no special love for the truth or care to teach it, and was under the incapacitating influence, the deadening, debilitating, stupefying effect of having continually to judge;—not to mention the enervating hopelessness that at length falls, I presume, upon every editor of popular periodical, of finding one pearl among the cartloads of oysters sent him by unknown divers in the gulf of literature—filling him with amazement that there should be so many to write so well, and so few to write better. Mr. Simon nevertheless encouraged Cosmo to make the attempt, seeing that to one who had nothing else to do it involved no loss of time, and would be certain gain to both head and heart, while there remained the possibility of a little return in money. So he set to work, and wrote and wrote, and sent and sent, but heard nothing and still nothing.

The weeks came and went, and the frosts came and went, and then came and staid; and the snow fell and melted, and then fell and lay; and winter had settled down with moveless rigour upon Castle Warlock.

Soon it became evident that the natural powers of the laird were failing more rapidly. But sufficient unto the day is the evil

thereof, and that in the matter of death as well as of life; if we are not to forestall the difficulties of living, surely we are not to forestall the sorrows of dying. So said Mr. Simon, and in like spirit Cosmo heard him. But there was one thing that did trouble him. The good old man's appetite was nearly gone, and how was he to get for him what might tempt him to eat? This was what brought him to his knees oftenest of all—oftener even than his own spiritual necessities.

He would have had his father take the grandmother's room now, but he would not leave the one he had last occupied with his wife. He would go from that, he said, as she had gone. Cosmo, therefore, took his grandmother's room, and there wrote and read; so that when his father could not, in the very cold weather, leave his bed, he was within the call of the slightest knock upon his floor. But every now and then, when the cold would abate, the laird would revive, and hope grow strong in the mind of his son: his father was not such an old man yet, he would persuade himself, that he might not be intended to live many years. Thereupon he would set to work with fresh vigour. But it is hard to labour without encouragement or apparent prospect of result.

Never surely did household, even in Scotland, live upon less! Cosmo had to watch Grizzie to know that she ate at all, and once came nearly to the conclusion that she consumed only dry meal.

Many a time did the Gracies go without milk that they might send the laird the little their cow gave; but though Cosmo never refused their kindness, as indeed he had no right, it went to his heart that the two old people should go without what was as needful for them as for his father. Mr. Simon too would every now and then send something from his house or from the village—oftener than Cosmo knew, for the giver had appealed to Grizzie, and she was discreet. But now at length began a little fall of heavenly crumbs to keep the human sparrows picking.

The schoolmaster at the Muir, the same who had behaved so insolently to the Warlocks, father and son, though for some time ailing, had returned to his duties at the end of the *hairst play;* but since then had been getting worse, and was now at length unable to go on: Cosmo heard that he was on the outlook for a substitute.

Cosmo knew well that, if he had desired to be made parish-schoolmaster, the influence of lord Lumbiggin would have been too strong against him, but it seemed possible that his old master might have so far forgotten by-gones as to be willing to employ him. He went to him therefore the same hour, and was shown into the room where he sat wrapt in blankets.

Now the schoolmaster, although both worldly in his judgment

and hasty in his temper, was not a heartless man. Keen feelings are not always dissociated from brutality even. One thing will reach the heart that another thing will not; and much that looks like heartlessness may be mainly stupidity. He had never ceased, after the first rush of passion, to regret he had used the word that incensed the boy; and although he would not to his own heart confess himself wrong in knocking down the violator of the dominical sanctity, yet, unconsciously to himself, he was sorry for that also. When the boy, therefore, on whom for years he had not set his eyes, stood unexpectedly before him, a fine youth, down in the world, and come, as he anticipated the moment he saw him, to beg a favour, he not only felt inclined to make him reparation by granting it, but beheld within his reach the opportunity of doing so without any confession of wrong, and even with the dignity of one forgiving wrong. He received Cosmo, therefore—with the stiffness of a condescending inferior, it is true, but with kindness notwithstanding, and having heard his request, accorded immediately a gracious assent, which so filled Cosmo with gratitude that he could not help manifesting some emotion, whereupon the heart of the schoolmaster in its turn asserted itself, and from that moment friendly relations were established between them.

Things were soon arranged: Cosmo was to be paid by the week, and should commence his work the next morning. He returned, therefore, in much consolation, carrying with him for his father one or two simple luxuries the village afforded. That night he hardly could sleep for joy.

He cast himself into his new duties with zeal. Whoever is anxious to make it genuine, will find teaching far from easy work; and Cosmo had besides to leave home early in all kinds of wintry weather, and walk to school through the bitterness of *black frost*, the shifting toil of deep snow, or the assault of arctic storm, whichever might rule the temporal hour. But he thought nothing of the labour or its accessories of discomfort; the only thing he felt hard was having to leave his father all the winter day alone—for it was generally five o'clock before he got back to him.

And now in the heart of the laird arose a fresh gratitude to God for the son he had given him. His hours passed mainly in devotion and anticipation. Every time he received his son from the arms of the winter to his own, it was like the welcoming of one lost and found again.

Into the stern weather of their need had stolen a summer day to keep hope alive. Cosmo gave up his writing, and spent all his home-time in waiting with soul and body upon his father. He read to him—sometimes his own poetry—and that the laird liked

best of all, because in it he had more of his boy and came nearer to him ; now and then, when he saw he was too weary for thought, he would play backgammon with him ; and sometimes, when he was himself more tired than usual, he would get Grizzie to come up and tell yet again the stories she used to tell him—some of which his father enjoyed the more that he remembered having himself heard them when he was a child.

Upon one of these occasions, Grizzie brought from her treasury a tale the laird remembered his grandmother saying she had heard from her nurse, and therewith it came into Cosmo's head to write it out, as nearly as he could, in Grizzie's words, and try a magazine with it. After a long delay he received for the first time an answer —the most agreeable part of which was a small cheque—with a request for another paper of like character. Grizzie's face, when she learned in what way, and how largely, as it seemed to her, the stores of her memory had ministered to the family necessities, was a sight worth more than a good dinner to father and son both. At first she imagined Cosmo was making game of her, and stood upon the dignity of her legends ; but convinced at length of the fact of the case, she glowered into nowhere for a minute.

"Eh, sirs !" she cried at last. "Oot o' the moo' o' babes an' sucklin's ! The Lord be praist whan herts is raist !"

"Amen, Grizzie !" responded the laird. "Eh, wuman ! gien ever ane made a place her ain 'at was foreordeent her by the fatherly providence ower a' the faimilies o' men, Grizzie, ye're that wuman !"

Word to please Grizzie better the laird could not have found. It sunk the deeper that her delight found no outlet : there was no room for growth in the devotion of her ministrations.

And now Cosmo would take no more of the Gracies' milk, but got Aggie to go every day to a farm near, and buy what was required for his father, and Agnes was regular as the clock, sunshine or storm.

There was another thing in which she was not quite so regular, which yet she never missed when she could help it : as often as three, occasionally four times in the week, would Cosmo find her waiting for him somewhere on his return from school—now just outside the village, now nearer Glenwarlock, according to when she had got through her work. She had now recovered her former position of familiarity with him ; and it was one of the comforts of his labour, when the dullness or contrariety of the human animal threatened to be too much for him, to anticipate the walk and the talk with Agnes which he might any day at least hope the evening would bring forth. Under Mr. Simon she had made much pro-

gress, and was now a companion fit for any thinking man. The way home was not half the length to Cosmo when Agnes walked it by him. Thinking inside, and labouring outside, she was, in virtue of the necessities of her life, such a woman as not the most vaunted means of education, without the weight and seeming hindrances of hardship, can produce. An immortal woman she was—for she had set out to grow for evermore. For such, neither poet nor prophet, none save him who knows what he is making of her, is capable of predicting an adequate future.

Her behaviour to Cosmo was likest that of a half-sister born in a humbler position from which she would not rise, but none the less his sister, and none the less loving him. Whether she had any struggle to keep this position, I am not prepared to say; but I suspect that her scorn of the behaviour of Elspeth had something to do with the restoring of the old relation between her and Cosmo. The most jealous of mothers could hardly have found fault with her behaviour in Cosmo's company, however much she might disapprove of her seeking it as she did. And to Cosmo, next to his father and Mr. Simon, Agnes Gracie was the most valued of his friends. Mr. Burns came next. For lady Joan, he never thought of her by the side of anyone else. If he had not loved lady Joan, I think he might now have loved Agnes; and if he had now asked her to marry him, when marriage was impossible, I do not know what Agnes might have said. But as it was they remained the best of trusting friends.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### GRANNIE AND THE STICK.

This winter, the wind that drops the fruit not plucked before, blew hard upon old Grannie, who had now passed her hundredth year. For some time Agnes had not been able to do much for her, but another great-grandchild, a widow, with a little daughter, was spending the winter with her. On his way to or from school, Cosmo would every day look in to see or enquire after her; and when he heard she had had a bad night, he would sometimes think how with her would fail the earthly knowledge of not a little of the past of his family. Upon one of these occasions he resolved to see whether she remembered the bamboo he had brought from Cairncarque.

When school was over he called, and hearing she was a little

better, the next morning brought with him the cane. Learning then that she had had a good night, he went in after school, and found her in her chair by the fireside. He took his place by her, but so that the light from the window at her back should fall upon the stick.

He had not sat more than a minute, when her eyes found it and fixed on it.

"What's that ye hae there, Cosmo?" she said.

"This?" returned Cosmo. "It's a bit cane I pickit up upo' my traivels. What think ye o' 't?"

He held it towards her, but she drew back the hand next it.

"Whaur got ye 't?" she asked, her eyes seeming to come forward from the pits in which age had sunk them, and growing larger as she looked.

"What gars ye speir, Grannie?" he returned, with assumed indifference.

"I dinna believe there was ever anither like the ane 'at that's like," she replied.

"In that case," rejoined Cosmo, "it maun be the ane itsel'. What ken ye aboot it?"

"Gien ye ken naething yersel', ye 're no sae gleg as I wad hae expeckit o' a Warlock. That stick's no a stick like ither sticks, an' I wuss I was nearer hame."

"Hoot, Grannie! ye dinna mean there's onything no canny aboot the stick?" suggested Cosmo.

"I wadna like to think him near me 'at aucht it!" she replied.

"Wha aucht it, Grannie?"

"Rive 't a' to bits, laddie; there's that 'at 's no mowse (*safe to meddle with*) aboot it. The auld captain made o' 't as gien it had been his graven image. That same ye hae i' yer han' 's *his* stick, whaurever ye got it; an' oot o' his it seldom was frae mornin' til nicht. Some wad hae't he tuik it til's bed wi' 'im. I kenna aboot that; but gien by ony chance he set it oot frae 'atween his k-nees, it gatna ayont the sicht o' his een. I hae seen him mysel' luik up o' a suddent as gien his sowl hed been requiret o' 'im, an' grip at it as gien it hed been his proadigal son come hame oonexpeckit."

Cosmo told her where he had found it.

"I tellt ye sae!" she cried. "The murderin' villain tuik it wi' 'im! Weel kent he what was intil 't!"

Cosmo showed her the boxes in the joints. She shook her head.

"Ower late! ower late!" she murmured. "The reavin' English lord! Wha but he to scrape pot an' pan!"

She fell then into what seemed a kind of lethargic musing, and

as Cosmo had not yet made up his mind to show her the paper found in the horse, he bade her good night—little thinking he was not to see her again in this world. That same night she died.

When all opportunity was thus gone, and he could learn no more from her, the mind of Cosmo began to be exercised afresh concerning the stick. According to Grannie, its owner habitually showed anxiety for its safety, keeping it all but constantly under his eye. It did not seem likely that the rings had been in it long when it was taken from him, neither that he would have been in the habit of carrying such valuables about in such a losable receptacle. It could hardly therefore have been because of those or of similar precious things that he was from the first and always so watchful over it. It was possible, indeed, that from often using it for temporary concealment, he might have come to regard it with constant anxiety; but the possibility was not enough to set Cosmo's mind at rest on the matter. Little as he had regarded it when first found, and notwithstanding that its presence in the horse seemed accounted for by its mere chance employment for the protection of the jewels, round which it was rather squeezed than folded, he came by degrees to imagine the unintelligible paper somehow associated with the fidgety care of the old captain over his stick: a man may crumple up his notes and thrust them in his pocket, yet value them more than anything else in that pocket. He was indeed driven to imagine thus, or yield all hope of discoverable mystery. And now Grannie was gone, who might possibly, if he had but trusted her, have cast him a light on the curious puzzle! It was not probable, however, he thought, by way of self-consolation, that she should have got much nearer the old captain's secret than himself.

Meditating on the thing one night in bed, about a week after Grannie's funeral, it occurred to him suddenly to ask himself what he had done with the paper, for he could not remember when he had last seen it. He got up, took the stick, which always, except when he carried it, stood in a corner of his room, and opening the horse in the dark, found it empty. This made him uneasy, and he lay down again, thinking what he could have done with it. His anxiety was not so great, however, but that sleep presented its claim upon him. He resisted it, unwilling to yield without having at least got a glimpse of some probability concerning the paper. Like a soundless tide it kept creeping on, and he kept starting back from it with successive spur-pricks of the will not yet consenting to pass under the shadow of annihilation. Bethinking himself in one of these partial revivals, that he might have put the paper in his pocket-book, he stretched his hand to the chair by the

bed, on which lay his clothes, and got the book from his pocket. At this point, I presume, he fell asleep, but he thought he searched at once every pocket in the book, and, satisfied the paper was not there, could rest no longer, but must look for it until he found it. He rose, as he thought, lighted his candle, went down the stair, through the kitchen, and out of the house. Then first he began to doubt whether he was indeed awake, but like one compelled, went on to the great door, and up to the drawing-room. There the moon was shining! At sight of that, all at once he knew that an old dream was coming again: there it was!—the old captain was sitting in the old chair with the moon on his ghastly face! He felt his hair about to stand on end, but resisted the terror with all his might. The rugged, scarred countenance gazed fixedly at him. He did his best to return the gaze as fixedly. The appearance rose, and went walking from the room, and Cosmo knew he had to follow it to the guest-chamber above, which he had not once entered since his return. Thither it led the way, with Cosmo after it. Arrived in the room it went straight to the other side of the bed, and disappeared. Despite his terror Cosmo followed still, and in the wall, by the head of the bed, saw an open door. He hurried up to it, but seemed to strike against the wall, and woke, his heart beating a terribly quick march. He was in bed. His pocket-book was in his hand. He struck a light, and found in it the missing paper.

The next day he told his dream to his father and Mr. Simon, and they had a talk about dreams and apparitions. Then all three pored over the paper, but far from arriving at any conclusion, seemed hardly to get a glimpse of what even might be light concerning it.

All this time Cosmo had not written again to Joan. His father thought it better he only should for the present keep up the correspondence. But months had passed without their hearing from her. The laird had written the third time, and received no answer.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### OBSTRUCTION.

The day came on when the last of their land would be taken, leaving them nothing but the kitchen-garden—a piece of ground of about half an acre, the little terraced flower-garden to the south of the castle, and the croft tenanted by James Gracie. The laird applied to lord Lumbiggin for a lease of the one field next the

castle, which, with the help of the two women, he had cultivated the spring before; but his lordship would not grant it: his resentment was as strong as ever, and his design deeper than they saw. The formal proceedings took their legal course; and after a certain day lord Lumbiggin was not seldom to be seen walking the fields to north, east, and west of the castle, holding council with his bailiff concerning them. Within a fortnight those to the north were cut off from the precincts of the castle by a *dry-stane-dyke;* and its inhabitants soon found that their old neighbour in his nearer approach was not likely to spare them one annoyance he could safely cause them.

Lord Lumbiggin had discovered from the plan of the property that that part of the road from the glen of the Warlock to the How o' Hap which now passed the gate of the castle-yard, had been made by the present laird only so-many years before; and thereupon had given orders that it should be broken up from the old point of departure, and a dry dyke built across the gate. The persons to whom the job was committed, either ashamed or afraid, took an evening for the work on which Cosmo had a class at the school for farm-labourers, and even then did not venture to begin it until after dark; whence it came that, plodding homewards without a suspicion, Cosmo found himself all at once floundering among stones and broken ground, and presently brought up standing—cut off from his own door by a wall night-born like a mushroom—the entrance gone which to him had seemed primordial, for it was older than his memory! With a great shove he hurled down half the height of the dyke, and appeared before his father in a rage that bewildered and troubled him far more than any insolence of lord Lumbiggin could have done.

"The scoundrel!" cried Cosmo; "I should like to give him a sound drubbing—only he's an old man! But I'll make him repent it—and heartily too!"

"Cosmo, my boy," said the laird, "you must not meddle with what does not belong to you."

"I know the place is yours, not mine, father; but——"

"This business is no more mine than yours, my son: 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.'—An' the best o' 't is," he went on, willing by a touch of humour to help turn the tide of Cosmo's wrath, "he'll tak no more o' the same than's guid for the sinner; whauras yersel', Cosmo, i' the tune ye're in the noo, wad damn puir auld Lick-my-loof for ever an' ever for puttin' up a dry-stane-dyke! Man, he canna hurt you an' me thegither to the worth o' sic an awfu' heap o' firin'!" Then changing his tone to one of absolute seriousness, "Min' ye tu, Cosmo," he went on,

"'at the Maister never threatent, but aye left the thing, whatever it was, to him 'at judges richteously; an' his w'y is the only w'y for you an' me 'at wad fain he had his wull. Ye want naething but fair play, my son, an' whether ye get it frae Lick-my-loof or no, ye'll get it, for the ane 'at hauds 't frae nane is ower a'. Ye'll get it, my son; ye'll get it! The Maister 'll hae a'thing set richt some time; an' gien *he* binna in a hurry 'at hates wrang mair nor ony man can, you an' me may weel hae patience. For mysel', the man has smitten me upo' the tae cheek, an' may hae the tither to lat drive at whan he likes. It's no worth liftin' my auld airm to haud aff the smack."

He laughed, and Cosmo laughed too—but grimly and out of tune. Then the laird told him that that piece of the road was an improvement of his own, and had taken a good deal of blasting. The road used to cross the stream twice before it got to the yard-gate, and he had seen both the bridges carried away in one winter. He hardly thought, he said, his lordship would like having to reconstruct it; for, besides the expense, it would take so much out of one of his best fields. For themselves, they must contrive a connection with what was left of the road between them and the Warlock. The worst of it was there would be no longer direct communication with James Gracie's cottage. Even when the old road was restored, it would be a tremendous round!

The rage and indignation of Grizzie when she learned what had been done, surpassed even Cosmo's. The flood of poetic abuse poured out by her seemed inexhaustible, sweeping along with it tale after tale to the prejudice of "that leein' Lick-my-loof." But, poetic as was her speech, not a single rime did she utter during the hour she took thus to unload her heart.

"Ay!" she concluded, and thereafter sank into smouldering silence, "there was a futpath there afore ye was born, laird, blast or no blast, an' whether ye min' upo' 't or no; an' to that I can fess them 'at can beir testimony—ane o' the same bein' Jeames himsel', wha's ten lang years aheid o' yer lairdship; an' lat me see man or dog 'ill haud me ohn taen my wull o' my richts intil 't! They canna hang me, and for less I carena."

At break of day Cosmo was up to see what could be done, and found that a few steps cut in the rocky terrace of the garden would bring one with ease to the road, and there was now no need of approach for cart or carriage. He set about it immediately, and before breakfast-time had finished the job.

The schoolmaster was at length equal to the resumption of his labours, and soon after the event just narrated, Cosmo ceased to occupy his place.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### GRIZZIE'S RIGHTS.

In those days Mistress Gracie fell sick, and though for a while neither husband nor granddaughter thought seriously of her ailment, it proved more than her age, worn with labour, could endure, and she began to sink. Then Grizzie must go and help nurse her: Cosmo being again at home all day, the laird insisted he could well enough spare her. Father and son were now indeed seldom out of each other's sight. While Cosmo was writing, the laird would be reading in the same room; and when, after dinner, the laird slept, Cosmo would read, generally his New-Testament, beside him; then as often as he woke fresh from his nap, the two would talk about what the one had been reading, and Cosmo show his father any fresh light the Greek had given him. The capacity of the old man for what was new to him was wonderful—and yet not to be wondered at, seeing it was the natural result of the constant practice of what he learned. Knowledge gained is duty; duty done becomes truth in the inward parts; and such truth is wisdom and understanding. To him who obeys, truth comes as to its home; to him who obeys not, it comes in forms of fear and dismay. The true, that is the obedient man, cannot help seeing the truth, for it is the very business of his being—the natural concern, the correlate of his soul. The religion of the two, father and son, was obedience and prayer; their theories only the print of their spiritual feet as they walked homeward.

The road which lord Lumbiggin had broken up went almost in a straight line from Castle Warlock to the cottage of the Gracies, where it joined the road that passed his lordship's lodge on the way to How o' Hap. And now came Grizzie's call to action! The moment she found her services required at the cottage, she climbed the gate of the close, from the top of it crept cautiously on to that of the new wall, whose stones had been replaced by the hands of the laird himself and Cosmo, got down on the disfeatured road, and set out to follow its track, straight through the ploughed land. In the evening she came back the same way, scrambled over the wall and the gate, and neither said word, nor was asked question. To visit his tenants the laird himself went a mile about, but was not prepared to strain his authority with Grizzie, and therefore was as one who knew nothing. Before the week was out, her steps, and hers alone, had worn a visible and

very practicable footpath across the enemy's field; and whether lord Lumbiggin was from home, or willed the trespass to assume well defined form and be itself the snare to take the trespasser, he let the week go by and made no sign.

On the Sunday morning, however, as Grizzie was on her way to the cottage, she spied suddenly, over the edge of a hollow through which her path ran, the head of lord Lick-my-loof: he was following the track she had made, and would presently meet her. Wide spread her nostrils like those of the war-horse, for she too smelt the battle from afar.

"Here's auld Belzebub at last," she said to herself, "gaein' to an' fro i' the earth, an' walkin' up an' doon intil't! Noo 's for me to priv the trowth o' Scriptur! Whether he'll flee or no we'll sune see: I s' resist him ony gait. It's no me 'at'll rin!"

His lordship had been standing by his lodge on the lookout, and the moment he saw Grizzie approaching, had started to encounter her. As they drew near to each other he stopped, and stood in the path motionless. On she came till within a single pace of him. He did not move. She stopped also.

"I doobt, my lord," she said, "I'll hae to mak my ro'd a bit wider. There's hardly room for yer lordship an' anither. But I'm gettin' on fine!"

"Is the woman an idiot!" exclaimed his lordship.

"Muckle siclike 's yersel', my lord!" answered Grizzie; "—no that muckle wit but I micht hae mair—an' haith I wad need it to guide my steps throuw the wilderness ye wad mak o' no sae ill a warl' but ye wad hae't waur!"

"Are you not aware, woman, that you make yourself liable to a heavy fine for trespass? This field is mine!"

"An' this fitpath 's mine, my lord—made wi' my ain feet! an' I coonsel ye to stan' aside an' lat me by, for fear I hae a coonter-chairge for assault an' battery."

"Woman, you are insolent."

"Troth, I needna yer lordship to tell me that! Nane the less ae auld wife may say 'at she likes til anither."

"I tell you there is no thoroughfare here."

"An' I tell you there *is* a thoroughfare, an' ye hae but to wull the trowth to ken 'at there is. There was a fit-ro'd here lang or yer lordship's father was merriet upo' yer lordship's mither; an' the law—what o' 't yer lordship hasna the makin' o'—is deid agen ye: —that I can priv. Hae me up: I can tak my aith as weel's ony-body whan I'm sure."

"I intend doing so; but in the meantime you must get off my property."

"Weel, stan' by, an' I s' be aff o' 't in less time nor yer lordship."

"You must go back."

"Hooly an' fairly! Bide till the gloamin', an' I s' be back, safe eneuch—nae fear o' that! I' the mids o' the meantime I'm gaein' aff yer property the nearest gait—an' that's straucht efter my nose."

She tried to pass him, but turn as she might, he confronted her. He raised the stick he carried, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps thinking to intimidate her. Thereupon was the air rent with outcry. Grievously it shook the nerves of his lordship.

"Hold your tongue, you howling jade!" he shouted—and the epithet sufficed to destroy every remnant of forbearance in the mind of Grizzie.

"I'm thinkin', my lord," she said with sudden calm, "it'll be the verra name ye ca'd Annie Fyfe, puir lass, whan she cam efter ye, fifty year come Can'lemas, to yer father's hoose, an' gat fowth o' ill words, but naither plack nor bodle to haud her an' her bairn frae the ro'dside!—Ye needna girn like that, my lord! Spare yer auld teeth for the gnashin' they'll *hae* to du. Though ye fearna God nor regaird man, yer hoor 'll come, an' ye're no like to bid it walcome."

Beside himself with rage, lord Lick-my-loof would have laid hold of her, but she uttered a louder cry than before—so loud that James Gracie's deaf colley heard her, and, having a great sense of justice, more courage than teeth, and as little regard to the law of trespass as Grizzie herself, came, not bounding, but tearing over the land to her rescue, as if a fox were at one of his sheep. He made straight for his lordship.

Now this dog was one of the chief offences of the cottage, for he had the moral instinct to know and hate a bad man, therefore could not abide his lordship. He had never attacked him, for the colley cultivated self-restraint, but he had made his lordship aware there was no friendship in his heart towards him.

Almost as silent as swift, he was nearly on the enemy before either he or Grizzie saw him. His lordship turned from red to white, staggered from the path, and raised his stick with trembling hand.

"Doon wi' ye! doon, Covenant! doon, ye tyke!" cried Grizzie. "Haud frae 'im gien ye wad keep the feow teeth ye hae left! Deil a bite but banes is there i' the breeks o' im'!"

The dog had obeyed, and stood worshipping Grizzie with his tail, while with his eyes he watched the enemy and his stick.

"Hark ye, Covenant!" she went on: "Whan his sowl he sellt him, the deevil tellt him 'at never mair sud he turn a hair at cry or

moanin' in highway or loanin', for greitin' or sweirin', or grane o' despair. Haud frae him, Covenant, my fine fallow; haud frae him."

Grizzie talked to the dog nor lifted her eyes. When she looked up as she ended her address, lord Lick-my-loof was beyond the hollow, hurrying as if to fetch help. In a few minutes she was safe in the cottage, out of breath, but in high spirits, making even the dying woman laugh at her tale of how she had served his lordship.

"But ye ken, Grizzie," suggested James, "we're no to return evil for evil, nor flytin' for flytin'."

"Ca' ye that flytin'?" cried Grizzie. "Ye sud hear what I didna say! That was flytin'! We'll be tried by what we *can* du, no by what we canna! An' for returnin' evil, did I no haud the dog frae the death-shanks o' 'im?"

The laird and Cosmo had spent as usual a quiet and happy Sunday. It was now halfway down the gloamin' towards night, and they sat together in the drawing-room, the laird on the sofa, and Cosmo at one of the windows. The sky was a cold clear calm of thin blue and translucent green, such an embodiment of profound but sad peace as in my mind will more or less for ever be associated with a Scotch Sunday. A long low cloud of dark purple hung like a baldachin over the yet glimmering coals on the altar of sunset, and the sky above it was like a pale molten mass of jewels that had run together with heat, and was still too bright for the stars to show in it. Father and son were both looking out at the sky, and a peace as of the unbeginnings of eternity had sunk into their hearts. The laird's thoughts were with his Marion in the region beyond the dream; Cosmo's with Joan in the dream that had vanished into itself. If love be religion, what matter whether its object be in heaven or on the earth! Love itself is the only nearness. He who thinks of his Saviour as far away can have made little progress in the need of him; and he who does not need much cannot know much, any more than he who is not forgiven much can love much. They sat silent, belonging to the heaven over their heads, not the earth under their feet, when of a sudden the world of their stillness was invaded with hideous discord, on the top of which rose the well known voice of Grizzie. They started up and hurried out.

The noises came from the direction of the obstructed gate, and over the wall they descried in the dim light several heads, two of them in fierce contention, with voices clearer than their faces: Grizzie was in the grasp of Lumbiggin's bailiff, and his lordship looking on with his hands in his pockets and the smile that was his

own. But it was not for herself Grizzie had this time cried out: there were two more in the group—two of the dog-kind, at the moment worrying each other with that perfect devotion which renders a master's quarrel superior to a dog's own. They were, however, far from equally matched, and hence Grizzie's cry; for one of them was the ancient colley named Covenant, whose teeth were of the past, and the other a young mastiff belonging to lord Lick-my-loof, malevolent, and that night off his chain the first time for a month. It was a poor chance for Covenant, who was a brave dog, incapable of turning his back on death itself when duty called him. Both were well-bred, each in his kind. Covenant was the more human, Dander the more devilish. And the battle was fierce.

The moment Cosmo descried who the combatants were, he was over the wall, and had thrown himself upon them. Instantly the bailiff, knowing his master's eagerness for Covenant's death, let Grizzie go, and would have rushed on Cosmo. But it was Grizzie's turn now, and she clung to him like an anaconda. He cursed and swore; nor failed to deposit on Grizzie certain bruises of which she made no mention except to Agnes; but she kept her hold of his cravat, and did her best to throttle him. Cosmo tried the same with the mastiff, but without success because of his collar. He caught up a great stone, therefore, and stunned him with a blow on the head; which done, he took Covenant and heaved him over wall and gate to his father. The same moment the bailiff got clear of Grizzie, and made at him, calling to the mastiff. But the dog, just coming to himself, and either mistaking through bewilderment, or moved by some occult influence, instead of attacking Cosmo, rushed at his master. Rage recalls offence and dislike: he may not have forgotten certain teasings on the chain. His lordship, however, was instantly aware of his treacherous intent; in a moment his legs had saved themselves over wall and gate, and, in his turn the trespasser, he stood panting and shaking beside the laird.

The mastiff would have been over after him, had not Cosmo, leaving the bailiff, who had not observed his master's danger, knocked the dog, in the act of leaping, once more to the earth, when a rush of stones that came with him and partly fell upon him, had its share in cowing him.

"Haud him! haud him! Haud the deevil, ye brute! Haud the brute, ye deevil!" cried his lordship.

"It's yer ain dog, my lord," said the bailiff, as he took him by the collar.

"Am I to be worried 'cause the dog's my ain?" returned his

master indignantly. "Haud him the sickerer. He s' be ayont mischeef the morn!"

"He's the true dog sides wi' the richt! he'll be in bliss afore his master!" said Grizzie, as she descended from the gate and stood once more on her own side.

But in the meantime the laird was welcoming his lordship with the heartiness of one receiving the favour of an unhoped-for visit.

"Weel loupen, my lord!" he said applaudingly. "Come in-by, an' rist yersel' a bit, an' I s' set ye back on yer ain property an easier gait nor ower a dry-stane-dyke."

"Gien ye ken 't for my property," returned his lordship, "I wad thank ye, laird, to haud yer fowk aff o' 't!"

"Grizzie, wuman," said the laird, turning to her, "ye dinna surely want to bring disgrace upo' me! The lan' 's his lordship's —boucht an' paid for, an' I hae no more richt ower 't nor Jeames Gracie's colley there, puir beast!"

"That may be the case wi' the lan', laird—the mair 's the peety!" answered Grizzie; "but the fut-path, beggin' the pardon o' baith lairdship an' lordship, belangs to me as muckle as to the ane or the ither o' ye. Here I stan' alane for mysel'! That ro'd 's my neebour, an' I'm b'un' to see til 't; for a sair vex it wad be to mony a puir body like mysel' to lowse the richt o' 't."

"You'll have to prove what you assert, woman," said his lordship.

"Surely, Grizzie," expostulated the laird, "his lordship maun un'erstan' affairs o' sic a natur' better nor you or me!"

"As to the un'erstan'in' o' them, laird, I mak nae doobt," returned Grizzie; "an' as little 'at he's o' the wrang side o' the wa' this time."

"Na, Grizzie—he's upo' my side o' 't, an' walcome."

"An' I mak him jist as walcome to the fair eese (*use*) o' the path I made wi' my ain feet throuw the rouchest plooed lan' I ever crossed. It'll tak him straucht hame."

Therewith Grizzie, who abhorred compromise, turned away, and went into the kitchen.

"Come this way, my lord," said the laird.

"Take the dog home," said his lordship to the bailiff. "Have him shot the first thing to-morrow morning. If it were not the Sabbath-day, I should have it done to-night."

"He's a good watch, my lord!" interceded the man.

"He may be a good watch, but he's a bad dog," replied his lordship. "I'll have neither man nor dog about my place that doesn't know his master. You may poison him if you prefer it."

"Come awa', come awa', my lord!" said the laird. "This, as

ye hae weel said, 's the Sabbath-day, an' the thoucht o' 't sud mak us mercifu'. I hae naething to offer yer lordship but a cheir to rist ye in, an' syne we'll tak the ro'd thegither, like auld neebours as we are, an' I'll shaw ye the w'y hame."

Lord Lick-my-loof yielded, for his poor thin legs were yet trembling with the mighty effort they had made, and now that the spur of fear was withdrawn, the gate and the dyke seemed a rampart insurmountable.

"What are you doing with that cursed dog there?" he said, catching sight of Cosmo holding Covenant by the back of the neck.

"I am keeping him till your lordship's mastiff is out of the way," answered Cosmo.

"That you may set him at me, as that old hag of yours did this morning?"

They had neared the kitchen-door, open as usual.

"That's as big a lee as ever yer lordship h'ard tell i' the coort," cried Grizzie from within. "It's the natur o' dougs to tak scunners. They see far ben. Fess the beast in here, Cosmo; I s' be answerable for 'im. The puir animal canna bide his lordship."

"Hoot, hoot, Grizzie!" began the laird anew, now with displeasure in his tone; but that moment, Cosmo having put the dog in, the kitchen-door was closed.

"Leave her alone, Mr. Warlock, before you have the worst of it," said his lordship, trying to laugh. "But seriously, laird," he went on, "it is not neighbourly to treat me like this. Oblige me by giving orders to your people not to trespass on my property. I have paid for it, and must be allowed to do with it as I please."

"My lord," returned the laird, "I have not given, and I will not give you the smallest annoyance in my own person. But I cannot interfere with the rights of other neighbours either. If Grizzie believes there was a right of way before the road,—and she generally knows what she is about—I have no business to interfere."

"Confound your cant!" cried his lordship. "You care no more for your neighbours than I do. You only want to make yourself unpleasant! Show me the way out, and be damned to you!"

"My lord," said Cosmo, "if you weren't an old man, I would show you the quickest way out! How dare you speak so to a man like my father!"

"Hold your tongue, you young fool! *You* stand up for your father!—idling about at home and devouring him! Why don't you list? I warn you, if you fall into my hands I will not spare

you. The country will be better to live in when such as you are scarcer."

"Cosmo," said his father, "do not answer him. Show his lordship the way out."

As they went through the garden, lord Lick-my-loof sought to renew the conversation, but Cosmo maintained a stern silence, and his lordship went home incensed more than ever with "the contumacious paupers."

The path in which Grizzie gloried as the work of her own feet, hardened and broadened, but she herself had very little *foot* in it any more. For the following week Mistress Gracie died.

The day after she was buried the old cottar came to the laird, and begged him not to think of him any longer, but, if he saw fit, let his lordship have the croft, for doubtless he would give a good price for it.

All the neighbours knew that Lick-my-loof greatly coveted it, though none of them were aware what a price he had actually offered for it.

"Ye see, sir," said Gracie, "noo 'at *she* 's gane, it maitters little to Aggie or me whaur we are or what comes o' 's."

"Wadna she hae said the same, gien it had been you 'at was gane home, Jeames?" asked the laird.

"'Deed wad she! She was aye a'thing for ither fowk, an' naething for hersel'! The mair cause she sud be considered the noo!"

"An' ca' ye that considerin' her—the minute she's gane to gang an' du the thing wad hae grieved her by ordnar'?"

"Whan we was thegither," returned James with solemnity, "there was a heap o' things worth a hantle; noo 'at we're pairtit, there's jist nearhan' as mony 'at 's no worth a strae."

"Weel div I un'erstan' ye, Jeames!" returned the laird with a sigh. "But what wad come o' yersel' an' Aggie wi'oot a place to lay yer heids? We're no to prezhume to mak oorsel's as ill aff as was the Maister; we maun lea' a' to his wull. Ye wadna hae *her* luik doon an' see ye in less comfort nor whan she was wi' ye? It wad be like to brak the speerit-hert o' her!"

"Thereanent, sir, I had a word o' a proposal to mak," rejoined James. "Ye haena a man aboot the place: whatfor sudna Aggie an' me come an' pitch oor bit tent i' the men's quarters, an' sae be at han' to len' a han' whan it micht be wantit? Aggie an' me thegither wad get mair oot o' the gairden; I wad hae mair time for weyvin'; an' ye wad get a heap for the craft frae Lick-my-loof. It wadna be an ill muv, I do believe, laird—a guid ane for hiz, an' no an ill ane for yersel'. Consider o' 't, sir."

The laird thought with himself that the two might indeed be better accommodated at the castle. He would consult his son, he said. Cosmo in his turn consulted Agnes, and was satisfied. In the winter the wind blew through the cottage bitterly, she said.

As soon as the change was concluded upon, Cosmo went to see Lumbiggin, and was shown into the library. His lordship guessed his errand, for his keen eye had that same morning detected about the cottage some signs of a flitting. He received him with politeness, and begged to know wherein he could serve him. From his changed manner Cosmo thought he must be sorry for the way he had spoken to the laird.

"My father sent me," he said, "to inform your lordship that he is now at length in a position to treat with you, should you be so inclined, concerning the purchase of James Gracie's croft."

"I am greatly obliged to Glenwarlock," replied lord Lick-my-loof, softly wiping the palm of one hand with the ball of the other, "for his attention, but I have no longer any desire to possess the land. It has been so long denied me, that at length I have grown indifferent to it. It is a merciful provision of the Creator that the human mind should have the faculty of accommodating itself to circumstances—even such as are a positive nuisance."

Cosmo rose.

"As soon as you have made up your mind," added his lordship, rising also, "to part with what remains of the property *including the castle*, I shall be glad to have the refusal of *that* Castle Warlock would make a picturesque ruin from certain points on the estate."

Cosmo bowed, and left his lordship grinning.

## CHAPTER L.

### ANOTHER HARVEST.

HARVEST-TIME brought again the opportunity of earning a pound or two. But Cosmo would not go from home again, if he could help it, for, although his father never pined or complained, he had seen that the remnant of his life shrunk more rapidly when he was away: left to himself, he began at once to go home the faster —as if he cut the cable of yet another dragging anchor, and was drawn the more swiftly whither sets the tide of life.

To the old and weary man the life to come showed as rest; to the young and active Cosmo it promised more work. But

what we need for rest as well as for labour is *life*. It is life, more life we want, whether we be young or old. Life is everything. That which is would be more. The eternal root of our being causes us to long for larger existence, more being, more of God's making, less of our own unmaking. Our very desire after rest comes of life, life that recoils from weariness. The imperfect hungers to grow. Its hunger lies in its lack of its own eternity. The sense of a continuous enlargement of existence is indispensable to the created children of an infinite Father; for in the child the paternal infinite works—by him apprehensible, not as infinitude, but as lack and aspiration, or as gain and growth. Are not we too infinite, if infinite growth be our God-born prerogative? Nothing indeed that is not infinite can justly be said to live.

The best thing for both seemed to Cosmo, if it could but be compassed, an engagement for the Lumbiggin-harvest—to reap, among other fields, those that had so lately been their own. He would then be hardly out of sight of his father all the time. He applied, therefore, to the *grieve*, the man with whom he had all but fought that memorable Sunday of trespass. Though of a coarse, the man was not of a spiteful nature, neither regarded a quarrel as ground of hatred; yet as he carried the application to his lordship—for he dared not without his master's consent engage the man he counted his enemy—it gave him pleasure to see what he called *poor pride* brought to what he called *beggary*—as if the labour of a gentleman's hands were not a good deal farther off beggary than the money of his ancestors!

Lord Lick-my-loof smouldered a while before he gave his answer. The question was—which would most gratify the feeling he cherished against the man of old family and evil fortunes—to accept or refuse the offered toil of his son? His deliberation ended in orders to the bailiff to fee the young laird, but to mind he did not pay workman's wages for gentleman's work—an injunction the bailiff allowed to reach Cosmo's ears.

The young laird, as they all called him, was a favourite with his enemy's men, partly because they did not love their master, and were therefore not unprepared to side with the man he oppressed; partly because they admired the gentleman who could so cheerfully come down to their level, and, showing neither condescension nor chagrin, be in all simplicity friendly with them; and partly because some of them had been to his evening-school the last winter, and had there become attached to him. No honest heart in truth could be near Cosmo long and not love him—for the one reason that humanity was in him so largely developed. To him a man was a man whatever his position or

calling; he beheld neither in the great man a divinity, nor in the small man a slave, but honoured in his heart every image of the living God it had pleased that God to make—honoured every man as, if not already such in the highest sense, yet destined to be one day a brother of Jesus Christ.

In the arrangement of the mowers the bailiff put Cosmo last, as presumably the least capable, who must not be allowed to lower the rate of the field. But presently Cosmo contrived to make his neighbour in front a little uneasy about his legs, and when he humorously objected to having them cut off, asked him, for the joke of the thing, to change places with him. The man at once consented; one after another behaved with equal courtesy, showing no desire to contest with him the precedence of labour; before the end of the long bout, Cosmo swung the leading scythe, and many were the compliments he received from his companions as they stood sharpening for the next—in which they were of one mind he must take the lead, some begging him however to be considerate, as they were not all so young as he, while others warned him that if he went on as he had began, he could not keep it up, and the first would be last before the day was over. Cosmo listened, and thereafter restrained himself, having no right to overwork his companions—yet had cause, many a time in after life, to remember the too great exertion of that day. Even in the matter of work a man has to learn that he is not his own, but has a master, whom he must not serve as if he were a hard one. When our will goes hand in hand with God's, then are we fellow-workers with him in the affairs of the universe—not mere discoverers of his ways, watching on the outskirts of things, but labourers with him at the heart of them.

The next day lord Lick-my-loof came into the field, and stood watching the toil.

Now Grizzie and Aggie, irrespective of Cosmo's engagement, of whose intention at the time they were unaware, had laid their heads together, and concluded that, although they could not be at once away from the castle, they might between them do a day's work and earn a day's wages; and although the grieve would certainly have listened to no such request from Grizzie in person, he was incapable of refusing it to Aggie. Thence it came that Grizzie was that morning gathering to Cosmo's scythe, hanging her labour on that of the young laird with as devoted a heart as if he had been a priest at the high altar and she his loving acolyte. I doubt if his lordship would have just then approached Cosmo had he noted who the woman was that went stooping along behind the late heir of the land.

"Weel, Glenwarlock!" said the old man, giving a lick to the palm of his right hand as he stopped in front of the nearing mower, "ye're a famous han' at the scythe! The corn boos doon afore ye like the stooks to Joseph."

"I hae a guid airm an' a sharp scythe, my lord," answered Cosmo cheerily.

"Whisht, whisht, my lord!" said Grizzie, before he could speak again; "gien the corn hear ye, it 'll stan' up again an' cry oot. Hearken til 't."

The morning had been very still, but that moment a gust of wind came, and set the corn rustling.

"What! you here!—Crawford, you rascal!" cried his lordship, glancing round, "where are you? Look sharp and turn this old cat out of the field."

But his eyes searched the field in vain; the grieve was nowhere in sight.

"The deil steek (*stitch*) yer lordship's moo' up wi' an awn o' beer (*a beard of barley*)!" cried Grizzie. "—Haith, gien I be a cat, ye s' hear me curse!"

His lordship bethought him that she would assuredly disgrace him in the hearing of his labourers if he provoked her farther; and he knew for certain that, although they were all working away as if they had not an ear amongst them, every one of them within possible hearing was straining the sense to the utmost.

"Hoots, wuman!" he said, in altered tone, "dinna ye ken a jape frae a jab (*a joke from a prick*)?"

"I daurna. There's ower mony o' yer lordship's japes has turnt fearsome jabs to them 'at tuik them!"

"What mean ye, wuman?"

"Wuman! quo' he? My name's Grisel Grant. Wha kensna auld Grizzie 'at never turnt her back on freen' or foe? But I'm no gaein' til affront yer lordship wi' the sicht o' yersel' afore fowk —sae lang, that is, as ye haud a quaiet souch. But gie the yoong laird there ony o' the dirt ye're aye lickin' oot o' that loof o' yours, an' the auld cat 'll be yowlin' upo' the hoose-tap!"

"Grizzie! Grizzie!" cried Cosmo, ceasing his work and coming back to where they stood, Grizzie with her fists in her sides, and her face flaming on his lordship, "ye'll ruin a'!"

"What is there, sir, to ruin mair?" returned Grizzie. "Whan yer back 's to the wa', ye canna fa'. An angry chiel 'll ca' up the deil; but an angry wife 'll gar him rin for 's life. Whan I'm angert, I fear no aiven his lordship there!"

Lord Lick-my-loof turned and went, and Grizzie set to work like a fury, probably stung by the sense that she had gone too far.

Old woman as she was, she had soon overtaken her scythe. But Cosmo did not speak to her, he was so sorely vexed. In a few minutes the heat of her wrath was abated; then she grew aware of his silence, and in every motion of his body in front of her could read that she had hurt him grievously. It was more than she could endure.

"Laird!" she cried, "my stren'th 's gane frae me. Gien ye dinna speyk to me, I'll drap."

Cosmo stopped his scythe in mid swing, and turned to her. She was standing erect, but her arms were hanging by her sides.

"Grizzie," he said, "I winna deny 'at ye hae vext me,——"

"Ye needna; I wadna believe ye. But ye dinna ken yon man as I du, or ye wadna be sair angert at onything wuman said til 'im. Gien I was to tell ye what I ken o' 'im, ye wad be affrontit afore me, auld wife as I am; an' haith, ye wadna du anither stroke for *him!* He's a deevil, an' an oogly ane!"

"It's for the siller, no for *him*, jist at this present, Grizzie. But gien he war as ill 's ye ca' 'im, a' the same, as ye weel ken, the Lord maks his sun to rise on the evil an' on the good, an' sen's rain on the just an' on the unjust!"

"Ow ay! The Lord can affoord it!" remarked Grizzie.

"An' them 'at wad be his, maun affoord it tu, Grizzie, an' du the man's wark as ready as anither's!" returned Cosmo. "An' whaur's the guid o' ca'in' ill names, 'uman?"

"Ill 's the trowth o' them 'at's ill. Whatfor no set ill names to ill duers?"

"'Cause a Christyan 's b'un' to destroy the warks o' the evil ane; an' ca'in' names only raises mair o' the deil's corn. The only thing 'at maks awa' wi' ill, is the man himsel' turnin' again' 't, an' that the man 'll ne'er du for ill names. Ye wad never gar *me* repent that gait, Grizzie! Hae mercy upo' the auld sinner, 'uman."

The pace at which they were making up for lost time was telling upon Grizzie, and she remained silent. When she spoke next it was upon another subject, though in much the same spirit.

"I cud jist throttle that grieve there!" she said. "To see 'im the nicht afore last come hame to the verra yett wi' Aggie, was eneuch to anger the sanct 'at I'm no."

Was it jealousy that sent a pang through the heart of Cosmo at her words? Aggie was one of the family—more like a sister to him than any other could ever be, and the thought of her in any kind of familiar relation with a man like Crawford was unendurable to him.

"She cudna weel help hersel'," he rejoined, "gien the man wad gang. An' whaur's the maitter o' 't sae lang as she has naething to say til 'im!"

"Ay, sae lang!" returned Grizzie; "but wha kens hoo lang that may be! The hert o' a wuman 's no deceitfu', as the Buik says is a man's, an' sae it's the easier deceivt. The chield's no ill-luikin'! an' I s' warran' no sae rouch wi' a yoong lass as wi' an auld wife!"

"Grizzie, ye wadna mint 'at oor Aggie 's ane to be ta'en wi' the luiks o' a man?"

"What for no—gien it be a' the man has? A wuman's hert 's that saft, whiles, 'at she'll jist tak 'im, no to be sair upon 'im. I wadna warran' ony lass. Na; gien the fallow cairry a fair face, she'll sweir her conscience doon he maun hae a guid hert!"

Thus Grizzie turned the tables upon Cosmo, and sheltered herself behind them. Scarce a word did he speak the rest of the morning. At noon, however, when toil made way for food, and they sat down among the stooks—except Grizzie, who, appropriating one share all in oat-cake, took it home and laid the greater part aside—Cosmo ate and drank, and enjoyed the homely repast with the hungriest.

By the time the meal was over, Agnes had arrived to take Grizzie's place.

It was a sultry afternoon, and what with the heat, what with the annoyances of the morning, the scythe swung heavy in Cosmo's hands, and Aggie had not to do her very best to keep up with him. But she was careful to maintain her proper distance, for she knew that the least suspicion that he was not up to his own mark would set him off like a thrashing-machine. He led the field, nevertheless, at a fair speed; his fellow-labourers were content; and the bailiff made no remark. But he was so silent, and prolonged silence was so unusual between them, that Aggie was disquieted.

"Are ye no weel, Cosmo?" she asked.

"Weel eneuch, Aggie," he answered. "What gars ye speir?"

"Ye're haudin' yer tongue sae sair," she replied.

"I'll tell ye a' aboot it as we gang hame," he returned.

The same moment the bailiff came up.

"Dinna warstle yersel' to deith, Aggie," he said.

"I maun haud up wi' my scythe," she answered.

"Yer man 's ower het at it! He'll be fit for naething or the week be oot. He canna haud on at this rate!"

"Ay can he—fine that! Ye dinna ken oor yoong laird. He's worth twa ordnar men. An' gien ye dinna think me fit to gaither til 'im, I s' lat ye see ye're mistaen!"

He had brought her a little behind by talking to her, but in a moment almost she had recovered her position.

"Hoots, Aggie!" said the bailiff, going up to her, and laying his hand on her shoulder, "I ken weel ye hae the spunk to drive till ye drap. But there's nae occasion the noo. Sit ye doon an tak yer breath a meenute—here i' the shaidow o' this stook. Whan Glenwarlock 's at the tither en', we'll set tu thegither, an' be up wi' him afore he has a fresh edge on 's scythe. Come, Aggie! I hae lang been luikin' oot for the chance o' a word wi' ye. Ye left me or I kent whaur I was the ither nicht."

"My time 's no my ain," answered Agnes.

"Whause is't than?"

"Whiles it's the laird's, an' whiles it's my father's, an' noo it's his lordship's."

"It's yer ain sae lang 's I'm at the heid o' 's lordship's affairs."

"Na; that canna be. He's boucht my time, an' it 's his siller 'at 'll pey me for 't, an' he s' hae his ain."

"Ye needna consider 'im mair nor rizzon; he's nae freen' to you or yours."

"What's that to the p'int?"

"A'thing to the p'int—wi' me here to haud things straucht."

"Ca' ye that haudin' straucht—to temp' me to wrang my enemy?" said Agnes, keeping steadily on with her gathering, the grieve following her step by step.

"Ye're unco short wi' a body, Aggie!"

"Weel I may be, whan a body wad hae me neglec' my paid wark."

"Weel, I reckon ye're i' the richt o' 't efter a'," said Crawford; "sae I'll jist fa' tu, an' len' ye a han'."

He had succeeded in so far hindering her that Cosmo had again gained a little; and now pretending to help, he contrived to hinder her yet more. She still managed however to keep near enough to Cosmo to prevent him from saying much, and by and by he left her.

When they ceased for the night, the grieve would again have accompanied her home, but she saw it, and never left Cosmo's side.

"Aggie," said Cosmo, as soon as they were out of other hearing, "I dinna like that chield hingin' aboot ye—glowerin' at ye as gien he wad ait ye."

"He winna ait me, Cosmo; he's ceevil eneuch."

"Ye sud hae seen sae rouch as he was to Grizzie that Sunday nicht at the yett!"

"Grizzie 's some rouch hersel' whiles," remarked Agnes quietly.

"That's ower true," assented Cosmo; "but a man sud never be rouch wi' a wuman."

"Say that to the man," rejoined Aggie. "The wuman can haud aff o' hersel' weel eneuch."

"Grizzie, I grant ye, 's mair nor a match for ony man; but ye're naither sae sharp nor sae lang i' the tongue, Aggie."

"Think ye a lang tongue an' a sharp 's a lass's safety, Cosmo? I wad awe nane til't! But what's ta'en ye the nicht, 'at ye speyk sae to me? I ken o' no occasion."

"Aggie, I wadna wullin'ly say a word to vex ye," answered Cosmo; "but I hae baith notit an' h'ard tell 'at the best o' women whiles taks onaccoontable fancies to men no fit to haud a can'le to them."

Agnes turned her head aside.

"I wad ill like to see you, for enstance, Aggie, drawin' to yon Crawford," Cosmo went on. "It micht be eneuch, it seems to me, for a woman to ken 'at he's been sae lang the factotum o' an ill man!"

Aggie was again looking straight before her. A slight convulsive movement passed across her face, leaving behind it a shadow of hurtless resentment, yielding presently to a curious smile.

"I micht mak a better man o' 'im," she said, and again turned her head aside.

"They a' think that, I'm thinkin'!" replied Cosmo with a sad bitterness. "An' sae they wull think, I doobt, to the warl's en'.—But, Aggie," he added, after a pause, "ye ken we're no to be oonaiqually yokit."

"That's a thing to heed," murmured Aggie. "—But what du ye un'erstan' by that, Cosmo? There's nae worshippers o' idols the noo, as i' the days whan the apostle said it."

"There's idols veesible, an idols inveesible," answered Cosmo. "There's heaps o' idols amo' them 'at ca's themsel's, ay an' them 'at 's coontit Christyans. Gien a man set himsel' to lay by siller, he's the worshipper o' as oogly an idol as the fish-tailt god o' the Phillisteens."

"Weel I wat that!" returned Agnes, and a silence followed.

"You an' me's aye been a heap til ane anither, Aggie," resumed Cosmo at length. "—I wad fain hae a promise frae ye—jist to content me."

"What aboot, Cosmo?"

"Promise, an' I'll tell ye, as the bairnies say.—It wad pit my hert at rist aboot ye, sae far, Aggie."

"But we're no bairns, Cosmo, an' I daurna—no even to you

'at I wad trust like the Bible. Tell me what it is, an' gien I may, I wull."

"It's no muckle atween you an' me, Aggie; it's only this—'at gien ever ye fa' in love wi' onybody, ye'll lat me ken."

Agnes was silent for a moment; then, with a tremble in her voice which in vain she sought to smooth out, and once more turning her head away, she answered,

"Cosmo, I daurna."

"I want naething mair," persisted Cosmo, thinking she must have misapprehended the scope of his request, "nor jist the promise 'at what ye ken I sall ken. I wad fain be wi' ye at sic a time."

"Cosmo," said Agnes with much solemnity, "there's ane 'at's aye at han', ane that sticketh closer nor a brither. The thing ye require o' me, it micht be a lass could tell to nane but the father o' her—him 'at's in haiven."

Cosmo was silenced, as indeed it was time and reason he should be; for had she been his daughter he would have had no right to make such a request of her. He might well have asked her to tell him, but not to promise to tell him. He did it in all innocence, however, and not yet understanding that he had made a moral blunder, was the more troubled about Agnes, and felt as if, for the first time in their lives, they had begun to be divided.

They entered the kitchen. Aggie hastened to help Grizzie lay the cloth for supper. Her grandfather looked up to her with a smile from the old newspaper he was reading in the window. The laird, who was in his chair with a book in his hand which Mr. Simon had lent him, called out joyfully,

"Here, Cosmo! hark to this bit o' wisdom, my man—frae a hert doobtless praisin' God this mony a day in upper warl's:—'He that would always know before he trusts, who would have from his God a promise before he will expect, is the slayer of his own eternity.'"

The words mingled strangely with what had just passed between him and Agnes. Both they and that gave him food for thought. But this night thought did not keep him awake.

The bailiff continued to haunt the steps of Agnes, but few supposed his attentions acceptable to her. Cosmo was soon convinced that she gave him no encouragement.

The harvest was over at length, and the little money he had earned laid aside for the sad winter once more on its way. But no good hope dies without leaving its child, a younger and fresher hope, behind it. The year's fruit must fall that the year's fruit may come, and the winter itself is the king's highway to the spring.

## CHAPTER LI.

### THE FINAL CONFLICT.

As there was no more weekly pay for teaching, and no extra hands were longer wanted for farm-labour, Cosmo, hearing there was a press of work and a scarcity of workmen in the building-line, offered his services, at what wages they might upon trial be judged worth, to Sandy Shand the mason, then raising a house in the village for a certain Mr. Pennycuik, a native of the same, who, having left it long ago, and returned from India laden with riches, now desired, if not to end, yet to spend his days amid the associations of his youth. Upon this house, his offer accepted, Cosmo laboured, doing the work now of a mason, now of a carpenter, and receiving a fair remuneration—until the weather put a stop to all such work except what was under cover, and there was no longer any need of partially skilled hands.

But instead of reaping golden opinions by his readiness to turn himself to any labour at which he could honestly earn a shilling, the strange result was that Cosmo thus became the object of endless depreciatory remark. "A young fellow of his abilities, with a college-education too, to waste his time at home, a Jack of all trades, working with his own hands to the degradation of his family, instead of leaving the country and devoting himself to some honourable calling fit for a gentleman! Look at Mr. Pennycuik! See how he has raised himself—and that without one of the young laird's advantages! There he stands, a rich man and an employer of labour, the builder of his own fortunes, while the poor-spirited gentleman is working away at the walls of his house, one of his hired men!" Such was the mean idea cherished in that little village of the self-raising which is the duty of a man! They spoke after their kind, putting ambition for aspiration. They did not know the spirit they were of, who would have had the youth leave his father for Mammon. As little did they know, or, had they known, were capable of taking into the account, certain moral refinements and delicate difficulties entailed upon him by that father, which might indeed bring him to beggary, but could never allow him to gather riches as Mr. Pennycuik had gathered them. He had a holy weakness for the purity that gives alms of the things within us. If there is one blot more disgraceful than another upon a Christian soul, it is meanness—of action, of thought or of judgment.

Through stress of weather, Cosmo was therefore once more driven back upon his writing. But whether it was that there was too little of Grizzie or too much of himself in these later stories, his work seemed now to have lost either the power or the peculiarity that had recommended it. Things therefore did not look promising. But they had a fair stock laid in of oatmeal, and that was the staff of life, also a tolerable supply of fuel, which neighbours had lent them horses to bring from the peat-moss.

With the cold weather the laird began again to fail, and Cosmo to fear that this would be the last of the good man's winters. As the best protection he betook himself to bed, and his son spent his life almost in his room, reading aloud when he was able to listen, and reading to himself or writing when he was not. The other three of the household occupied the kitchen, to save fuel, and keep each other company. Thus the little garrison awaited the closer siege of the slow-beleaguering winter, while some of them fortified their hearts against the more terrible enemies which all winter-armies bring flying on their flanks—the haggard fiends of doubt and dismay, which will often bore through the stoutest walls. To trust in spite of the look of being forgotten; to keep crying out into the vast whence comes no voice, and where seems no hearing; to struggle after light, where is no glimmer to guide in the direction of it; at every turn to find a doorless wall, yet ever seek a door; to stare at the machinery of the world pauseless grinding on as if self-moved, caring for no life, shifting no hair's-breadth for all entreaty, and yet believe that God is awake and utterly loving; to desire nothing but what comes meant for us from his hand; to wait patiently, willing to die of hunger, fearing only lest faith should fail—such is the victory that overcometh the world; such is very faith. For such victory Cosmo strove and prayed hard—sometimes deep sunk in the wave while his father floated calm on its crest. The old man's discipline had been longer; a continuous communion had for many years been growing closer between him and the heart whence he came.

"As I lie here, warm and free of pain," he said once to his son, "expecting the redemption of my body, I cannot tell you how happy I am. I cannot think how ever in my life I feared anything. God knows it was my obligation to others that oppressed me, but now in my utter incapacity, I am able to trust him with my honour and my duty as well as my sin."

"Look here, Cosmo!" he said, another time; "I had temptations, such as you would hardly think, to better my worldly condition, and redeem the lands of my ancestors, and the world would have commended, not blamed me, had I yielded. But my God

was with me all the time, and I am dying a poorer man than my father left me, leaving you a poorer man still, but, praised be God, an honest one. Your honesty, my son, is a diamond in my heart. Be sure, Cosmo, God is the only adviser to be trusted, and you must do what he tells you, even if it lead you to a stake, to be burned by the slow fire of poverty.—O my Father," cried the old man, here breaking out suddenly in prayer, " my soul is a flickering flame of which thou art the eternal, inextinguishable, self-burning fire. I am blessed because thou art. Because thou art life, I live. Nothing can hurt me, because nothing can hurt thee. To thy care I leave my son, for thou lovest him as thou hast loved me. Deal with him as thou hast dealt with me. Set him free as thou hast set me free. I ask for nothing, care for nothing but thy will. Strength is gone from me, but my life is hid in thee. I am a feeble old man—the old feeble child of a Father everlastingly young and strong; but I am dying into the eternal day of thy youth and thy strength."

Cosmo stood and listened with holy awe and growing faith. For what can help our faith like the faith of the one we most love, when, sorely tried, it yet shows sound and strong!

But there was one earthy clod still clinging to the heart of Cosmo. There was no essential evil in it; not the less it held him back from the freedom of the man who, having parted with everything, possesses all things. The place, the things, the immediate world in the heart of which he was born and had grown up, crowded with the memories and more shadowy but hardly less potent associations of childhood and youth, amongst them the twilight loveliness of lady Joan, had such a hold of him that his feeling towards them savoured of idolatry. This love was born with him, it was in him, had come down into him, growing, through generation after generation of ancestors, had become the stronger that he had been true, and was neither weakling nor craven, and had a power over him for whose existence he was not accountable, but for whose continuance, so soon as he should become aware of its true character, he would immediately know himself accountable. For Cosmo was not one of those poor creatures who, finding in themselves certain tendencies with whose existence they had nothing to do, therefore in whose presence they have no blame, will say to themselves, " I cannot help it," and at once create evil, and make it their own, by obeying the inborn impulse. Inheritors of a lovely estate, with a dragon in a den which they have to kill that the brood may perish, they make friends with the dragon, and so think to save themselves trouble!

But I would not be misunderstood: I do not think Cosmo

loved his home too much; I only think he did not love God enough in it. He did not enough feel that it was a gift of God to him, a shape that the love of God had taken that it might come to him. He did not love the body of it too much, but the soul of it too little. If he had felt the soul of it more, the loving will of God, that is, the ceaseless presence of that changeless soul would have been infinite comfort for the loss of its passing incarnation. To love a thing divinely, is to be ready to yield it, if not without a pang, yet certainly with a great joy, when God wills it; but to Cosmo, the thought of parting with the house of his fathers and the rag of land that clung to it, was torture. This hero of mine, instead of sleeping the perfect sleep of faith, would lie open-eyed through half the night, hatching scheme after scheme—not for the redemption of the property—even to him that seemed hopeless, but for such repulse of want as might render possible the retention of the house. Might it not at least go to ruin under eyes that loved it, and hands that laboured though in vain to fill the slow-yawning chasms of decay? His dream haunted him: if it came true, he would rather linger out his life in the dungeon wine-cellar of the mouldering mammoth-tooth, than forsake the old stones for any palace! The love of his soul for Castle Warlock was like the love of the psalmist for Jerusalem: when he looked on a stone of its walls, it was dear to him. But the love of Jerusalem became an idolatry, for the Jews no longer loved it because the living God dwelt therein, but because the glory of it was *theirs:* then it was doomed, for it was an idol. The thing was somewhat different with Cosmo: the house was almost a part of himself—an extension of his own body, as much his as the shell of a snail is his. But because into this shell were not continued those nerves of life which give the consciousness of the body, and there was therefore no reaction from it of those feelings of weakness and need which, to such a man as Cosmo, soon reveal the fact that he is not lord of his body, that he cannot add to it one cubit, or make one hair white or black, and must therefore leave the care of it to him who made it, he had to learn in other ways that his castle of stone was God's—God's as well as his body and his spirit. It was not that he *could* ever have doubted this; but not to doubt a truth is one thing, and to know it is quite another. Cosmo's truth and humility and love had not yet reached to the quickening of the idea of the old house with the assurance that God was in it with him, giving it to him, making it his. Not yet possessing therefore the soul of the house, which nothing could take from him, naturally he could not be content to part with the body of it. It seemed a moral impossibility that it should be taken from him—a wrong to things, to

men, to nature, that a man like Lick-my-loof should obtain the lordship over it. As he lay in the night, in the heart of the old pile, and heard the wind raving athwart its stone-mailed roofs, the thought of losing it would sting him almost to madness, hurling him from his bed to the floor, to pace up and down the room, burning, in the coldest midnight of winter, like one of the children in the fiery furnace, only his furnace was of worse fire, the wrath, namely, which worketh not the righteousness of God.

Suddenly one such night he became aware that he could not pray—that in this mood he never prayed. In every other trouble he prayed—felt it the one natural thing to pray! Why not in this trouble? Something must be wrong—terribly wrong!

It was a stormy night; the snow-burdened wind was raging; and Cosmo would have been striding about the room but that that night he was in his father's, who was not quite so well. He lay still—now with a stone on his heart, for he was at length awake to the fact that he could not in this matter say, "Thy will be done." He tried sore to lift up his heart, but could not. Something rose ever between him and his God. A thick fog was about him—no air wherewith to make a cry! In his heart not one prayer would come to life; it was like an old nest without bird or egg in it.

Such a state was too terrible! Here was schism at the very root of his being! Things were closer to him than God! Between him and God rose the rude bulk of a castle of stone! He crept out of bed, laid himself on his face on the floor, and prayed in an agony. The wind roared and howled, but the desolation in his heart made of the storm a mere play of the elements. How few of my readers will understand even the possibility of such a human state! How many of them will scorn the idea of it, as presenting a man on the high road to insanity!

"God," he cried, "I thought I knew thee, and loved thy will; and I have loved thy will in greater things than this wherein I now lie ashamed before thee. I cannot even pray to thee. But hear thou the deepest will in me, which, thou knowest, must bow before thine when once thou hast uttered it. It is rather that I am not willing this thing should be thy will, than that I am not willing thy will should be done. Hear the prayer I cannot offer. Be my perfect Father to fulfil the imperfection of thy child. Be God after thy own nature, beyond my feeling, beyond my prayer—according to that will in me which now, for all my trying, refuses to awake and arise from the dead. O Christ, who knowest me better a thousand times than I know myself, whose I am, divinely beyond my notions of thee and me, listen and hear, and save me eternally, out of thy eternal might whereby thou didst make me and give

thyself to me. Hear me in thy own primal will, which hangs nowise upon my mushroom prayer. Make me strong to yield all to thee. I have no way of confessing thee before men, but in the depth of my soul I would confess thee, hating myself for thee, yielding everything but the truth, which is thyself; and therefore, even while my heart hangs back, I force my mouth to say the words—*Take from me what thou wilt, only make me divine, the child of thy Father and my Father.* I yield the house and all it holds. It is thine, not mine. Give it to whom thou wilt. I would have nothing but what thou choosest shall be mine. I have thee, and all things are mine."

Thus he prayed, thus he wrestled with his reluctant heart, forcing its will by the might of a deeper will, that *would* be for God and freedom in spite of the cleaving of his soul to the dust.

Then for a time thought ceased in exhaustion. When it returned, lo! he was in peace, in the heart of a calm unspeakable. How it came he could not tell, for he had not been aware of its approach; but the contest was over, and in a few minutes he was fast asleep—ten times his own because a thousand times another's—one with him whom all men in one could not comprehend, but whom yet the heart of every true child apprehends and understands.

I would not have it supposed that, although the crisis was past, there came no more stormy weather. Often it blew a gale; often a blast would steal upon him from behind the skirts of the hope that God would not require the sacrifice of him; but he never again found he could not pray. Recalling this conflict and the great ensuing peace, he always made haste to his master, compelling the refractory slave in his heart to be free, and say "Thy will, not mine!" Then would the enemy withdraw, and again he breathed the air of the eternal.

When a man comes to the point that he will no longer receive anything save from the hands that have the right to withhold it, and in whose giving alone lies the good of having, then has he begun to enter into possession of the inheritance of the saints in light, of those whose strength has been made perfect in weakness. But there are whom for the present it is needless to trouble any more than the chickens about the yard. Their hour will come, and in the meantime they are counted the fortunate ones of the earth, for their pickings are large.

## CHAPTER LII.

### A REST.

But now James Gracie fell sick. They removed him therefore from the men's quarters, and gave him Cosmo's room, that there he might be better attended to, and warmer than in his own. Cosmo put up a bed for himself in his father's room, and Grizzie and Aggie slept together; so that the household was gathered literally under one roof—that of the kitchen-tower, as it was called.

James's attack was serious, necessitating much ministration, and involving an increase of expenditure which it needed faith to face. Cosmo of course did not shrink from it: so long as his money lasted, his money should go. James objected bitterly to the waste, as he called it: what remained of his life was not worth it! But the laird hearing the mood he was in, rose, and went down the stair, and stood before his bed.

"Jeames," he said to him solemnly, "wha are ye to tell the Lord the time 's come? What kin' o' faith is't to refeese a sup frae yer father's han' 'cause ye seena anither spunefu' upo' the ro'd 'ahin' 't?"

James hid his old face in his old hands. The laird went back to his bed, and nothing more was ever said by either on the subject.

The days went by; the money ran fast away; no prospect appeared of more; but still they had enough to eat.

One morning in the month of January, still and cold, and dark overhead, a cheerless day in whose bosom a storm was coming to life, Cosmo, sitting at his usual breakfast of *brose*, the simplest of all preparations of oatmeal, bethought himself whether something more might not be found in the mine whence so much had already issued—whether some others of the curiosities in the cabinets might not, with the help of his friend Mr. Burns, yield them pabulum. Without finishing his breakfast, for which he found he had that day but little relish, he rose and went to the drawing-room to examine its treasures in the light of necessity.

It felt like a tomb, dank and close and freezing-cold, and looked weary of its memories. So still was it, it seemed as if sound would die in it nor be heard at all—as if the silence were an entity that would choke it. Not a mouse stirred. The few pictures on the walls looked perishing with cold and changelessness. The very shine of the old damask was wintery. But he

did not long stand gazing. He crossed to one of the shrines of his childhood's reverence, opened it, and began to examine the things in it with the eye of a seller. Once they had seemed treasures inestimable, now he feared they might be worth nothing for his sore need. Scarce a pang at the thought of parting with any one of them woke in him as they passed through his hands. He was like a miner searching for golden ore, not a miser whom hunger had dominated. The sole question with him was, would the object he regarded bring money? When he had gone through all the things in the cabinet, he turned and again examined those he had set aside. Amongst them was a dagger in a sheath of silver of raised work, with a hilt cunningly wrought of the same; a goblet of iron with a rich pattern in gold beaten into it; a snuff-box with diamonds round a golden monogram in the lid: these, and a few smaller things with an air of promise about them, he put carefully together, thinking to take them at once to Muir o' Warlock, and entrust them to the carrier. But when he saw his father again, he judged it better to put off going till the next day.

As the sun went down, the wind rose, and the storm in the bosom of the stillness came to life—the worst of that winter. It reminded them of the terrible night on which lord Mergwain went out into the deep. The morning came, fierce with gray cold age, a tumult of wind and snow. There seemed little likelihood the carrier would put his horses to; but the storm might be more severe upon their hills than in the opener country, and as some things were wanted for the invalids, Cosmo would go and see.

It was with no small difficulty he made his way to the village, and there also he found the snow so deep that the question would have been how to get the cart out of the shed, not whether the horses were likely to get it through the glens o' Fowdlan. He left the parcel therefore with the carrier's wife, and proceeded, somewhat sad at heart, to spend the last of his money, just half a crown. Having done so, he set out for Glenwarlock, the wind blowing fierce, and the snow falling thick.

Just outside the village he met a miserable-looking woman with a child in her arms. How she came to be there he could not think, but he did not ask her. They were neighbours in suffering, hers was the greater share, and he gave her the twopence he had left. Prudence is but one of the minor divinities, if indeed she be anything better than the shadow of a virtue, and he took no counsel with her, knowing that the real divinity, Love, would not cast him out for the deed. The widow who gave the two mites was by no means a prudent person. Upon one of the prized cabinets was carved *Charity* gazing at the child on her

arm, and beside her *Prudence* with a mirror in her hand, contemplating herself.

He had not gone far, battling with the wind, and the snow both flying and fallen, before he began to feel his strength failing him. It had indeed been failing for some time; he had never quite recovered his exertions in lord Lumbiggin's harvest-fields; and now, for the first time in his life, he began to find it unequal to the encounter of the elements. But he laughed at the idea, and held on. The wind was right in his face, the cold was bitter, and within him, though plenty of courage, were not good spirits enough to supply the lack of physical energy: his breath grew short, and his head began to ache. He longed for home that he might lie down and breathe, but a long way and a great snowy wind were betwixt him and rest. He fell into a reverie, an absorption of thought in dreamy meditation, and vaguely seemed to himself to be getting on better for not thinking of the exertion he had to make. Alternately sunk in himself for minutes, and waking for a moment to the consciousness of what was around him, he had walked, by his feelings, for many hours, when at length he began to think he must be near the parish-road. He stood therefore, and sent sight into his eyes, but nothing was to be descried through the drift save more drift behind it. A ghastly doubt invaded him: was he upon a road to anywhere? He sought this way and that, but could find neither ditch nor dyke. He was lost! He knew well the danger of sitting down, knew on the other hand that the more exhausted he was when he succumbed at last the sooner would the cold get the better of him, and that with every step he might be wandering from the abodes of men, diminishing the likelihood of being found. Not knowing what to do, he turned his back to the wind and stood—how long he could not afterwards even conjecture.

But while thus he stood, hardly half awake, more than half asleep, out of the raving chaos around him he received—or so it seemed—a heavy blow on the head from something soft. It dazed him, and the rest was as a dream, in which he walked on and on for ages, often falling and rising again, ever following something, he never knew what. But all the time he knew, or seemed to know that he was on the way to his father's house. With that, however, all memory of consciousness ceased.

Aggie was the first to get anxious about him. They had expected him home to dinner, and when it began to grow dark and he had not come, she could bear it no longer, and set out to meet him. But she had not far to go, for scarcely had she left the kitchen-door when she saw some one leaning against the gate.

Through the gathering twilight and the storm she could not distinguish who it was, but she never doubted it was the young laird, though whether in the body or out of it she felt by no means so certain. She hurried to the gate, and found him standing between it and the wall. There came no answer when she spoke, and she thought he was dead; but presently followed an inarticulate murmur. She opened the gate gently. He would have fallen, but she got beside and supported him. Her touch seemed to bring him a little to himself. He tried to do as she told him, and she succeeded in getting him into the house. It was long before Grizzie and she could make him warm by the kitchen-fire, but at last he came to himself sufficiently to walk up the stairs to his father's room, though afterwards he remembered nothing of his arrival at home, or of what took place during the next three days.

When he entered the room, he went to his father's bed and spoke to him, then staggered to his own. The laird seemed at once to regain some portion of his strength, and rising helped to get him to bed. The three nights during which he was feverish and wandering, the old man could hardly be persuaded to lie down, and slept only in snatches. On the third day Cosmo himself persuaded him to return to his bed. Not until then did Grizzie let the laird understand the plight in which Agnes had found Cosmo. With all the men in the house laid up, the two women had now their hands full.

The first night, when they had put Cosmo to bed, and together gone down again to the kitchen, in the middle of the floor Grizzie and Aggie stopped and turned and looked at each other: their hour had come! They understood each the other, for they meant the same thing, and words were needless. They had a little money, and now no questions would be asked!

Aggie left the room, came back with her savings, and put them in Grizzie's hand. Grizzie laid the money on the table, went in her turn to her box, brought thence her store, every penny of it, laid the one on the other, took both up, closed her hands over the whole, shook it together, murmured over it like an incantation the words, " It's nae mair mine, an' it's nae mair thine, but belangs to a', whatever befa'," and put it in her pocket under her winsey petticoat. Thereafter, for a time, the invalids wanted nothing.

When Cosmo came to himself on the third day, he found that self possessed by a wondrous peace. It was as if he were dead, and must rest till his strength, exhausted with dying, came back to him. Bodiless he seemed, and without responsibility of action —with that of thought only. The words of the Ancient Mariner came to him as if he were speaking them for himself:

> I thought that I had died in sleep
> And was a blessed ghost.

His soul was calm and trusting like that of a bird on her eggs, who knows her one grand duty in the economy of the creation is repose. How it was he never could quite satisfy himself, but remembering he had spent their last penny, he yet felt no anxiety, neither, when Grizzie brought him food, any inclination to ask her how she had procured it. His atmosphere was that of the fairy-palace of his childish visions, only his feelings were more solemn, and the fairy, instead of being beautiful, was—well, was dear old Grizzie. His sole concern was his father, and the cheerful voice that invariably answered his every inquiry was sufficient reassurance.

For three days more he lay in a kind of blessed lethargy, with little or no suffering. He fancied he could not recover, nor did he desire to recover. His only wish was to go with his father to the old world, and learn its ways from his mother. In his half-slumbers he seemed always to be floating down a great gray river, on which thousands more were likewise floating, each by himself, some in canoes, some in boats, some in the water without even an oar; every now and then one would be lifted and disappear—none saw how, but each knew that his own turn would come; in the meantime all floated helpless on, some full of alarm at the unknown before them, others indifferent, and some filled with solemn expectation; he himself glided along gently waiting: the unseen hand would come with the hour, and give him to his mother.

On the seventh day he began to regard the things around him with dawning interest, began to be aware of returning strength, and the approach of duty: presently he must rise, and do his part! Still he felt no anxiety, for the alarum of duty had not yet called him.

And now his father from his bed would tell him old tales he had heard from his grandmother; and at times Grizzie would sit between the two beds and tell some of her stories, the stock of which seemed inexhaustible. Now the one, now the other would say, "There, Grizzie! I never h'ard that afore!" and Grizzie would answer, "I daursay no, sir. Hoo sud ye than? I had forgotten't mysel'!"

Here is one of the stories Grizzie told them.

"In a cauld how, far amo' the hills, whaur the winter was a sair thing, there leevit an honest couple, a man wi' a gey lot o' sheep, an' his wife. They war fowk weel aff in respec' o' this warl's gear, an' luikit up til amo' the neebours, but no to be envyed, seein' they had lost ane efter the ither o' a bonny faimily, till there

was left 'i the hoose but jist ae laddie, the bonniest an' the best o' them a', an' as a maitter o' coorse, the verra aipple o' their e'e. —Amo' the three o' 's, laird," here Grizzie paused in her tale to remark, "ye'll be the only ane 'at can fully un'erstan' hoo the hert o' a pahrent maun cleave to the last o' 's flock.—Weel, whether it was 'at their lives was ower sair wrappit up i' the life o' this ae human cratur for the guid o' their sowls, I dinna ken—there bude to be some rizzon for't—but this last ane o' a' begud in his turn to dwine an' dwin'le like the lave; an' whaurever thae twa puir fowk turnt themsel's i' their pangs there stude Deith, glowerin' at them oot o' his toom e'en (*empty eyes*). Pray they did, ye may be sure, an' greit whan a' was mirk, but prayers nor tears made nae differ; the bairn was sent for, an' awa' the bairn maun gang. An' whan at len'th he lay streekit in his last clean claes till the robe o' richteousness 'at wantsna washin' was put on 'im, what cud they but think the warl' was dune for them!

"But the warl' maun wag, though the hert may sag; an' whan the deid lies streekit, there's a hoose to be theekit. Sae freens an' neebours gaithert frae near an' frae far, an' there was a heap o' fowk i' the hoose, come to the beeryin' o' the bonny bairn. An' though deith be in a hoose, fowk maun ait nane the less, an' sae the nicht afore the yerdin' their denner whan they cam back frae the kirkyaird had to be foreordeent.

"It was the spring-time o' the year—unco late i' thae heich pairts. The maist o' the lambs hed come, but storm an' drift war laith to lift frae the laps o' the hills, an' lang efter it begud to be something like weather laicher doon, the sheep cudna be lippent oot to pick their bit mait themsel's, but had to be keepit i' the cot. Sae to the cot the gudeman wad gang to fess hame a lamb for a denner til 's freens an' neebours. An' as it fell oot, it was a fearsome nicht o' win' an' drivin' snaw—waur, I reckon, nor onything we hae hereawa'. But the gudeman he turnt na aside for win' or for snaw, for little cared he, wi' sic a how in his hert, what cam til 'im or cam o' 'im. The storm in fac' was a veil til's grief, an' ahin' 't he fell a greitin' an' bewailin' an' lamentin' lood oot, jeedgin' nae doobt, gien he jeedgt at a', he micht grane an' sigh, wi' naebody nigh, as he dauredna du amo' a' the fowk, or even afore his ain wife, for the hertbrak o' 't. To the sheep-cot, as I say, he gaed wailin' an' plainin' an' cryin' efter his bonny bairn, the last o' his flock, oontimeous ta'en.

"Half blin' wi' the nicht an' the snaw an' his ain tears, he cam at len'th to the door o' the sheep-cot. An' what sud he see there but a man stan'in' afore the door—straucht up an' still i' the mirk an' the storm, as gien naither win' nor snaw cam nigh him. It

was 'maist fearsome to see onybody there—sae far frae ony place, no to say upo' sic a night. The stranger was rowed in some kin' o' a plaid like the gudeman himsel', whether a lowlan' or a hielan' plaid, he cudna tell. But the face o' the man wasna ane to be forgotten—an' that for the verra freen'liness o' 't! An' whan he spak, it was as gien a' the voices o' them 'at was hame afore war made up intil ane, for the sweetness an' the pooer o' the same.

"'What mak ye here in sic a storm, man?' he speirt. An' the soon' o' his voice was y e safter nor the words o' his mooth.

"'I come for a lamb,' the gudeman he answered.

"'What kin' o' a lamb?' askit the stranger.

"'The best lamb I can lay my han's upo' i' the cot,' answered he, 'for it's to set afore my freens an' neebours. Sir, ye'll come hame wi' me an' share o' 't?

"'Du yer sheep mak ony resistance whan ye tak the lamb? Or whan it's gane, mak they an ootcry?'

"'No, sir,' said the gudeman.

"The stranger ga'e a kin' o' a sigh, an' says he,

"'That's no hoo mine trait me! Whan I gang to my sheepfold, an' tak the best an' the fittest—no to kill 'im an' ait 'im, but to tak 'im hame, an' fess 'im up i' my father's ain hoose, my ears are deavt an' my hert torn wi' the clamours, the bleatin' an' the ba-in' o' my sheep—my ain sheep!—compleenin' sair again' me!—an' me feedin' them, an' cleedin' them, an' haudin' the tod frae them, a' their lives, frae the first to the last! It's some sair to bide!'

"By this time the man's heid was hingin' doon; but whan the voice ceased, he daurt to luik up. There was nae man there! Like ane in a dream, whaurin he kennedna joy frae sorrow, nor pleesur frae pain, he gaed intil the cot, an' grat ower the heids o' the 'oo'y craturs 'at cam croodin' aboot 'im, soucht oot the best lamb, an' cairriet it hame. The neist day they saw 'im come back frae the funeral wi' a smile upo' the face whaur hed been nane for sae mony a lang; an' the neist Sunday they h'ard him singin' i' the kirk as naebody had ever h'ard him sing afore. An' never frae that nicht was moan or plaint to be h'ard frae the lips o' aither o' the twa o' them. They hadna a bairn to close their e'en whan their turn cam, but what o' that? Whaur nane 's left ahin', there's the mair to fin'."

She ceased, and her hearers were silent, for the old legend had touched the deepest in them.

Many years after, Cosmo discovered that she had not told it quite right, for, having been brought up in the lowlands, she was not familiar with the ancient customs of the highlands. But she

had told it well after her own fashion, and she could not have had a fitter audience.*

"It's whiles i' the storm, whiles i' the desert, whiles i' the agony, an' whiles i' the calm, whaurever he gets them richt their lanes, 'at the Lord veesits his ain—in person, as a body micht say," remarked the laird, after a long pause.

Cosmo did not get well so fast as he had begun to expect. Nothing very definite seemed the matter with him; it was rather as if life itself had been checked at the spring, therefore his senses dulled, and his blood made thick and slow. A sleepy weariness possessed him, in which he would lie supine and motionless for hours, desiring nothing, fearing nothing, suffering nothing, only loving. The time would come when he must be up and doing, but now he would not think of work! he would fancy himself a yet callow bird in God's nest—the nest into which the great brother would have gathered the children of Jerusalem! In this holy quiet, poems visited him, little songs and little prayers—spiritual butterflies with wings whose spots matched, sometimes humorous little parables concerning life and its affairs; they visited him, but would not stay. Never, do what he might, could he remember so as to recall one of them. He had to comfort himself with the thought that nothing true can ever be lost; the immediate form of it may go, but it is that a better may come in its place. Had it been the best, could he have forgotten it? I doubt it. A thing may be itself invaluable, and the form in which it presents itself so poor as to be neither capable nor worthy of being remembered, though at the moment it shares the shine of the invaluable which it as transiently as imperfectly embodies. But happy is the half-sleeper whose brain is a thoroughfare for lovely things—all to be caught in the nets of Life, for Life is the one miser that never loses, never can lose!

When he was able to be up for a part of the day, Grizzie yielded a portion of her right to Agnes; and now first the laird seemed to discover that there was yet more in her than goodness and common sense. Expressing his new admiration one day, and remarking on her knowledge, intellect, and insight, he was surprised that Cosmo did not seem to respond with equal warmth.

"Dinna ye see't sae yersel', Cosmo?" he asked.

"I hae seen't sae sin' ever I min', father," he replied, "an' I thoucht ye had aye been o' the same opinion!"

"Bairns' e'en are gey gleg upo' angels!" murmured the laird.

* See Mrs. Grant's Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders.

"There's feow like Aggie, father," said Cosmo. "Mony's the time she's hauden me up whan I was like to sink."

"The Lord be her portion!" said the laird.

All sicknesses are like aquatic plants of evil growth: their hour comes, they wither and die, and leave the channels free. Life returns—in slow, soft ripples at first, but not the less in irresistible tide, and at last in pulses of mighty throb through every pipe. Death is the final failure of all sickness, the clearing away of the very soil in which the seeds of the ill plants take root.

By slow degrees Cosmo recovered strength, nor left behind him the peace that had pervaded his weakness. And now the time for action was at hand. For many days he had been fed like the young ravens, and knowing he could do nothing, had not troubled himself with the useless *how;* but the moment was come when he must understand, that he might resôlve. Mechanically almost, he opened his bureau: there was not a penny there! He knew there could not be—except some angel had visited it while he lay, and that he had not looked for. He closed it, and sat down to think. There was no work to be had that he knew of; there was little strength to do it with had there been any. As the spring came on there would be labour in the fields, but necessity was at the door. There were many in the country around on friendly terms with his father and himself, but his whole being revolted from the borrowing of money where was no prospect of repaying it. He would rather die. For his father, if it came to want, he would beg. "Where borrowing is dishonest," he said to himself, "begging may be honourable. The man who borrows, knowing no chance of repaying, the more he scorns a gift is but the more a thief; the man who has no way to earn his day's bread, has a divine right to beg." In Cosmo's case, however, there was this difficulty: he could make a living for both, if he would but leave his father, and that he would not. There was one alternative more—to go, and take his father with him; and that he would not do until they were driven to part with stick and stone. But was there nothing to be done between this want and that last of compelled resources?

Once more he found the loose raft of his thoughts helplessly adrift, and no shore of ways or means visible—nothing but beggary, or final sale and departure in sight—except indeed some of the things in the house might find a purchaser. But had Mr. Burns been able to do anything with those he had sent he would have written, he thought—for he did not know that the parcel he had left at the carrier's was lying there still—in his wife's press under her summer-shawl! It might be that God intended to bring him

to the last humiliation of all—to positive beggary! But would even that be worse than the humiliation under which they had bowed for so many long years—that of owing and not being able to pay? A beggar may be under endless obligation, but a hopeless debtor is a slave! He *may* be God's free man all the while, but not the less is he his fellow's slave! His slavery may be a light burden or a sickening misery according to his creditor, but except indeed there be absolute brotherhood between them, he is that creditor's slave!

Again the immediately practical had vanished, lost in debate; again he sought to return to it. But it was like sharpening his eyes to see through a wall. He could not go to Mr. Simon; he too was poor, and had now for some time been far from well. He knew he would go without necessaries to help them, and that was an insurmountable reason against letting him know their condition.

At last came a thought: why should he not for present need pledge the labour of his body in the coming harvest? That would be action upon a reasonable probability, and he would not be ashamed to propose the thing to any man who knew him. He would but require a portion of the fee in advance, and a kindly disposed man would surely venture the risk involved! True, when the harvest came he might be as much in want of money as he was now, and there would be the less to receive; but if he did not have help now he could not reach that hour of want, and help now would give time for other help to arrive. Both hunger and beggary are safe things to postpone. At the worst he could beg then! He would see what could be done as soon as he was able for the walking necessary. And now he would have a peep into the meal-chest!

It stood in a dark corner of the kitchen; he had to feel with his hand to learn accurately its condition. To his surprise he found a not very shallow layer of meal in the bottom of it. How there could be so much after his long illness, he hardly dared imagine. He must ask Grizzie! Yet he almost feared to question her.

There came a spell of warm weather, and the invalids improved. Cosmo was able to go out, and every day had a little walk, not seldom thinking of that other time after illness, when Joan was with him, and so near that it scarce seemed possible anything should part them—and now she was an eternity away! For months he had heard nothing of her. She must be married, and think it kinder not to write!

The weather continuing moderate, he made rapid progress, and the week following judged himself equal to a long walk.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### HELP.

He had come to the resolve to carry first his petition to Mr. Henderson, for whom he had worked the harvest before the last. The distance was an objection, but he flattered himself he could after all get home every night. In the present state of his strength, however, he found it a long trudge indeed; and before the house came in sight was very weary. But he bore up and held on.

"I was almost as ill-off," he said to himself, "when I sought work the first time, yet here I am—alive and after work again! It's like going on and on in a dream, wondering what's coming next!"

He was shown into the parlour, and presently Mr. Henderson appeared. He scarcely welcomed him, but by degrees his manner grew more cordial. The coldness with which he had been received caused Cosmo to hesitate, and a pause ensued. The farmer broke it.

"Ye didna grant 's the fawvour o' yer company last hairst!" he said. "Gentleman 'at ye are, I wad hae thoucht ye micht hae fun' yersel' mair at hame wi' the like o' hiz nor wi' that ill-tongued vratch, Lick-my-loof! Nane o' 's tuik it ower weel, I can tell ye, 'at ye gied na 's the chance o' yer guid company."

This explained his reception, and Cosmo made haste in his turn to explain his conduct.

"Ye may be sure," he answered, "it gaed some again' the grain wi' me to see wark frae *him!* I hadna a rizzon upon this earth for no comin' to speir gien ye wad hae me, but jist 'at I cudna bide to be sae far, at nicht especially, frae my father. He's grown some auld, an' 's no the man he was."

"Verra nait'ral!" responded the farmer heartily, and in a tone of thorough satisfaction, while he wondered in himself whether a son of his would have been so considerate. "Weel," he went on, "I'm jist relieved to un'erstan' the thing; for the lasses wad hae perswaudit me I hed gien ye some offence wi' my free-spocken w'y. Naething cud hae been far'er frae the thoucht o' my hert."

"Indeed," answered Cosmo, half-rising in his eagerness, "I assure you, Mr. Henderson, there is not a man from whom I should be less ready to imagine offence than yourself. I do not know how to express my sense of the kindness with which you always treated me. Nor can I better prove that such is my feeling towards

you than by telling you at once why I have come to you, the very first day I was fit for the walk: it is to ask you to engage me for the harvest and pay me a part of the fee now in advance. I know it is a strange request, and if you think proper to refuse it, I doubt if there is another to whom I shall venture to make it. I have been ill, as you know—very ill, but I am now fairly on the mend, and there are long days and nights between this and harvest. To tell you the truth, we are much in want of a little money. We are not greatly in debt now, but we have lost all our land, and a house won't grow corn. Something in my mind seems to keep saying my father will yet pay every thing; but anyhow we want to hold on as long as we can. I am sure, if you were in our place, Mr. Henderson, you would not be willing to give up the house a moment before it was absolutely necessary. That is not mortgaged, thank God."

"But, laird," said the farmer, who had listened with the utmost attention, "hoo can the thing be? Is there no ane amo' a' the great fowk ye hae kent, to say, 'Help yersel''? I canna un'erstan' 't! The last o' sic an auld faimily no to hae a han' heeld oot to help them!"

"It is not so very hard to explain," replied Cosmo. "Almost all my father's *old* friends are dead, and a man like him, especially in such circumstances as his, does not readily make new ones. Almost the only person he has been intimate with of late years is Mr. Simon, whom I daresay you know, and he is far from being a man of means. Then my father has what people count peculiar notions: I heard of one calling him a fool behind his back because he paid him a certain small sum his father owed him. If he had rich friends they would only say it was no use trying to help such a man."

"Weel," exclaimed the farmer, "it jist blecks me to see hoo there can be ony trowth i' the Bible, whan a man like that comes sae near beggin' his breid!"

"He *is* come very near it certainly," assented Cosmo; "but why not he as well as another?"

"'Cause they tell me the Bible says the richteous man sall ne'er beg his breid."

"Well, *near* is not *there!* But I don't think the Bible says that. Certainly the New Testament does not. It is true the psalmist says he never saw the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread; but though he never saw it, another may have seen it."

"Weel, I fancy gien he hed seen 't, he wadna hae been lang in puttin' a stop til 't!—Laird, gien a sma' maitter o' fifty poun'

or sae wad tide ye ower the bar,—weel, ye cud pey me whan ye likit."

It was a moment or two before Cosmo could speak. A long conversation followed, rising almost to fierceness, certainly to oaths on the part of the farmer, because of Cosmo's refusal to accept the offered loan.

"I do see my way to meeting my wages with my work, but I see no way to repaying such a debt!" insisted Cosmo. "Lend me two pounds, Mr. Henderson, upon the understanding that I am to work it out in the harvest, and I shall be your debtor to all eternity; but more I cannot and will not take upon myself."

Grumbling heavily, the farmer at length handed him the two pounds, but obstinately refused either written acknowledgment or agreement.

All the time the friendly altercation proceeded, Elsie was standing behind the door, her ear laid against it not to lose a word, and her colour coming and going like the shadows in a day of sun and wind! She was sorely disappointed when it ceased without her father's having succeeded in making the young laird his debtor in a larger sum; but the next moment she entered with a smile, and asked Cosmo to stop and take tea with them. The farmer following up the invitation, he accepted it, and indeed was glad of a good meal. It passed with pleasure to all, for the relief of having two pounds in his pocket, and lent him with such genuine kindness, had put Cosmo in great spirits, so that he was more than usually agreeable, and the old farmer wondered admiringly at the good courage of the youth who in such hardship could afford to be merry.

Cosmo sat with these his true neighbours till the gloaming began to fall. Then it was more than time to go, and they all rose with him, and accompanied him half-way home. When they had taken their leave of him and he was again alone, his heart grew so glad that, weak as he was, and with the mists rising all along his path, he never felt a moment's chill, but trudged on cheerily, singing and *making* all the way, and was surprised to find what a short way it really was.

For a part of it, every now and then he had a glimpse of some one before him that looked like Aggie, but the distance between them gradually lengthened, and by and by he saw her no more. When he entered the kitchen, Aggie was there.

"Was yon you upo' the ro'd afore me, Aggie?" he asked.

"Ay was 't," she answered.

"What for didna ye wait on me?"

"Ye had the Hen'ersons' company the first half o' the ro'd, an' yer ain the last, an' I didna think ye wantit me."

So saying she went up the stair.

As Cosmo followed, he turned at the foot of it, and opened the meal chest. It was all but empty! there was hardly enough in it to make their supper! He smiled in the dark, and said to himself,

"The links hold yet! When one breaks the world will drift."

Going up to his father's, he had to pass the door of his own room, now occupied by James Gracie. As he drew near it, he heard the voice of Aggie speaking to her grandfather. What she said he did not know, but he heard his answer.

"Lassie," said the old man, "ye can never see by (*past*) the Lord to ken whaur he's takin' ye. Ye may jist as weel close yer e'en as try. His garment spreads ower a' the ro'd, an' what we hae to du is to haud a guid grip o' 't—no to gang gleyin' an' keekin' (*squinting and peeping*) ayont it."

Cosmo hastened up and told his father what he had overheard.

"There's naething like faith for the makin' o' poets, Cosmo!" remarked the laird. "Jeames never appeart to me to hae mair o' what's ca'd intellec' nor jist an' ord'nar share; but ye see the man at has faith he's aye growin,' an' may come to what nane expeckit even i' this warl'. An' whan ye think o' the ages to come, truly it wad seem to maitter little what stock o' onything a man may start wi'. I ance kenned ane in ord'nar affairs coontit little better nor an idiot, wha 'maist turnt a prophet the minute he gaed doon upo' his k-nees. Ay! fowk may lauch at what they haena a glimp o', but it wad be lang or their poleetical economy wad du sae muckle for sic a man! It wadna e'en gie 'im a chance. It wad hae the necks o' sic like's him thrawn the moment they appeart!—But there's Grizzie! I h'ard her come in! Gang an' tell her I wad like to see her. She's been to see her fowk."

Cosmo went down. The old woman was sitting in his father's chair by the fire, and did not turn her face when first he spoke. She was either tired or vexed, he thought. Aggie was again in the kitchen.

"My father wad like to see ye, Grizzie," he said. "An' here, Grizzie, here's twa poun'; an' ye'll need to gar 't gang far'er nor it can, for I kenna whaur we're to get the neist."

"Ken ye whaur ye got the last?" muttered Grizzie, but made haste to cover the words:— "—Whaur got ye that, Cosmo?" she said.

"What gien I dinna tell ye, Grizzie?" he returned, willing to rouse her with a little teasing.

"That's as ye think proper, sir," she answered. "Ae body has no richt to say til anither body, 'Whaur got ye that?'—'cep' he doobts ye hae been at the stealin' o' 't."

It was a somewhat strange answer, but there was no end to the strange things Grizzie would say: it was one of her charms! Cosmo told her where and how he had got the money.

The moment she understood, Grizzie started from her chair, and shaking her clenched hand at Cosmo, cried out like a Pythoness,

"Glenwarlock, yoong sir, ken ye what ye're duin'?" Then turning with an expression of despair to Aggie, who stood regarding them with a strange look, "The Lord preserve 's! he's an innocent!" she said, and dropped into her seat.

"Grizzie!" cried Cosmo, in astonishment, "what on earth gars ye luik sae raist like? Hasna the man ta'en 's oot o' the warst strait ever we was in?"

"Gien naebody nearer hame had na helpit ye oot o' waur straits, its waur straits ye wad be in the noo!" cried Grizzie. "An' it's waur ye'll be in yet, gien that man gets his wull o' ye!"

"He's a fine chiel', an' a rale freen," said Cosmo. "An' for waur straits, Grizzie—arena ye at the last o' yer meal?"

As he spoke he turned, and with factual reference to fact, strode to the chest into which he had put his hand but a few minutes before. To his astonishment there was enough in it for many meals! He turned again and stared speechless at Grizzie. But she sat now with her back to him.

"What's this o' 't, Grizzie?" he began; but before he could finish his speech, she broke out thus:

"Shame fa' 'im, say I, 'at gethert his siller sellin' beef an' mutton i' the Wastwyn' o' Howglen! *Him* to ettle at a gentleman o' a thoosan' year for ane o' *his* queyns! But, please the Lord, we s' haud clear o' sic a doonfa' as that for a' 'at 's come an' gane!"

"Hootoot, Grizzie!" said Cosmo, returning to the fire, "ye canna surely imaigine ony man in his senses wad think the like o' me worth luikin' efter for a guid-son til him! Stanewhuns wadna be sic a gowk!"

"Gowk here, gowk there! he kens what ye are an' what ye're worth! Weel that! Hasna he seen ye at the scythe? Disna he ken there's ten times mair to be gotten oot o' ae gentleman like you, wi' his siller at yer back, nor ten cowmon men sic as he's like to coff i' the market for 's dothers? Weel kens he it's nae faut o' you or yours 'at ye're no sae flush as some 'at oucht to be, an' wull be waur-aff yet, gien it be the Lord's wull, or a' be dune! Disna he ken 'at Castle Warlock itsel' wad be a warl's honour to ony leddy

—no to say a lass broucht up in a slauchter-hoose? Shame upo' him an' his!"

"Weel, Grizzie," rejoined Cosmo, "ye may say 'at ye like, but I dinna believe he had onything o' the kin' in 's heid. It cam a' o' rale guid wull an' charity; an'——"

"Charity!" interrupted Grizzie; "tshah! I'm ashamed to hear ye! Disna he ken the word o' a Warlock 's as guid as gowd? Disna he ken *your* wark, what wi' yer pride an' what wi' yer ill waured (*ill spent*) graititude, 'ill be worth til 'im that o' twa men? The man's nae coof! He kens what he's aboot! Haith, ye needna waur muckle graititude upo' sic benefactions!"

"To show you, Grizzie, that you are unfair to him," said Cosmo, more seriously, "I must tell you he pressed on me the loan of fifty pounds."

"I tell ye sae!" screamed Grizzie, starting again to her feet. "God forbid ye took 'im at his offer!"

"I did not," answered Cosmo; "but all the same——"

"The Lord be praist for his abundant an' great mercy!" cried Grizzie, more heartily than devoutly. "We micht contrive to win ower the twa poun' even ohn workit it oot—but *fifty!*—The Lord be aboot 's frae ill! As sure's deith, gien ye had ta'en the siller ye wad hae had to tak the lass!—Cosmo, ye canna but ken the auld tale o' muckle-moo'd Meg?" she concluded, more gently.

"Weel that," replied Cosmo. "But ye'll alloo, Grizzie, times are altert sin' the day whan ae man cud gie anither the ch'ice atween a wife an' the wuddie! Stanewhuns cudna weel hang me for sayin' *no*."

"Say ye *no*, come o' the hangin' 'at like," rejoined Grizzie, and sat down again.

"But, Grizzie," said Cosmo, "I wad fain ken whaur that meal i' the kist cam frae. There was nane intil 't an hoor ago."

With all her faults of temper and tongue, there was one kind of evil word Grizzie could not speak: she had tried a good many times in her life to tell a lie, but had never succeeded: absolutely determined not to disclose how she had procured the meal, she paused unprepared. Her hesitation, however, lasted but a moment.

"Some fowk says, sir," she answered in a deliberative tone, as if, although having in a measure weighed the question, she yet suspended judgment, "'at the age o' mirracles is ower. For mysel' I dinna preten' til an opingon; but gien the needcessity was the same, I wad be laith to think providence no consistent wi' 'tsel'. Ye maun min' weel the auld tale o' the meal-girnel—muckle siclike, I daursay, as oor ain, though it be ca'd a barrel i' the Buik,—hit

'at never wastit, ye ken—an' the uily-pig an' a'—ye'll min' weel!—though what ony wuman in her senses cud want wi' sic a sicht o' ile 's mair nor ever I cud faddom; she cudna aye be poorin' 'it upo' the heid o' her! But maybe it was lamp-ile!—Eh, but a happy wuman was she 'at had but to tak her bowl an' gang to the girnel, as I micht tak my pail an' gang to the wall! An' what for michtna the Almichty mak a meal-wall as weel 's a watter-wall, I wad like to ken! What for no a wall 'at sud rin ile—or say milk, which wad be mair to the purpose? What for sudna he, I say! Ae thing maun be jist as easy to him as anither—jist as ae thing 's as hard to hiz as anither! Eh, but we're helpless craturs!"

"Your w'y, Grizzie, ye wad haud 's helpless! Ye wad hae a'thing hauden to oor moo's, as gien we war bairns in oor mithers' laps! It's o' the mercy o' the Lord 'at he wad mak men an' women o' 's—no haud 's bairns for ever!"

"It may be as ye say, Cosmo; but whiles I cud weel wuss I was a bairn again, an' had to luik to my mither for a'thing."

"An' isna that jist siclike 's the Lord wad hae o' 's, Grizzie? We canna aye be bairns to oor mithers—an' for me I wasna ane lang—but we can an' maun aye be bairns to the great Father o' 's. It's him 'at hauds oot the piece til's, only we maun warstle til 't."

"I hae an ill hert, Cosmo, an' unco hard to content. An' I'm ower auld noo to mak muckle better o' 't; but maybe some kin'ly body like yersel' 'ill tak me in han' whan I'm deid, an' pit some sense intil me!"

"Ye hae sense eneuch, Grizzie, an' to spare, gien only ye wad——"

"Guide my tongue a wee, ye wad say! Little ye ken the temptation o' ane 'at has but ae solitary wappin, an' that no an ill ane! A tongue 's a gift, an' gifts ye're no to despise but turn til accoont."

Cosmo did not care to reason with her further. And Grizzie had gained her point: she had turned him aside from questioning her about the meal.

For a day or two more they had whereby to live; and if it seem to my reader that the horizon of hope was narrowing around them, it did not seem so either to the laird or Cosmo. For they judged not by appearances, neither was their hope in the shows of things. The help they looked for made its own way, and had highest ends in view for them—not merely deliverance from outside oppressions. And what is the extent of our merely rational horizon at any time? But for faith and imagination it were in truth a narrow one! Even what we call experience is but a stupid kind of faith—a trusting in impetus instead of in love. And these

days on the verge of a gulf of poverty were fashioning father and son eternally, for at the close of each they were loving each other more, and thus time, despite of fortune, nay rather working by the good that was at the heart of its evil, had its perfect work.

## CHAPTER LIV.

### A COMMON MIRACLE.

COSMO had all the winter, until he was laid up, and especially after his old master was taken ill, gone often to see him. The good man was now, but chiefly through the progress of his complaint, becoming aware of a general failure of his powers. But he was cheerful and hopeful as ever, and more expectant. As soon as he was able, Cosmo renewed his visits, but seldom stayed long, for Mr. Simon could not bear much talking, and his father would be watching for his return.

It had rained before sunrise, and a soft spring wind had been blowing ever since—a wind both soothing and persuading. It drew at the buds in the secret places of the dry twigs, and whispered to the roots of the rose-trees that roses would be wanted of them by and by. And now the sun was near the foot of the western slope. A mellow look, mingled of gold and gray, hope, that is, and tears, was spread over earth and sky. Cosmo was reading to his father, who sat in his mother's chair by the fireside, when Grizzie entered and told them she had just heard that Mr. Simon had had a bad night and was worse. The laird begged his son to go at once and inquire after their friend.

The wind that had been busy all day now at evening kept Cosmo company as he walked. It flitted softly about him, going and coming like an attendant natured for more motion than his pace would afford. So full of thought and love it seemed, that Cosmo, as he had done a thousand times before, wondered whether spirit were not all, and matter but our human relation to the under side of the golden tissue. Then came the thought of the infinitude of our moods, of the countless colours and hues and shades of our thoughts, of the endless kinds and undefinable varieties of our feelings, especially in our dreams.

"How rich God must be," he said to himself, "since from him we come capable of such inconceivable differences of conscious life!—How poor and helpless," his heart went on thinking, "how mere a pilgrim and stranger in a world over which he has no rule,

must be the man who has not God one with him! Not otherwise can any man's life be free, save moving in loveliest harmony with the will and life of the only Freedom—that which is so free that it wills and we are! We too must will, and so be free!—will the pure will that is love and so life."

"How would it be," he thought again, "if things came and went as they pleased in my mind and brain? Would it not be madness? Is it not of the essence of madness that things thrust themselves upon the man, and by very persistence of seeming, compel and absorb his attention, drowning faith and will in the false conviction of mere presence? The soul that is empty, swept, and garnished, is the soul which adorns itself, the soul where God is not, where therefore other souls come and go at will, drawn by the very selfhood, and make the man the slave of their thoughts and their desires. Oneness with the mighty All is the apex of life; its antipode is distraction—a thousand foolish desires tumultuously simulating the long dead will, a thousand self-impassioned spirits tearing the one asunder: he calls them by his own name, nor knows them from himself. Self is the one all-potent annihilator of individuality. God or chaos is the alternative. All thou hast, or no Christ!"

As he walked thinking thus, the stream was all the way by his side, tumbling out its music as it ran to find its eternity. The wind kept flowing rather than blowing from the moist west, where the gold and purple had fallen together in a ruined heap over the tomb of the sun. The stars came thinking out of the heavens, and the things of earth withdrew into the great nest of the dark. And he found himself at the door of the cottage, under whose low thatched roof lay one of the heirs of all things, waiting for his inheritance.

But Dorty said her master was better, and would be glad to see him, and showed him to his room. Because of his long illness and his need of air, Mr. Simon lay in the study, and the dusky place grew radiant with the smile that greeted Cosmo from the pillow.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Simon, almost eagerly. "I have been longing for you. I want to tell you something—a little experience I have had—an event of my illness. Outwardly it is nothing, but to you it will not be nothing.—It was blowing a great wind last night."

"So my father tells me," answered Cosmo. "For my part I slept too sound to hear it."

"It grew calm with the morning. As the light came the wind fell. Indeed I think it lasted only about three hours altogether.

"I have of late been suffering a good deal with my breath, and have always supposed it worse when the wind was high. Last night I lay awake very weary, longing for the sleep which seemed as if it would never come. I thought of Sir Philip Sidney, how, as he lay dying, he was troubled because, for all his praying, God would not let him sleep: the want of the sleep troubled his body, but that God would not give it him sorely troubled his mind; and I was trying hard to make myself strong to trust in God whatever came to me, sleep or waking, weariness or slow death—when all at once up got the wind with a great roar, as if the prince of the power of the air were mocking at me. And I thought with myself, 'It is then the will of God that I neither sleep this night nor lie quiet!' and I said, 'Thy will be done!' and laid myself out straight, expecting my breathing to grow thick and laboured, and that presently I should have to pump hard for every fill of my lungs. And so lying I waited.

"But still as I waited, I kept breathing softly. No iron band ringed itself about my chest; no sand filled up the passages of my lungs!

"The cottage is not very tight, and I felt the wind blowing all about me; but instead of beginning to cough and wheeze, I began to breathe better than before. Soon I fell fast asleep, and when I woke I was like a new man. It seemed as if a tide of life must have risen and filled me, so much better did I feel. It was a wind of God that had been blowing all about me as I slept, renewing me! Oh how sweet was the air when I woke, and how sweet it is still!

"On the wings of the dreaded wind had sped to me the spirit of good.

"So it may be when the time comes at whose approach nature will 'grow gray with fear': the pale damps of the grave will come steaming up, but they shall not enfold us; we shall hear the ghastly winds that issue from the tomb's mouth, but when they blow upon us they shall be sweet; a sighing, and a rustling of unrest may invade our ears, but lo, it was the waving of the wings of the waiting angels that sit in the antechamber of the hall of life, once the sepulchre of our Lord! And when we die, instead of finding we are dead, we shall have waked better."

To most men it would have been an experience of nothing but bodily relief; to Peter Simon it was a word from the eternal heart —the heart which, in every true and quiet mood, speaks within the heart of a man—makes itself known as the heart of his heart.

"When we close our ears," said Mr. Simon, "to the cries of self and care, then the voice that was there all the time fills those

closed ears. It is the voice of the father speaking to his child—never known for the father's voice until the child begins to obey it. To him who has not ears to hear God will not reveal himself; any other revealing would be death by terror."

Cosmo sat a long time talking with his friend, for now there seemed no danger of hurting him, so much better was he. It was late therefore when he rose to return.

## CHAPTER LV.

### DEFIANCE.

AGNES was in the kitchen when he entered. She was making the porridge.

"What's come o' Grizzie?" asked Cosmo.

"Ye dinna like my parritch sae weel 's her's!" returned Agnes.

"Jist as weel, Aggie," answered Cosmo.

"Dinna ye tell Grizzie that."

"What for no?"

"First she wad be angert, an' syne her hert wad be like to brak."

"There's nae occasion to say onything aboot it," conceded Cosmo. "But what's come o' her the nicht?" he repeated. "It's as mirk 's mirk, an' I dinna like her to be oot in 't.—She's no up the stair, is she?"

"Na, she's no up the stair. But the ro'd 'atween this an' the Muir 's no easy to lowse," replied Agnes.

The same instant her face flushed hotter than ever sun or fire made it: what she had said was in itself true enough, but what, though she had not *said* it, she had yet for the moment meant him to understand, was not true; Grizzie had gone nowhere near Muir o' Warlock. She had never told a lie in her life, and before the words were gone from her mouth felt as if the earth were sinking from under her feet. She left the *spurtle* sticking in the porridge, and dropped into the laird's chair.

"What's the maitter wi' ye, Aggie?" asked Cosmo, hastening to her in alarm, for her face was now white, and her head hanging down.

"This is no to be borne!" she cried, and started to her feet. "—Cosmo, I tellt ye a lee."

"Aggie!" returned Cosmo, dismayed, "ye never tellt me a lee i' yer life!"

"Never afore," she answered; "but I hae tellt ye ane noo—no to live though! Grizzie's no gane to Muir o' Warlock."

"What care I whaur Grizzie 's gane!" rejoined Cosmo. "Tell me or no tell me as ye like."

Agnes burst into tears.

"Haud yer tongue, Aggie," said Cosmo, trying to soothe her, himself troubled, and troubled with her trouble, for he too was sorry she should *almost* have told him a lie,—he would not allow it was more than *almost*—and his heart was sore for her misery over the sin. He knew how she must suffer, the thing she had done was so foreign to her nature!

"It *could* na be muckle mair, at the warst," he went on, "than a mere slip o' the wull, seein' ye made sic haste to set it richt again. For mysel', I s' bainish the thoucht o' the thing."

"I thank ye, Cosmo," sobbed Agnes. "Ye 'll aye du like the Lord himsel'! But there's mair intil 't. I dinna ken what to du or say. It 's a sod thing to stan' 'atween twa, an' no ken what to du ohn dune mischeef—maybe wrang!—There's something it 'maist seems to me ye hae a richt to ken, but I canna be sure; an' yet——"

She was interrupted by the sudden and hurried opening of the door. It flew to the wall, and Grizzie came staggering in, with a face of terror.

"Tu wi' the door!" she cried, with the last effort of speech, and sank upon a chair, gasping for breath, and dropping at her feet a bag like a pillow-case.

Cosmo leaped to the door and closed and locked it, while Agnes made haste to get her some water, which she drank eagerly. After a time of panting and sighing, she seemed to come to herself all at once, and rose, saying, as if nothing had happened,

"I maun see to the supper!"

Cosmo went to take up her bag, for he felt curious concerning it, but she pounced upon it, and carried it to the corner of the fire, where she placed it beyond her. The same instant her nose informed her that the porridge had begun to burn.

"Eh, sirs!" she cried, as she took the pot hastily from the fire, "the parritch 'ill be a' sung—no to mention the waste o' gude meal! Aggie, hoo cud ye be sae careless!"

"'T was eneuch to gar a body forget ony pot," said Cosmo, "to see ye come in like yon, Grizzie!"

"An' what'll ye say to the tale I bring ye?" rejoined Grizzie, as she turned the porridge into a dish, careful not to scrape too hard

on the bottom of the pot—which she set aside with the burned portion adhering to it, to serve as dish, plate, and supper for herself.

"Tell's a' aboot it, Grizzie, an' bena lang aither," said Cosmo, "for I maun til my father."

"Gang til im. Here's naebody wad keep ye frae 'im."

He was surprised at her tone, for although she took abundant liberty with the young laird, he had not since boyhood known her rude to him.

"Nae till I hear yer tale, Grizzie," he answered.

"An' I wad fain ken what ye'll hae to say til't; for naither the laird nor Maister Simon nor yersel' wad ever alloo o' kelpies, say 'at I likit! An' noo there I hae been followed myself, for the first time i' my life, by a sure ane—this last half-hoor—or it may be less!"

"Hoo kenned ye it was a kelpie—it's maist as dark 's pick?"

"Kenned! quo' he? Didna I hear the deil's naig 'ahin' me—the tramp o' a' the fower feet o' 'im—as gien they had been fower an' twinty!"

"Hoo was't he didna win up wi' ye than, Grizzie?" asked Cosmo.

"Guid kens hoo!" she answered; "I won'er at it mysel'. But I trow I ran! An' I tak ye to witness I garred ye steik the door wi' my last breath."

"But," objected Cosmo, to whom, his observation sharpened both by his own vague suspicions, and by what Agnes had said, Grizzie's whole bearing seemed to betray anxiety to conceal something, "it's weel kent the kelpie wons aye by some watterside."

"Weel, cam I no by the tarn o' the tap o' Stieve K-now?"

"What on earth tuik ye there an' nicht comin' on, Grizzie?"

"I said na I was there at nicht-fa'! The cratur had seen me gang by i' the efternune, an' watcht me back by the laich ro'd! Didna I haud ower the hill to the How o' Hap, an' come hame by Luck's Lift? Mair by token, wadna the guidman o' that same *hae* me du what I haena dune this twal year, or maybe twenty—an' that's tak a dram? An' didna I come hame a' the better for 't?"

"An' get a sicht o' the kelpie intil the bargain—eh, Grizzie?"

"Hoots! gang to the laird, an' lea' me to get my breath an' your supper thegither. An' I wuss ye see the neist kelpie yersel'!" said Grizzie. "—Only, whatever ye du, Cosmo," she added, already repenting her evil wish and dreading its possible consequences, "dinna m'unt the back o' 'im, or he'll cairry ye straucht til 's maister—an' we a' ken wha *that* is."

"I'm no gaein' oot o' this," returned Cosmo, "till I see what ye hae i' that pock o' yours."

"Hoot!" cried Grizzie, and snatching up the bag, she held it behind her back, "never wad a yoong gentleman mint at (*attempt*) luikin' intil an auld wife's pock! What kens he what she michtna hae there!"

"The ribs o' 't sticks oot like wi' meal! It's my belief it's nae ither nor a meal-pock," said Cosmo.

"Meal-pock!" returned Grizzie with indignant contempt: "what neist?"

He made another movement to seize the bag, but she caught the spurtle from the empty porridge-pot, and showed herself in genuine earnest for its defence. Whatever the secret to which Aggie had alluded, this pock must have to do with it! thought Cosmo, and began to grow very uncomfortable. So strange were his nascent suspicions that he dared not at the moment allow them to take defined shape, lest thereby they should start into facts.

For the last few days he had been occupied with the whole question of miracles. Why, thought he, should one who believes that in very truth a live, thinking, perfect Power is at both the heart and the head of affairs, count it impossible that, in like need, another meal-chest should be supplied like that of the widow of Zarephath? If the thing was ever done, there could be no absurdity in hoping it might be done again. If it was possible once, it was possible in the same circumstances always. No human being, however, could tell when circumstances were the same—and in fact he could not believe that the same circumstances all round, inside and out, ever came again! Wherever, indeed, the same thing was not done, the conclusion must be that the circumstances were not the same. One thing he did discover—that, in the altered relations of man's mind to the facts of nature, a larger faith is necessary to believe in the constantly present and ordering will of the Father of men, than to believe in the unusual phenomenon of a miracle. In the meantime, it was a fact that they had hitherto had their daily bread! But now the strangeness of Grizzie's behaviour set him thinking in a very different direction.

And now again came the question, why Mr. Burns took no notice of the things he had sent him! If he had found it impossible to do anything with them, and had delayed writing from unwillingness to cause him disappointment, yet there ought surely to be some limit of silence! Why should his friend not even show himself aware of the straits he had confessed himself in. It must be the design of Providence to take off him the last clog that

trammelled him: he was to have no ease until he had yielded the castle! If it were indeed so, then the longer they delayed the worse off they would find themselves when at length it was done! To sell everything in it first would, in postponing the evil day, but prepare for them so much the deeper poverty against its arrival; whereas if he parted with the house at once, and took his father where work was to be had, they might have some of the old things about them still to tincture strangeness with home. The more he thought about it, the more it seemed his duty to end the hopeless struggle, and having accepted the social descent which seemed the will of God for them, with new courage commence a new endeavour, no more on the slippery slope of the hill Difficulty, but with the firm ground of the valley of Humiliation under his feet. But ready as he was to do whatever was required of him, he did wish God would make it quite plain. The part of discipline he liked least—one of whose good and necessity I doubt if we have yet gained more than a glimpse—was his uncertainty upon occasion as to what the will of God might be. But on the other hand, perhaps the cause of that uncertainty was the lack of perfect readiness; perhaps all that was wanted to make duty plain was absolute will to do it!

These and other such thoughts went flowing and ebbing for hours in his mind that night. But at last he saw his immediate duty plain enough—namely, to banish care and go to sleep. He yielded his consciousness therefore to him from whom it came, and slept.

## CHAPTER LVI.

### DISCOVERY AND CONFESSION.

In the morning he woke wondering whether God would that day let him know clearly what he required of him. He was certain he would not have him leave his father; anything else in the way of trouble he thought he was prepared for.

The season was now approaching the nominal commencement of summer, but the morning was very cold. He went to the window. Air and earth, he thought, wore the crape veil of a black frost—the most ungenial, the most killing of weathers. Alas, that was his father's breathing! His bronchitis was worse! In haste he lighted the fire, and leaving him still asleep, went down stairs. He was earlier than usual, and Grizzie was later;—she

had not yet got over her run from the kelpie; only Agnes was in the kitchen. Her grandfather was worse also, she told him. Everything leaned towards severer straits and sorer necessity: this must be God letting him know what he was to do!

He sat down, and suddenly, for a moment, seemed to be on the opposite bank of the Warlock river, looking up at the castle, now the property of another, and closed to him for ever! Within those walls he could not order the removal of a straw! could not chop a stick to warm his father! "The will of God be done!" he said, and the vision was gone.

Agnes was busy making his porridge: here was a chance ot questioning her before Grizzie came down.

"Come, Aggie," he said abruptly, "I want to ken what for Grizzie was in sic a terror aboot her pock last nicht. I'm thinkin' I hae a richt to ken."

"I wish ye wadna speir," returned Aggie, after but a moment's pause.

"Aggie," said Cosmo, "gien ye tell me it's nane o' my business, I winna speir again."

"Ye're maist ower guid to me, Cosmo, efter the w'y I behaved to ye last nicht!" she answered, with a tremble in her voice.

"Dinna think o' that again, Aggie. To me it's jist as gien it had never been. My hert's the same to ye as afore—an' justly. I believe I un'erstan' ye whiles 'maist as weel as ye du yersel'."

"I houp whiles ye un'erstan' me better," answered Agnes. "Sair I m'urn the shaidow o' that lee ever crossed my min'."

"It was but a shaidow!" said Cosmo.

"But what wad ye be thinkin' noo o' yersel', gien it had been you 'at sae near—na, I winna nibble at the trowth ony mair—gien it had been you, I wull say't, 'at leed that lee—sic an' sae as it was?"

"I ken what I wad *say to* mysel'," answered Cosmo. "I wad say 'at wi' God's help I was the less likly ever to tell a lee again. For, ye see, I wad better un'erstan' hoo a temptation may come upo' a body a' at ance, ohn gien im time to reflec'. Sae, I wad tell mysel', my responsibility was noo the greater."

"I thank ye, Cosmo," returned Aggie humbly, and was silent.

"But," resumed Cosmo, "ye haena tellt me yet it's nane o' my business what was in Grizzie's pock last nicht."

"Na, I cudna tell ye that, 'cause it wadna be true. It is yer business."

"What was i' the pock than?"

"Weel, Cosmo, ye pit me in a great diffeeclety; for though I never said to Grizzie I wadna tell, I made nae objections—though

at the time I didna like it—whan she tellt me what she was gaein' to du; an' sae I canna help fearin' it may be fause to her to tell ye. Besides, I hae latten 't gang sae lang ohn said a word! The guid auld body cud never jaloose I wad turn upo' her noo!"

"Ye're awfu' mysterrious, Aggie!" said Cosmo. "Troth, ye mak me 'at I 'maist daurna think! What can 't be 'at 's been gaein' on sae lang, an' hasna been tellt me? Hae I a richt to ken or hae I no?"

"Ye *hae* a richt to ken, or I wadna tell ye yet," answered Agnes. "Frae the first o' 't I was terrifeed to think what ye wad say til't! But ye see, what was there left? You, an' the laird, an' my father, a' laid up thegither! heaps o' things wantit! the meal dune! an' life depen'in' upo' mait an' drink! I pit it to ye, Cosmo: *cud* we sit still an' lat oor ain three men dee o' cauld want?"

As she spoke, shadowy horror was deepening to monster presence; the incredible was gradually assuming shape and fact; the hair of Cosmo's head seemed about to rise. He answered nothing, asked no more, but sat waiting the worst.

"Ye maunna be ower hard upo' Grizzie an' me, Cosmo," Agnes resumed. "It wasna for oorsel's we wad hae dune sic a thing, an' maybe there was nane but them we did it for 'at we wad hae been able to du't for. But I hae no richt to say *we*. Blame, gien there be ony, I hae my share o'; but praise, gien there be ony, she has't a'; for, whan the warst cam to the warst, or raither 'at the warst michtna come to the warst, she tuik the meal-pock an' gaed oot wi' 't."

Here Agnes gave a howl like a hurt child, and fell a weeping bitterly.

"Good God!" cried Cosmo, and for some moments was dumb. "Lassie!" he said at length, in a voice that came from somewhere he did not know, "didna ye ken i' yer ain sowl we wad raither hae dee'd?"

"There 't is! That's jist what for Grizzie wadna hae ye tellt!—But dinna think she gaed ony gait whaur she wad be kent," sobbed Agnes, "or appeart to ony to be ither than a puir auld body gaein' aboot for hersel'. Dinna think aither 'at ever she tellt a lee, or said a word to gar fowk peety her. She had aye afore her the possibeelity o' bein' ca'd til accoont some day. But eh! gien 't war her an' no me, ye wad be hearkenin' til anither mak o' a justification! Ae thing ye may be sure o'—there's no ane in a' the country-side a hair the wiser."

"What differ maks that?" cried Cosmo. "Fac' 's fac'!"

"Hoot, Cosmo!" said Agnes, with a revival of the old

authority, "ye're takin' the thing efter a fashion oonworthy o' a philosopher—no to say a Christyan. Ye tak it as gien there was shame intil't! An' gien there bena shame, I daur ye to say there can be disgrace! Come to that wi' 't, an' hoo was the Lord o' a' himsel' supportit whan he gaed aboot cleanin' oot the warl'? Wasna it the women 'at gaed wi' 'im 'at providit a'thing?"

"Trowth; but that was verra different! They a' kenned him, they a' lo'ed him—kenned he was duin' what gowd cudna pey for; kenned he was workin' himsel' to deith for them an' their fowk—was earnin' the haill warl', o' the whilk they themsel's war the arles (*earnest*). Or gien no freely sae muckle as that, they kenned at least 'at he was duin' as did never man afore, an' their ain lugs tauld them he spak as never man spak. Forby, there was nae beggin' intil 't; he never askit them for onything."—Here Aggie shook her head in unbelief, but Cosmo went on.—"An' thae women, some o' them onygait, war rich, an' prood to du what they did for the best an' grandest o' men. But what hae we dune for the warl' 'at we sud daur luik til 't to come 'atween 's an' meesery!"

"For that maitter, Cosmo," returned Agnes, still gathering courage now the weight of her secret was off her, "arena we a brithers an' sisters? A'body's breethers an' sisters wi' a'body, an' it's but a kin' o' a some mean pride 'at wadna be obligat to yer ain fowk, efter ye hae dune yer best. Cosmo! ilka han'fu' o' meal gi'en i' this or ony hoose by them 'at wadna in lik need accep' the same, is an affront frae brither to brither. Them 'at wadna tak, I say, has no richt to gie."

"But naebody kent the trowth o' whaur their meal was gangin'! The thoucht they war giein' 't til a puir auld wife, whan they war in fac' giein' 't to men wi' a grit hoose ower their heids. It's a disgrace, an' hard to beir, Aggie!"

"'Deed the thing 's hard upo' 's a'—that's no to be contradickit! But whaur the disgrace o' 't is, that I wull not condescen' to see. Men in a muckle hoose! Twa o' them auld, an' a' three ailin' an' i' their beds no fit to muv! An' div ye think there was ane o' them 'at gied o' her meal to Grizzie, 'at wad hae gi'en less—though what less nor the han'fu' o' meal, which was a' she ever soucht or got, wad be ill to imaigine—wad hae gi'en less, I say, had she kent it was for the life o' auld Glenwarlock—a name respeckit, an' mair nor respeckit, whaurever it was h'ard?—or for the life o' the yoong laird, vroucht to deith wi' labourer's wark, an' syne 'maist smoored i' storm?—or for auld Jeames Gracie, 'at 's led a God-fearin' life till 'maist ower auld to live ony langer? I say naething aboot Grizzie an' me, wha cud aye tak care o' oorsel's

but for the three dowie men we had to luik efter. We did oor best, but whan a' oor bit hainin's (*savings*) was efter the lave, an' we cudna win awa' oorsel's to win mair, what was we to du? Gien ony ane o' you three cud hae dune for the lave, we wad hae been awa' an' sen'in hame."

"Ye tell me, Aggie," said Cosmo, as in a painful dream, through which flashed lovely lights, "'at you an' Grizzie waured a' yer ain siller upo' 's, an' syne gaed oot an' beggit for 's?"

"Grizzie did—an' 'deed there's no anither word for 't—nor was there ae thing ither to be dune." Aggie drew herself up, and went on with solemnity. "Div ye think, Cosmo, whaur heid or hert or fit or han' cud du a stroke to haud trible frae you or the laird, Grizzie or mysel' wad be to seek that day? I beg o' yer grace ye winna lay to oor chairge what we war driven til. As Grizzie says, we was jist at ane mair wi' desperation."

Cosmo's heart was full. He dared not speak, but approaching Agnes with reverence, and taking her hand, he looked her in the face with eyes full of tears. She had been pale as sun-browned could be, but now she grew red as a misty dawn. Her eyes fell, and she began to pull at the hem of her apron. Grizzie's step was on the stair, and Cosmo, not quite prepared to meet her yet, walked out.

He found the morning neither so black nor so cold as he had imagined. He went into the garden, to the nook between the two blocks, there sat down, and tried to think. The sun was not far above the horizon, and he was in the cold shade of the kitchen tower, but he sat there motionless and felt no chill. The sun came southward, looked round the corner, and brought with him a lovely fresh day. The leaves were struggling out, and the birds had begun to sing. Ah! what a day were here, had the hopes of the boy been still swelling in the bosom of the man! But the decree had gone forth! no doubt remained! no refuge of uncertainty was left! The house must follow the land! Castle Warlock and their last foothold of soil must go! wrong must not sustain ruin! Were those divine women to spend money, thought, and labour, to endure privation, care, and weariness, that he and his father might hold what they no longer had any right to hold? Or, if beggars, were they to hide themselves in the lower depth of begging by proxy—living in their grim stronghold upon unacknowledged charity, as their ancestors on plunder? He durst not tell the laird his discovery until he had taken at least the first step towards putting an end to the whole falsehood. Delay of due action was of all things what Cosmo shrunk from the most; and as the loss mainly affected him, the yielding of the castle must

primarily be his deed and not his father's. He rose at once to do it.

The same moment the incubus of Grizzie's meal-pock was lifted from his bosom. The shame was, if shame was any, that they should have been living in such a house while the thing was done. When the house was sold, let people say what they would! In proportion as a man cares to do what he ought, he ceases to care how he may be judged; for why should a true man heed judgment, just or unjust?

"If there be any stain upon us," he said to himself, "God will see that we have the chance of wiping it out!"

With that he got over gate and wall, and took his way along Grizzie's path.

But while he was thinking in the garden, Grizzie, who had learned from Aggie that her secret was such no more, was going about her affairs in dire distress, for she feared she had offended the young laird beyond atonement. In heart-devouring anxiety she kept going every minute to the door, to see if he was not coming in to his breakfast; but the first she spied of him was his back as he leaped from the top of the wall. She ran after him to the gate.

"Sir, sir!" she cried, "come back; come back, an' I'll gang doon upo' baith my auld k-nees to beg yer pardon. I wull, sir! I wull!"

Cosmo turned the moment he heard her, and went back.

When he reached the wall, over the top of the gate he saw Grizzie already on her knees upon the round paving stones of the yard, stretching up her old hands to meet his appearance, as if he were some heavenly messenger just descended, whose wrath she deprecated. He jumped over wall and gate, ran to her, put his arms round her, and lifted her to her feet, saying,

"Grizzie, wuman, what are ye aboot! Bless ye, Grizzie, I wad 'maist as sune strive wi' my ain mither whaur she shines i' glory as wi' you!"

Grizzie's face began to work like that of a child in an agony between pride and tears, just ere he breaks into a loud cry. She gripped his arm hard with both hands, and after a few moments of struggle faltered out, gathering composure as she proceeded,

"Cosmo, ye're like an angel o' God to a' 'at has to du wi' ye! Eh, sic an accoont o' ye as I'll hae to gie to the mither o' ye whan I win to see her! For surely they'll lat me see her, though they may weel no think me guid eneuch to bide wi' her up there, for as lang as we was thegither doon here! But for trowth's sake ae thing I maun say, sir:—gien I hadna dune as I did du, I div not see hoo we cud hae won throuw the winter."

"Grizzie," said Cosmo, "I ken ye did a' for the best, an' maybe it was the best. The day may come, Grizzie, whan you and me 'ill gang thegither to ca' upo' them 'at pat the meal i' yer pock, an' return them thanks for the kin'ness."

"Eh, na, sir! That wad never du! What for sud they ken onything aboot it! They war kin' nae doobt, but no to you or me, or to onybody in partic'lar. They gae to me jist as to ony unco beggar wife. It was to me they gae't, no to you. Lat it lie upo' me, sir, an' me du as I see fit."

"That canna be, Grizzie," replied Cosmo. "Ye're ane o' the faimily, ye ken, an' whatever ye du, I maun haud my face til."

"God bless ye, sir!" exclaimed Grizzie, and turned towards the house, entirely relieved and satisfied.

"But eh, sir," she cried, turning again, "ye haena brocken yer fast the day!"

"I s' be back in a feow meenutes, an' mak a brakfast o' 't by or'nar'," answered Cosmo, as he hastened away up the hill.

## CHAPTER LVII.

### IT IS NAUGHT, SAITH THE BUYER.

WHEN Cosmo reached the gate of his lordship's *policy*, he found it closed, and although he both rang the bell and called lustily to the gate-keeper, no one appeared. He put a hand therefore on the top of the gate, and vaulted clean over it. But just as he lighted, who should come round a bend in the drive a few yards off, but lord Lick-my-loof himself, out for his morning-walk! His cantankerous temper would have been greatly irritated at mere sight of such treatment of his gate, but to see Cosmo thus make nothing of it—clearing it with as little respect as a lawyer would a quibble not his own—raised his displeasure to indignation and wrath, which were plainly to be read on his approaching countenance.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," said Cosmo; "I could make no one hear me, and therefore took the liberty of describing a parabola over your gate."

"A verra ill fashiont parabola in my judgment!" replied lord Lumbiggin. "For auld proprietors you Warlocks think ower little o' the richts o' property."

"If I had set my foot on the new paint, my lord, I should

have been to blame; but I vaulted right over, scarcely touching more of the gate than if it had been opened to me."

"I'll hae an iron gate!"

"Not on my account, my lord, I hope; it would be a needless expense; I have come to ask you to put it in my power to leave Glenwarlock."

"Well?" returned his lordship, and waited.

"I find myself compelled at last," said Cosmo, not without a little tremor in his voice, which he did his best to still, "to offer you, as your lordship desired, the refusal of what remains of my father's property."

"House and all?"

"Everything except the furniture."

"Which I do not want."

A silence followed.

"May I ask if you are prepared to mention any sum?—or will you call on my father when you have made up your mind?" said Cosmo.

"I will give you two hundred pounds for the lot."

"Two hundred pounds!" repeated Cosmo, who had certainly not expected a large offer, but was nevertheless taken aback. "Why, my lord, the bare material is worth more than that!"

"No. I might as well blast it fresh from the quarry. I know the sort of thing those walls are! Vitrified with age, by George! Anyhow, I don't want to build. Neither is the place as it stands of the smallest use to me. I should but let it crumble!"

Cosmo's dream rose yet again in his mind's eye; but it was no more with pain; for if the loved walls must pass from their possession, what better could they desire!

"The sum you mention, my lord," he said, "would scarcely, after paying everything, take us to another place!"

"That *I* should see to! It must be entered as a condition of purchase! You have my offer; take it or leave it. You'll not get half as much if you come to the hammer. It's worth nothing to anybody else, bedded in my property."

"There's the croft too!" said Cosmo.

"That of course. If you decline my offer, I will wait the auction."

Cosmo's heart sank afresh. He dared not part with the place off-hand on such terms! His power of action seemed for the moment exhausted; he could no more even spare his father.

"I must speak to the laird," he said. "I doubt if he will accept your offer."

"As he pleases. I do not promise to let it stand over."

"I must run the risk," answered Cosmo. "Will you allow me to jump the gate?"

But his lordship had a key, and preferred opening it.

When Cosmo reached his father's room, he found him still in bed, and sitting down on the edge of it, he told him all—first to what straits they were reduced; then what Grizzie had been doing; next how his mind and heart and conscience had been exercised concerning the castle—how all his life the love of it had held him to the dust; and last he recounted his interview that morning with lord Lumbiggin, and said he could do no more without his father.

"I wadna wullin'ly be left oot o' yer troubles, my son, sae lang as I'm 'ithin reach o' them, an' I houp that'll no be i' this warl' only," said the old man cheerfully. "But ye did richt no to come til a conclusion concernin' the castel yer lane; I wadna hae f'un' mysel' at leeberty to determine the fate o' what was sae muckle mair yours nor mine. But that sae far sattlet, I can deleeberate wi' ye anent the rest. But lea' me my lane a wee. There 's ane, as ye weel ken, wha 's nearer to ilk ane o' 's nor we are to ane anither: I maun speyk to him first—your Father and my Father, in whom you and I are brothers."

Cosmo bowed in reverence, and withdrawing, went and sat with James Gracie in the room below.

After the space of half an hour, came the signal with which his father was in the habit of calling him when he used to sit in that room, and he hastened to him.

The laird held out his old hand.

"Come, my son," he said, "an' lat's commune thegither like twa o' the heirs o' all things. It's unco easy for me to regaird wi' equaneemity the loss o' a hoose I was o' the p'int o' leavin' onygait for the hame o' a' hames, the dwallin' o' a' the loves, withoot the dim memory or foresicht o' which—I'm thinkin' they maun be aboot the same thing—we cud never hae lo'ed the auld place as we du, whaur ance I'm in, a' thing doon here maun dwin'le, ootworthied by reason o' the glory that excelleth—I dinna mean the glory o' pearls an' gowd, or even o' licht, but the glory o' love an' trowth. Gien ever I've had onything to ca' an ambition, Cosmo, it 's been to hae my son ane o' the wise, wi' faith to believe what his father had learnt afore him, an' sae start the farther on upo' the narrow way. It 's been my ambition, I say, 'at my endeevours and my experrience sud sae far avail for my boy, as to start him to mak his ain endeevours an' gether his ain experrience a wee bit nearer to that perfection o' life efter the which oor divine natur groans an' cries even whan it kensna what it wants. An'

the Lord be praist! he has h'ard my petition, an' grantit my request. I may weel say wi' Dawvid the son o' Jesse, 'at the prayers of Cosmo Warlock are en'it. Blessed be his name 'at tells us we maun forsake a', an' tak up oor cross, an' follow him, lowsin' oor life 'at he may luik efter 't! For whaur wad he hae 's follow him but til his ain hame, to the verra boasom o' his God an' oor God, there to be ane wi' Love itsel' for evermore!"

Such a son as Cosmo could not listen to such a father saying such things, and not drop the world as if it too were but a burnt-out cinder like the moon.

"When men desire great things, then is God ready to hear them," he said; "an' so I trust, father, he *has* grantit your prayers for me: I desire nothing but to fulfil my calling."

"Ye can pairt wi' the auld hoose ohn grutten than?"

"As easy, father, as wi' a piece whan I wasna hungry. I dinna daur houp it'll aye be sae; for ye ken the flesh lusteth again' the speerit as weel 's the speerit again' the flesh; but i' my present licht an' peace, I even rej'ice to pairt wi' the hoose as a victory upo' the speerit-han'. Wull I gang til 's lordship at ance an' accep' his offer? I'm ready."

"Du ye that, my son. I haena lang to live, an' the price, though sma', 's muckle siller, for it'll pey the last o' my debts, an' lat me dee an' you live a free man. Ye'll easy provide for yersel' an' Grizzie! For Jeames, he'll hae his share o' the siller in richt o' the craft, an' wi' Aggie he'll no want muckle mair i' this warl'. For her, she'll be safe's an angel whaurever she gang. An' you, Cosmo, ye'll hae an abundant entrance ministered tu ye intil the kingdom o' oor Lord an' Saviour, an' be content wi' that. What but that gat the Lord himsel', an' wha daur luik for a better fate nor his! There was them 'at by faith subdued kingdoms, an' them 'at by faith war sawn asun'er: baith war martyrdoms. What God sen's, we s' tak."

"Ye'll tak the twa hun'er than for craft an' a', father?"

"Dinna ye ettle at a penny mair; he micht gang back upo' 't. Regaird it as his final offer."

Without a word more Cosmo rose and went—strong-hearted, not a thought pulling back from the sacrifice. There was even a pleasure in doing the thing just because in a lower mood it would have torn his heart: the spirit was glorying against the flesh. He felt somewhat as the young man would have felt had he given all to the poor and followed the master. The weight of the castle was already off his heart. With the strength of a young giant he strode to meet the oppressor.

There stood his lordship at the gate where he had left him.

"I thought the old cock had more sense than the young one!" he said; "so I waited to protect my gate."

But he did not move to open it.

"My father accepts your lordship's offer," said Cosmo.

"When you left me," said lord Lumbiggin, speaking slowly and with emphasis, "I was on the point of adding another fifty to my offer, to make sure of getting rid of you, but as you are content——"

"We will take the two hundred, my lord," said Cosmo.

"Deil, but ye winna!" cried Lumbiggin. "I hae changed my min'. I'm gaein' to bide till the roup (*sale by auction*)."

"Good evening, then, my lord," said Cosmo, and turning left him grinning over the gate—but with an odd look, as if he were a little ashamed of himself, thinking he had perhaps gone too far teasing the young fellow. For Cosmo, in such peace was his heart that he was not even angry with him.

As he went the hope awoke and began once again to whisper itself, that they might not be able to sell the place; that some other way would be provided; and that he would be allowed, if not to live, yet to die in it when his time came. Then up started conscience, jealously watchful lest hope should undermine submission, or weaken resolve. God *might* indeed intend they should not be driven from the house! but did he not keep Abraham in constant removal, not ever letting him own a foot of land, save so much as would hold his dead: their cave was the earnest of his promised possession; he held the land by his dead! And there was our Lord: he had not a place to lay his head—had to go out of doors to pray to his father in secret! Let God's will be done, modified no hair's-breadth by lack of faith or obedience or submission. Then would it be God's very own will that was done, and not something composite, not something modified to the conquest of his unchildlike reluctancy! God's pure will done, he must rejoice equally whether it took or gave the castle!

Thus thinking he returned to his father.

The laird expressed no surprise at the result of his visit.

"He maks the verra wrath o' man praise 'im!" he said. "This 'll be to oor side."

That day there was not another allusion to the matter. They turned to their ordinary doings, and first of all Cosmo read his father a ballad he had written the night before. The old man found no fault with what most critics would have counted a great defect in Cosmo's literary faculty, namely, that his imagination could seldom or never find scope enough in this world by itself; to him the end of things never came; nothing that had an end was worth employing his art upon.

"Who would write *Finis* at the end of a chapter?" said Mr. Simon.

The poem erred in the over-development of an eternal symbol, but it falsified nothing of the meaning folded in it.

"*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*"

The miser lay on his lonely bed;
Life's candle was burning dim.
His heart in his iron chest was hid
Under heaps of gold and an iron lid;
And whether it were alive or dead,
It never troubled him.

Slowly out of his body he crept.
He said, "I am just the same!
"Only I want my heart in my breast;
"I will go and fetch it out of the chest."
Thorough the dark like a gloom he leapt—
He was dead, but had no shame!

He opened the lid—oh, hell and night!
Ghost-eyes could not see the gold;
Empty and swept! not a gleam was there!
His heart lay alone in the chest so bare!
Ghost-hands felt nothing—they had no might
To finger and clasp and hold!

But his heart he saw, and at it did clutch.
A heart, or a puff-ball of sin?
Eaten with moths, and fretted with rust,
He grasped a handful of dry-rotted dust!
He shrieked, as ghosts may, at the crumbling touch,
But hid it his breast within.

And some there are who can see him sit
Under the church apart,
Counting what seems to him rounds of gold,
Heap upon heap, on the dank death-mould:
Alas, poor ghost! how he lacks of wit!—
They breed in the dust of his heart!

Another miser has his chest,
And it hoards of wealth yet more;
Like ferrets his hands go in and out,
Burrowing, tossing the gold about;
And *his* heart too is out of his breast,
The cold heap's bloodless core!

Now wherein differ the ghost that sits
And counts ghost-coins all day,
And the man that clings with spirit prone
To that which could not be his own,
Till out of the world with nothing he flits,
But a heart all eaten away?

That same night Cosmo made up his mind to set out for the city the next morning on foot, begging his way thither if he must, to acquaint Mr. Burns with the straits they were in, and consult with him as to what he might best do to gain a livelihood for his household. As soon as his father had had his breakfast he would let him know his resolve, and if he were pretty well and did not object, would go at once. His spirits rose as he lay brooding. What a happy thing it was that lord Lumbiggin had not accepted their offer! In their poor lodging in some noisy street, they would see in their mind's eye their strong silent castle waiting for them!

"Anyhow," said Cosmo, "such a castle we have! *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott!*"

One part of the discipline of some people seems to be that they shall never settle down or imagine themselves at home, until they are at home in very fact. "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

To be lord of space, a man must be unbound from place. For a heart to be heir of all things, it must have no *things* inside it. The man must be like one who makes things, not one who puts them in his pocket. He must stand on the upper, not the lower side of them. He must be as the poet, not the collector of his editions. God, having made a sunset, lets it pass, and makes no second such. He has no picture-gallery, no library, no museum. I fancy that in heaven men will be so busy being and growing, as to have no time to write or read.

How blessed would he be, Cosmo thought, in the great city with his father and Grizzie and his books—the only trouble that he could not be with his father all day! So much the happier would it be then to come home at night!

Thus imagining, he fell asleep, and dreamed that he had been going about the streets with a barrow of oranges all day trying to sell them. He had not sold even one, and was now returning home, his barrow piled heavy with the golden fruit, consoling himself that his father was fond of oranges, and might have as many as he pleased. But the barrow seemed to grow heavier and heavier as he wheeled it, and he sickened at the thought that his strength was failing him, and he would never get back to his father. Heavier and heavier it grew, until at last he could but barely force it along. At last he reached the door, and setting it down with a great sigh, proceeded to choose as many of the best oranges as he could carry to his father. But the first he laid his hand on seemed frozen to the heap. It was a lump of gold! Another and another—every orange was a lump of solid gold!

Then he said to himself, "My father is dead!" and woke in misery. Rising he went to his bedside, found him in a quiet sleep, lay down comforted, nor that night dreamed any more.

## CHAPTER LVIII

### AN OLD STORY.

WISE plans are perhaps just as seldom carried out as foolish ones. Cosmo's intent was the next morning frustrated.

He was roused before sunrise by his father's cough. After a bad fit of it, he lay weary and restless. In such case, no unfrequent one, Cosmo could almost invariably put him to sleep by reading to him; he therefore got one of the Border Tales, and began to read. It soon had the desired effect, which however did not last; in a little while he woke, and began to talk about the story. It was of a king's ship so disguising herself that a pirate took her for a merchantman, and was herself taken. Cosmo made some remark about the old captain.

"You needn't believe," said his father, "all they told you about that uncle of ours. He was a rough enough sailor-fellow, no doubt, but I do not believe there was ground sufficient for calling him a pirate. He was nothing worse than a privateer, I fancy; God knows that may have been bad enough! I am nearly sure that for the most part of his sea-life he was owner and captain of an east-Indiaman, trading on his own account."

"You once told me an amusing story about an east-Indiaman and a frigate: was that his ship?"

"No, no; it was a cousin of your mother's was captain of that. I was thinking of the anecdote as you read."

"I should like much to hear it again. I shall ask you to tell it me sometime when you are able."

"You shall read it; I have got it among my Marion's papers. You will find in the bureau in the book-closet, in the pigeon-hole farthest to the left, a packet tied with red tape: bring it me, and I will find it for you."

Cosmo brought the packet. His father with trembling hand pulled out one of the papers and handed it to him, saying—

"It is the writing of a brother of your mother's, and seems to have formed part of a more extended narrative. The captain Macintosh who is the hero of the story, was a cousin of her mother's, and at the time of the event related must have been

somewhat advanced in years, for he had taken again to the sea after losing a fortune in the attempt to establish a brewery on the island of St. Helena."

Cosmo unfolded the manuscript and read as follows.

"'An incident occurring on the voyage to India when my brother went out, exhibits Captain Macintosh's character *very practically*, and not a little to his professional credit. On a fine evening, some days after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, sailing with a light breeze and smooth water, a strange sail of large size, hove in sight, and apparently bearing down direct upon the "*Union*"—Captain Macintosh's ship; evidently a ship of war, but showing *no colours*—a very suspicious fact. All English ships at that time trading to and from India, by admiralty rules, were obliged to carry armament, proportioned to their tonnage, and crew sufficient to man and work the guns carried.—The strange sail was *nearing* them, or "the big stranger," as the seamen immediately named her. My brother, many years afterwards, more than once told me, that the change, or rather the *transformation*, which Captain Macintosh *underwent*, was one of the most remarkable facts he had ever witnessed; more bordering on the *marvellous*, than any thing else. When he had carefully and deliberately viewed "the big stranger"—and deliberately laying down his glass, his eyes seemed to have catched *fire*! and his whole countenance lighted up: a new spirit seemed to possess him—while he preserved the utmost coolness: advancing deliberately to what is called the poop railing—and steadily looking forward,—"Boatswain! Pipe to quarters." Muster-roll called.—"Now, my men, we shall *fight*!" "I *know* you will do it well!—Clear ship for action." I have certainly but my brother's word and judgment upon the fact, who had never been *under fire;* but his opinion was that no British ship of war could have been more *speedily*, or more completely cleared for action, both in rigging, decks, and guns—guns *double shotted* and run out into position. "The big stranger" was now *nearing*,—no ports opened, and no colours shewn—*all*, increased cause of suspicion that there was some ill intent in the wind—and it was very evident, from the *size* of "the big stranger"—nearly *thrice*—the size of the little "Union,"—that, one Broadside from the former, might send the latter at once to the bottom:—the whole crew, my brother related, were in the highest spirits, more as if preparing for a *dance*, than for work of life and death. Suddenly, the captain gives the command,—"Boarders,—Prepare to board!"—"Lower away—boarding Boats"—and no sooner said than done. The stranger was now at musket shot. It was worthy the courage of a *Nelson* or a

*Cochrane*, to think of *boarding* at such odds—a mere handful of men, to a full complement of a heavy Frigate's crew! The idea was altogether in keeping with the best naval tactics and skill. Foreseeing that one broadside from such an enemy would sink him—he must *anticipate* such a crisis. Boarding would at least divert the enemy from their *guns;* and he knew what British seamen could do, in clearing an enemy's decks! *There was* British spirit in those days. Let us hope it shall again appear, should the occasion arise. The captain himself was the first in the foremost Boarding Boat—and the first in the enemy's main chains, and to set his foot on the enemy's main deck! when a most magic-like scene saluted the *Boarders;* but did not *yet* allay suspicion:—not a single enemy on deck!—Here, a characteristic act of a British *tar*—the Union's Boatswain,—must not be omitted—an old man of war's man:—no sooner had his foot touched the *enemy's* deck—than *rushing aft*—(or towards the ship's *stern*)—to the *wheel*,—the *only man on deck* being he at the wheel, —a big, lubberly looking man,—the Union's boatswain in less than a *moment* had his hands to the steersman's throat,—and with one *fell shove*, sent him spinning, heels over head—all the full length of the ship's quarter-deck, to land on the main-deck;—one may suppose rather *astonished!* The manly boatswain himself was the only man *hurt* in the affair—his boarding pistol, by some untoward accident, went off—its double shot running up his forearm, and lodging in the bones of his elbow. Amputation became necessary; and the dear old fellow soon afterwards died.—But what did all this *hullybaloo* come to? Breathe—and we shall hear! "The big stranger" turned out to be a large, heavy armed Portuguese Frigate!—actually the *war-ship solitary* of the Portuguese navy then afloat!—a fine specimen of Portuguese naval discipline, no doubt! not a *watch* even on deck!—They had seen immediately on seeing her, that the "Union" was *English*, and a merchant ship—which a practised seaman's eye can do at once; and they had quietly gone to take their *siesta*, after their country's fashion,—Portugal, at that time, being one of Britain's allies, and not an enemy;—a grievous *disappointment* to the Crew of the "Union."'

"My uncle seems to have got excited over his tale," said Cosmo, "to judge by the number of words he has underlined!"

"He enters into the speerit o' the affair no ill for a minnister!" said the laird with a smile.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

### A SMALL DISCOVERY.

WHEN they had had a little talk over the story, the laird desired Cosmo to lay the bundle of papers again in the bureau. As he approached the closet to do so, the first beams of the rising sun were shining upon the door of it. The window through which they entered was a small one, and the mornings of the year in which they so fell were not many. When he opened the door, they shot straight to the back of the closet, lighting it with rare illumination. Even with the door wide open it was commonly so dusky that in it one book could hardly be distinguished from another. It was as if a sudden angel had entered a dungeon. When the door fell to behind him, as was its custom, the place felt so dark that he seemed to have lost memory as well as sight, and not to know where he was. He propped it open, and proceeded to replace the packet. But the presence there of such a light was so strange, and it was such a thing actually to see what the dingy little closet, to him the treasure-chamber of the house, was like, that he stood for a moment gazing around the light-invaded recess, as if he had suddenly found himself in Aladdin's cave. Old to him beyond all memory, it looked new and wonderful; what had hitherto been scarcely known but to his hands, was now suddenly revealed in radiance to his eyes also. Gazing thus he saw that the bureau did not stand against a rough wall as he had imagined, but a foot or so from what seemed a lining of oak. He leaned over, and tapped it with his knuckles.

"There's a wainscot 'ahin' the desk, father," he said, re-entering the room, "an' it soon's how (*hollow*). I never noticed it afore."

"An inch 'atween timmer an' stane wad gar 't soon' how," answered the laird.

"I wad like to draw the desk oot a bit, an' hae a nearer luik. I canna weel win at it as 't is."

"Du as ye like, laddie. The hoose is mair yours nor mine.—But, noo ye hae putten 't i' my heid, I min' my mother sayin' there was ance a passage 'atween the twa tooers: could it hae been there, no? I aye thoucht it had been 'atween her room an' the drawin'-room. My father had it closed up, she said. That 'atween the kitchen an' the dinin'-room, whaur the rufe's fa'en in, I closed up mysel.' But gien prosperity ever return, it 'll be easy to open an' rufe again."

Cosmo stood gazing towards the closet from the bed-side.

"Surely it gangs far'er back nor the thickness o' the wa'!" he said, and going to the western window looked out of it, then turned again towards the closet.—"I canna think," he resumed, with something like annoyance, "hoo it cud be I never noticed that afore! A body wad suppose I had nae heid for the un'erstan'in' o' hoo things are putten' thegither! The closet rins richt intil what I thoucht was but a great blin' wa' 'atween the twa hooses! I took it for naething but a kin' o' a curtain-wa'!"

So saying he re-entered the closet, and proceeded to move the bureau—not an easy task, for it was large, and nearly filled the breadth of the closet. The sun had left the window before he got behind it.

"I wad sair like to brak throuw the buirds, father," he said, going again to the laird.

"Onything ye like, I tell ye, laddie! I'm growin' curious mysel', forby," he answered.

"I'm feart I mak ower muckle din for ye, father."

"Nae fear; nae fear! I haena a sair heid; the Lord be praist, that 's a thing I'm seldom triblet wi'. Gang an' get yer tules, an' gang at it, an' dinna spare. Ye'll mar nae mair nor ye'll sune men.'"

Cosmo fetched his tool-basket, and set to work. The partition was strong and sound, but with a centre-bit and a saw he soon made an opening large enough to creep through. As he worked, a cold air from within seemed to warn him off. There was no wall behind. When he entered, it felt like a cellar.

Groping with his hands he found it was no closet, but apparently a deserted passage. His feet told him the floor was of slate, and his hands that the walls were of rough stones, damp and cold. A little way on it took a sharp turn, then another, and then his hands came upon wood, and he felt the panels of a door. Feeling along its frame he found a lock, but the handle was gone. Too eager for delay or caution, he went back a little and threw himself against the door. Lock and hinges yielded, the lock first, and it went sideways out before him. He followed staggering, came against something, and was brought up by falling half across a bed. He was in the guest-chamber, the gruesome centre of legend, the home of ghostly awe! Not yet had its shadows forsaken it, for his every nerve thrilled. From his father's room to this, was an immediate transition from the homely to the eerie, from the place of familiar use and daily custom to a hollow in the far-away past, an ancient cave of time, full of withering history. Its windows were all to the north; it was lustreless, dank, and musty.

For a moment he stood motionless, gazing about him. Wide awake, he had tumbled into a dream! He turned to see how he had got into it: there lay the door; there lay too the old screen; and there was the open passage! He lifted the door: the other side of it was covered with stamped leather like the wall, from which it had torn a great piece as it fell. He went back through passage and partition, rejoined his father, and in eager excitement told him what he had discovered.

"I h'ard the racket the door made," rejoined his father. "—I wadna won'er noo," he added, "gien we fan' a w'y throuw to the third tooer!"

"Eh, father!" said Cosmo with a sigh, "what a comfort this door wad hae been! an' jist as we're like to lea' the hoose for ever, we come upo' 't!"

"But hoo weel we hae gotten on wantin' 't!" returned his father.

"What *could* hae made my gran'father close 't up?"

"Some fule ghost-story, I believe—aiblins the same Grannie tellt ye."

"I won'er my gran'mother never spak o' 't!"

"Maybe she was shy o' ony reference til 't."

"I daursay she believt it!"

"Weel, I daursay! I wadna won'er!"

"What for did ye ca' 't fule, father?"

"For thouchtlessness, I doobt. But wadna it be some fule to think to kep (*intercept*) a ghost by paperin', or leatherin', ower a door? Gien there be ony trowth i' sic tales, the ghaist gangs throuw a stane wa' jist as easy's the air. But surely o' a' fules a ghaist 'at hings aboot a place maun be the warst!"

"Maybe it's to haud awa' frae a waur. An' wadna it be a queer thing gien a ghaist 'at had been a fule a' his life was to turn a wise man the minute he dee'd! An' forby that, michtna it be a pairt o' his punishment to hae to see hoo things gaed on efter he was awa'? What cud be sairer, for instance, upon a miser, nor to see his heir gang scatterin' what he gaed to the deevil getherin'?"

"'Deed ye 're richt eneuch there, my son!" answered the old man. "—An' troth, it's aye siller—or banes—'at fesses them back! I can weel un'erstan' their reluctance to tak a last leave o' the siller they ca'd their ain; but for the banes—eh, but I'll be pleased to be rid o' mine! *I* s' no come back to see what 's come o' mine!"

"But whaur banes are concernt, there's aye been fause play," suggested Cosmo.

"Think ye it's the hunger for revenge 'at winna lat them gang?"

"Maybe: maist o' the ghost-stories o' that kin' bring the murderer an' justice acquant. But the human bein' wad seem in a' ages to hae had a great dislike to the thocht o' his banes lyin' aboot. I hae h'ard my gran'mother say the warst servan'-lass was aye cleanly twa days o' her time—the day she cam an' the day she gaed."

"Ye hae thoucht mair aboot it nor me, laddie! But that wadna haud wi' the Parsees, I doubt, wha lay their deid to be devoored by the birds o' the air."

"They swipe up their banes at the last, hooever. An' though the livin' expose the deid, the deid mayna like it."

"I daursay. An' I grant it's weel to lea' as little dirt as possible 'ahin' ye, an' tak nane wi' ye. For my ain pairt I wad fain gang clean an' lea' clean!"

"Gien onybody gang clean an' lea' clean, father, ye wull."

"I luik to the Lord, my son.—But," he resumed after a pause, "gien he hae't in his min' to haud 's i' this place, yon passage 'ill be a great convainience."

"Ye dinna think it wad be worth while openin' 't up direc'ly?"

"I wad bide for the warmer weather. I think the room 's jist some caller the noo by rizzon o' 't."

"I'll close 't up at ance," said Cosmo.

In a few minutes he had screwed a box-lid over the hole in the partition.

"An' noo," he said, "I'll gang an' set up the door o' the ither side."

Before he went however, he told his father what he had been thinking of doing, and said, if he approved of it, and were well enough to be left, he should like to go the next day.

"It 's no an ill idea," said the laird. "We'll see whan the morn comes. There's a nicht 'atween; an' wha kens what may come ony nicht!"

When Cosmo entered the guest-chamber from the other side, he stood and stared as of old: the gaping door where had seemed solid wall but added to the ancient terror of the place. But he gathered himself, and proceeded to examine the hinges. They were broken, the half of each remained fast to the door-post, the other half to the door. For the present he must be content to prop it up. Having done so, he threw one of the windows wide open, and left it open, for the room was much in want of fresh air.

His father continuing better through the day, he went to bed early, in the hope of starting at sunrise.

## CHAPTER LX.

### A GREATER DISCOVERY.

In the middle of the night he was awakened by a loud noise. He had been too sound asleep to know what it was like; he only knew it had waked him. He sprang out of bed, found to his relief his father undisturbed, and stood for a moment wondering. All at once it came into his thought that he had left the window of the guest-room open; the wind had risen, and was now almost a gale; something must have been blown down! Taking his candle, he groped his way down the stair, out through the kitchen, and along to the great door.

As he neared the top of the second stair and approached the room, the old faint horror suddenly seized him, the same as ever. He stood still. Must he not be dreaming? Could he be there actually—in the middle of the night? With an effort he dismissed the folly and entered the room, if not with indifference yet with composure. There was just light enough to see the curtains of the terrible bed waving wide in the torrent of wind that followed the opening of the door. He shut the window, lighted his candle, and then saw that the door of the new-found passage was again flat on the floor, with the screen he had placed against it. But he was puzzled to think how the wind could have got a hold of it. He placed the candle beside it, and proceeded once more to raise it. But casting his eyes up as he did so, he saw something which made him lay it down again.

The candle on the floor shone half-way into the passage, lighting a portion of the wall on the left, just within the doorway, and showing the rough gray stones of it. Something about these stones had drawn his attention. He took the candle, examined them, turned away, left the room, and went up to the one over it. There he took from his secretary the unintelligible drawing, and with beating heart unfolded it. Certainly its lines did more or less correspond with the shapes of those stones!—but he must bring them face to face!

Down the stair he went again, every remnant of childish terror gone. He went to the passage, and stood there, the candle in one hand, the paper in the other, his eyes going and coming steadily between the paper and the wall. The lines on the paper, and the joints of the stones over a space of about two yards square, corresponded.

But in comparing the two, another thing had caught his eye: on one of the stones, remarkable neither by position, for it was towards one side of the figure, nor by shape, for it was trapezoidal, he spied what seemed a rude drawing; but as it was higher than his head, and the candle cast up shadows from the irregular surfaces of the stones, he could not with certainty distinguish it. He got a chair, therefore, and standing upon it, saw plainly enough, scratched upon the stone, which was of rough slate, a horse such as a child might have drawn. Beneath it, easily legible to one who knew them so well, were the lines, written apparently with an iron point,

> catch your Nag, and pull his Tail
> in his hind Hele ca a Nail
> rug his Lugs from one another
> stand up and call the King your Brother

How were these directions to be followed with such a horse as the one on the flat before him? That would be scanned! The solution lay probably inside the wall! He would set the door up again, and go back to bed.

For he was alarmed at the turmoil these signs caused in him. He dreaded *possession* by any spirit but the one. Whatever he did he must do calmly. To bed he went, and having prayed God to watch him, lest in the giddiness of hope some earthy fume should rise between him and the light eternal, gave himself up to sleep. For the man in whom any hope dims the heavenly presence and weakens his mastery of himself, is on the bypath across the meadow to the castle of Giant Despair.

But in the morning he rose early, and went to look at the stone. It was so close jointed with its neighbours that not one of his tools could get in between. He got an old breakfast-knife from Grizzie; but the mortar was so hard he could not with that make any impression upon it. He must find something fitter! The job was likely to be a difficult one!

He took his porridge to his father's bedside, and as they were eating their breakfast together, described to him the discovery he had made. The laird listened with the light of a smile rather than the smile itself, and when he had ended made him no answer: Cosmo saw by the scarce perceptible motion of his lips that he was praying.

"I wuss I cud help ye, laddie," he said at length.

"There isna room for mair nor ane at a time, father," answered Cosmo. "Ye can be Moses prayin', an' I'll be Joshua fechtin'."

"Prayin' again' waur enemies nor ever Joshua warstled wi',"

returned his father; "for even in this my auld age, the mere thoucht o' the aff-liftin' o' the gravestane o' my debt fleys (*frightens*) me. I wadna hae my sowl tum'led aboot like a bledder, an' its auld wings tak to lang, flaggin', wallopin' strokes i' the ower thin aether o' joy. I thank my God for the weichts he has laid upo' me up to the noo. May he protec' 's baith frae his ain gifts! Wi'oot him they're ten times waur nor ony wiles o' the deevil's ain. But I'll pray, Cosmo; I'll pray."

The real might of temptation is in the lower and seemingly nearer loveliness as against the higher and seemingly farther.

Cosmo betook himself to the yard, and having on the grindstone fashioned a screw-driver to his purpose, went back to his work, and got on better. The stone was both well fitted and well fixed, but after about three hours' work his tool went suddenly through, and it was then easy to knock away from the edges gained. As soon as he had cleared one side of the stone he made an attempt tc prize it out, but he had to clear another side first. It then yielded so far that he got a hold with his fingers, and soon had it out. It disclosed a cavity in the wall, but there was not light enough to see into it, and he went to get a candle.

Now Grizzie had a curious dislike to any admission of the poverty of the house even to those most familiar with it, and having but one exiguous candle-end left, was as unwilling to confess it her last as to yield it.

"Them 'at burns daylicht, sune they'll hae nae licht!" she said. "What wad ye want wi' a can'le? I'll haud a fir-can'le to ye, gien ye like."

"Grizzie," repeated Cosmo, a little impatient, "I want a can'le."

She went grumbling, and brought him her one miserable end.

"Hoot, Grizzie!" he expostulated, "dinna be sae near. Ye wadna gien ye kenned what I was aboot."

"Eh! what are ye aboot, sir?"

"I'm no gaein' to tell ye yet. *Ye* maun hae patience, an' *I* maun hae a can'le."

"Ye maun tak what ye can get."

"Grizzie, I'm in earnest."

"'Deed an' in trowth sae am I! Ye s' hae nae mair nor that —no gien it was to scrape the girnel—an' that 's dune a'ready."

"Grizzie, I'm feart ye'll anger me."

"Ye s' get nae mair!"

Cosmo burst out laughing.

"Grizzie, I dinna believe ye hae an inch mair can'le i' the hoose!"

"It needs na a Warlock to tell me that! Gien I had it, what for sudna ye hae 't 'at has the best richt?"

Cosmo took his candle, and was as chary over it as Grizzie herself could have been.

## CHAPTER LXI.

### A GREAT DISCOVERY.

THE instant the rays of the candle-end were thrown into the cavity, he saw what made him, expectant as he was, utter a cry. Through the hole he had made he looked into a miniature stable. Before him was a stall, and a horse standing in it with its tail towards him. He put in his hand and felt it over. It had a skin with hair, dry and comfortable. He would fain have got it out at once, but, alas, there was not room! Three or four stones more must be removed ere it could pass from the cavern where, like the horses of Charlemagne, it had been waiting its hour so many years.

He blew out his precious candle-end, and again set to work—with a will and what light the day afforded. Nor was the task much easier for the removal of the slab: each of the stones was more or less imbedded in the solid bulk of the wall.

When their poor dinner-time came, he was tired as well as hungry. He locked the door of the room, and having just told his father what he had found, left him and made haste over his meal, for night was coming, and no candle. Back to his labour he went; and struck and heaved "till the toil-drops fell from his brows like rain." At last he laid hold of the horse by its hind legs, and would have drawn it from the stall. A little way it came, and would come no further. He had to light the candle. Peeping then into the stall he spied a chain attached halter-wise to its head and stretched tight. He dared not use force to break it, and clearly it had been fastened before the stall was completed. Especially now he needed light, but he could only afford to let his candle burn for an instant's inspection at a time. He proceeded nevertheless, induced by the appearance of one of the two stones forming the sides of the stall, to attempt its removal in the dark, feeling for the spot where he must set the one end of his chisel before he struck the other with his hammer. For a long time he seemed to make no progress, but the stone at last yielded a hair's-breadth, and the minute after, he had it out. Then for the last time he lighted his candle: there was just enough of it to show him

how the chain was fastened. With a pair of pincers he detached it, and lifted out the horse.

He must carry it straight to his father, but first, unwilling to take it through the kitchen, he went to his room without it, and reopening the hole in the closet, passed through, and returning with the horse in his arms, placed it on a chair beside him, where he was seated by the fire. The laird looked it all over ere he said a word, and Cosmo thought he delayed from a desire to still his son's impatience. But at length he spoke.

"I' the name o' God, the gi'er o' ilka guid an' perfec' gift, see, Cosmo," he said, "gien ye can win at the entrails o' the animal. It canna be fu' o' men like the Trojan horse, or they maun be enchantit sma', like the deevils in Paradise Lost whan they war ower mony for the cooncil-ha' o' Pandemonium; but it may weel be 'at what 's intil 't may cairry a heap waur danger to you an' me nor ony nummer o' airmit men or hornit deevils!"

"We'll sune see!" answered Cosmo, taking the horse on his knees. "Ye min' the rime, father?"

"No sae weel 's the twenty-third psalm," returned the laird with a smile.

"The first line o' 't rins, 'Catch yer naig, an' pu' his tail.' Wi' muckle diffeeclety, we hae catcht oor naig, an' noo for the tail 'o 'im!—There! that's dune!—though there's little to shaw for 't. The neist line is—'In his hin' heel caw a nail:' we s' turn up his fower feet thegither, 'cause they're co-inoperant!—An' noo lat 's mak the discovery o' the proper spot for the cawin' o' the said nail."

Cosmo had now the horse lying on its back upon his knees. Its shoes were large, and the hole where a nail was missing had not long to be sought. He took a fine bradawl, and pushed it gently into the hoof. A loud whirring noise followed, but without visible result.

"The next line," said Cosmo, "is—'Rug his lugs frae ane anither.'—Noo, father, God be wi' 's! an' gien it please him we be disapp'intit, may we hae grace to beir 't as he wad hae 's beir 't."

"I pray the same," said the laird.

Cosmo set the horse upright again, and pulled its two ears in opposite directions. A line began to appear down the hairy back, which opened slowly and reluctantly, as if during the long years the sides of the cleft had been growing together. Scarcely had it opened half an inch when he sprang from his seat. The laird looked after him with a gentle surprise. But he had not jumped up either to rush from the room, or to execute a frantic dance with the horse for a partner.

The largest window of the room looked westward into the court, and at this season of the year the descending sun looked straight in at that window. He was looking in now, and made a glowing pool of light in the middle of the floor. Beside this pool Cosmo dropped with the horse in his arms like a child with his toy, and pulled lustily at its ears. Into the pool began to tumble a small cataract of shredded rainbows, flashing all the colours visible to human eye—and more. As he slowly turned the horse upside down, the flow increased, then gradually diminished, and presently ceased in a few stray drops. He shook the horse, put in his hand and searched it, threw one or two drops more after the rest, then flung it aside.

The stream that flowed from it had not spread and sunk and vanished. Based and heaped it lay where it fell, a silent, motionless tempest of conflicting yet utterly harmonious hues, with a foamy spray of spiky flashes, and spots that ate into the eyes with their fierce colour. In every direction shot from it blinding rays. It was a cairn of diamonds, of all the shapes into which diamonds are fashioned. Ah, the splendrous show of deep-hued burning, flashing, stinging light! the heaviest of its colours borne light as those of a foam-bubble on the strength of its triumphing radiance. There pulsed the mystical glowing red—heart and lord of colour; there the jubilant yellow—light crowned to ethereal gold; there the wide-eyed, spirit blue—the truth unfathomable; there the green that haunts the brain—storeland of Nature's boundless secrets!—all together striving yet atoning, fighting and fleeing and following, parting and blending, an illimitable play of infinite force and endlessly delicate gradation. All the gems were there—sapphires, emeralds, and rubies; but they were scarce to be noted in the glorious mass of ever new-born, ever dying colour that gushed from the fountains of the light-dividing diamonds.

Cosmo rose, and returning to his father, sat down beside him. For a few moments they regarded in silence the stony mound, smoking, like an altar of sacrifice, with light and colour. The eyes of the old man as he gazed seemed at once to sparkle with pleasure and quail with some shadowy fear. Without turning his face he said at last,

"Cosmo, are they what they luik?"

"What luik they, father?" asked Cosmo.

"Bonny bits o' glaiss they luik," answered the old man. "But," he went on, "I canna but believe them something better—they come til 's in sic a time o' need. But be they this or be they that, the Lord's wull be dune—noo an' for ever mair—be it, I say, what it like!"

"I wuss it, father!" responded Cosmo. "But I ken something aboot sic-like things, bein' sae muckle in Mr. Burns's shop, an' haudin' a heap o' conference wi' 'im; an' I tell ye, sir, they're di'mon's an' feow ither. But the nummer o' thoosan' poun' they maun be worth gien they be worth a saxpence, I daurna guiss!"

"They 'll be eneuch to pey oor debts, ye think, Cosmo?"

"Ay, mony a hun'er times ower. They're maistly a guid size, an' no a feow o' them lairge."

"Cosmo, we're ower lang ohn thankit! Come, my son; gang doon upo' yer knees, an' lat's tell the Lord what he kens a'ready."

Cosmo obeyed, and knelt at his father's knee. His father laid his hand on his head, that so they might the better pray in one, and said,

"Lord, although there's naething a man can tak intil his han' can ever be his ain, no bein' o' his natur made i' thy image, yet, O Lord, the thing 'at's thine, made by thee efter thy holy wull an' pleesur, man may touch an' no be defiled. Yea, he may tak pleesur i' the same, an' it no hurt 'im, sae lang as he han'les 't whaur it lies, i' the how o' thy han', no grippin' at it, no ca'in' 't his ain, an' like a rouch bairn seekin' to snap it awa' to hae his fule wull o' 't. They're bonny stanes, O Lord, an' fu' o' licht: forbid at their beaouty an' licht sud breed oogliness an' darkness i' the hert o' Cosmo an' me. O God, raither nor it sud raise in us ae thoucht or ae feelin' thoo wadna wullin'ly see, we pray thee tak again the gift. An' gien i' thy mercy, for it's a' mercy wi' thee, it turn oot efter a' 'at they're no stanes o' thy makin', but the produc' o' airt an' man's device, we 'll lay them a' thegither, an' haud them safe, an' luik upo' them frae time to time as a token o' what thoo wadst glaidly hae dune for 's gien we had been to be trustit wi' sae muckle for the safity an' clean-throuwness o' oor sowls;—ay, an' a better token o' what ae day thoo wilt du for us, whan we're ayont drawin' ill oot o' thy guid—whan for braiss thoo wilt bring gowd, an' for iron silver. O my God, latna the sunshiny Mammon creep intil my Cosmo's hert an' mak a' mirk; latna the licht that is in him turn to darkness. God hae mercy on his bairns, an' no lat the playocks tak their e'en frae the han' 'at gies them! May the licht noo streamin' frae the hert o' thae bonny stanes be the bodily presence o' thy speerit, as ance was the doo descendin' upo' the maister, an' the buss 'at burned wi' fire an' wasna conshumet. Thoo art the father o' lichts, an' a' licht is thine: gar oor herts burn like thae stanes—a' licht an' nae reek! An' gien ony o' them in auld time cam in by a wrang door, grant ilk ane to gang oot by a richt ane. Thy wull be dune, which is the purifyin' fire o' a' thing, an' a' sowl! Amen."

He ceased and was silent, praying still. Nor did Cosmo yet rise from his knees. The new room about his heart was filled with fear, lest, no longer spurred by equal sense of need, he should lose his hold on the garment of the guiding God. Alas! how is it with our hearts? In trouble they cry and in joy forget! think it hard that God should let them cry so long, and when he has answered abundantly, turn away as if they needed him no more!

Cosmo rose at length from his knees, and looked his father in the face with wet eyes.

"Oh, father!" he said, "the fear an' oppression of ages are gane like a clood swallowed up o' space. Father, fain wad I believe a' human ills doomed to vainish at last i' the licht eternal o' the love-burnin' God!"

"He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," rejoined the laird; and a pause followed.

"An' noo, father, what 's neist to be dune?" resumed Cosmo, turning his eyes again to the heap of jewels.

The sunrays had left them, and they lay cold and almost colourless, but icy-bright. It was not dark enough yet for some of them to shine with the light they had just gathered after long-during dark.

"It pleases me, father," Cosmo went on, "to see nane o' them set. It pruves naething, but maks 't a wheen mair likly he got them first han'. Eh, the queer things! sae hard, an' yet 'maist bodiless! naething but skinfu's o' licht! blobs o' glory!"

"Hooever they war gotten," rejoined the laird, "the only w'y o' cleansin' them, sae be they want cleansin', is to put them to their holiest use."

"An' what ca' ye that, father?"

"Whatever enables a man to be a neebour; whatever ten's o' twa to mak ane. A true life 's the sairest bash to Sawtan. To gie yer siller to ither fowk to spread is to jink the wark laid oot for yersel'.—But we maunna ley them lyin' there. The rottans micht come an' cairry aff some o' them; they're thievin' craturs. Ye maun berry yer deid again—for deid they are as yet. They maun lie i' the mirk, like human sowls no yet perswaudit to the deeds o' licht."

"It think, wi' yer leave, sir," said Cosmo, "I'll set oot the morn, an' gang straucht to Mr. Burns—but eh, sic a different eeran' as I'll hae! He maun put 's i' the w'y o' turnin' the bonny things til accoont. They cannot lie to be luikit at!"

"Better ye canno du, my son," answered the laird.

Cosmo gathered the gems again into the horse, lifting them in double handfuls. But peeping first into the hollow of the animal

to make sure he had found all its content, he caught sight of a bit of paper stuck in a corner. It was a five-hundred-pound-note. It would have been riches an hour ago—now it was only a convenience—and not much of that.

"It 's queer to think," said Cosmo, "'at wi' a' this siller, I maun tramp it to the morn like ony caird! There's nane i' Muir o' Warlock to change 't—an' wad I gang til 'im gien there was ony?"

His father rejoined with the words of St. Paul:

"'Noo I say, 'at the heir, sae lang 's he 's but a bairn, differeth naething frae a servan', though he be lord o' a'.'—Eh, Cosmo," he added, "but the word admits o' mony an illustration!"

Having given the horse his supper of diamonds, Cosmo set him again in his old stall, and loosely replaced the stones that had shut him in. After that he wedged up the door between posts and lintel, and as there was no flour in the house with which to make paste, glued the leather torn from it again to the wall. Then he sought the kitchen and Grizzie.

## CHAPTER LXII.

### MR. BURNS.

"GRIZZIE," he said "I'm gaein' a lang tramp the morn, an' maun hae a poochfu' o' breid."

"Eh sirs! An' what's takin' ye frae hame in sic haste, sir?" returned Grizzie.

"I'm no gaein' to tell ye the nicht, Grizzie. It's my turn to hae a secret noo! But ye ken weel it's lang sin' there was ony thing to be gotten by bidin' at hame."

"Eh, but, sir! ye're never gaein' to lea' the laird! Bide an dee wi' him, sir," implored Grizzie.

"God bless ye, Grizzie!—Hae ye ony baubees?" was all Cosmo's answer.

"Ay; what for no!—sax shillin's, fower pennies, an' a baubee fardin'!"

She did not tell him that it was the remnant of a sum borrowed from a sister in service like herself. And it was out of her own wages she repaid it. As the laird had called her so would she be—one of the family!

"Weel, ye maun jist len' me half a croon o' 't," said Cosmo.

"Half a croon!" echoed Grizzie, staggered at the hugeness of the demand. "Haith, sir, ye're no blate (*bashful*)!"

"I dinna think it's ower muckle," said Cosmo, "seein' I hae to tramp thirty mile the morn. But bake ye plenty o' breid, an' that'll haud doon the expense. Only, gien a body can help it, he sudna be wantin' a baubee in 's pooch. Gien ye hae nane to gie me, I maun set oot bare. Jist as ye like, Grizzie!—I cud beg fine, noo ye hae shawn the gait," he added, taking the old woman by the arm with a laugh, "but whan ye ken ye sudna speir, an' whan ye hae, ye maunna beg."

"Weel, I'll gie ye auchteen pence," she returned, pulling away her arm crossly, "an' considerin' a' 'at's to be dune wi' a' 'at's left, ye'll grant it's no a sma' portion ye tak wi' ye."

"Weel, weel, Grizzie! I'm thinkin' I'll hae to be content."

"'Deed, an' ye wull, sir! Ye s' get nae mair."

That night the old laird slept a long and sound sleep. Cosmo was continually blown back from the very brink of unconsciousness by ever a fresh gust of gladness. The morning came golden and brave, and his father was wondrous well. He set out, and, in the strength of his joy and the oat-cakes with which his pockets were filled, went all the way without changing even the sixpence of Grizzie's eighteen pence. Two days ago, he would consult his friend how to avoid the deepest mire of poverty; now he must learn from him how to make the most of great riches!

He did not tell Mr. Burns, however, what his object was when he begged him, for the sake of friendship and old times, to go with him for a day or two to Castle Warlock.

"But," objected the jeweller, "that would be to take the play in school-hours! We're to be diligent in business, you know."

"I want you for business," replied Cosmo.

"Then what's to be done with the shop? I have no one I can trust it with."

"Shut it up, and give them a holiday. You can put up a notice of when you will be back."

"The most unbusiness-like proposal I ever heard of! The thing is impossible."

"Why, sir, your business is not like a doctor's, or even a baker's. People can live without diamonds."

"Don't speak disrespectfully of diamonds, Mr. Warlock. If you knew them as I do, you would know they had a thing or two to say for themselves."

"Speak of them disrespectfully you never heard me, Mr. Burns."

"Like all things else, they give a man according to what he has," pursued the jeweller. "The fine lady may see in her diamonds victory over a rival; the philosopher may read in them

law inexorable; the poet—I have read my Spenser, Mr. Warlock—sees in the diamond the only substance fit to make the shield of faith out of. Like the gospel itself, diamonds are a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death, according to the eyes that look upon them."

"That is true. Every gift of God is good, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.—But will you come?"

After a long refusal Mr. Burns did at length actually consent to close his shop for three days, and go with Cosmo.

"It will not be a bad preparation," he said, as if to justify himself in his own eyes, "for retiring altogether—which I might have done long ago," he added, "but for you, sir!"

In the mean time things went well at Castle Warlock—with, shall I say?—one exception: Grizzie had a severe fit of repentance, mourning bitterly that she had sent away the youth she worshipped with but eighteen pence in his pocket.

"He'll come to grief for the want o' jist ae shillin' mair!" she said over and over to herself; "an' it'll be a' an' only my wite! What gien we never see 'im again! Eh, sirs! it's a terrible thing to be contrived sae contrairy! What 's to come o' me i' the neist warl', it 's hard to say!"

On the second evening, however, as she was *washing up* in the gloomiest frame, in walked Cosmo with a strange gentleman.

"Hoo's my father, Grizzie?" asked Cosmo.

"Won'erfu' weel, sir. An' walcome hame!" answered Grizzie.

"This is Grizzie, Mr. Burns, of whom I have told you—that takes care of us all!"

"How do you do, Grizzie?" said Mr. Burns, and shook hands with her. "I am glad to make your acquaintance."

"Here, Grizzie!" said Cosmo, having drawn her aside to the corner where stood the meal-chest, "here's the auchteen pence ye alloot me for expenses. An' luik here!—Tell naebody."

He showed her a bunch of bank-notes. All she had ever seen in her life would not have made so many! He gave her ten pounds.

"Mr. Burns," he said, "will be staying with us over to-morrow."

Grizzie *glowered* at the money as if it could not possibly be *canny;* but the next minute, like one suddenly raised to power, began to order Aggie about, an imperious mistress. Within ten minutes she had her bonnet on, and was setting out for Muir o' Warlock.

But oh the pride and victory that rose and towered in her, and

sank weary only to rise and tower again, as she walked to the village with that money in her pocket! The dignity of the house of Warlock had rushed aloft like a sudden tidal wave, and on its crest was Grizzie borne triumphing heavenwards. From one who begged at strange doors for the daily bread of a decayed family, in an instant she was the housekeeper of the most ancient and honourable castle in all Scotland, steering the great ship of its fortunes! With a reserve as impressive as provoking to the gossips of the village, from one shop to another she went, buying carefully but freely, and rousing endless curiosity by her evident consciousness of infinite resource. When last of all she went to the Warlock Arms, and bought half a dozen of port at six shillings a bottle, and half a dozen of sherry at four, not a doubt remained in the Muir that "the auld laird" had somehow come in for a great fortune, and there was no small rejoicing of honest hearts in consequence. She returned laden, and driving before her two boys with a large basket between them.

Cosmo and Mr. Burns found the laird seated as usual when able to be out of bed, by the fire in his room. There first, in his presence, Cosmo recounted to their guest the story of the finding of the gems. He began far back with the tales concerning the old captain as they had come to his knowledge; just touched on the finding of the bamboo and its contents; and then described minutely the process of his last discovery, but without giving the jeweller a hint of what was at hand. In relating the nearer events he led him from very scene to scene, re-enacting his part, and forestalling nothing. Not once did he mention stone or gem, but, opening the horse, poured out the diamonds on the rug in the firelight.

## CHAPTER LXIII.

### TOO SURE, TOO LATE.

About noon of the same day on which Cosmo started for the great town, lord Lick-my-loof sent to the castle the message that he wanted to see young Mr. Warlock. The laird returned answer that Cosmo was from home, and would not be back till the day following.

In the afternoon came his lordship, desiring an interview with the laird; which, not a little against his liking, the laird granted.

"Sit ye doon, my lord," said Grizzie, returning with his con-

sent, "an' rist yer shins. The ro'd atween this an' the ludge maun be slithery."

His lordship took the chair she offered. He would rather propitiate than annoy her, for he was at last more afraid of Grizzie than aught in creation except dogs. And Grizzie, appreciating his behaviour, had compassion and spared him.

"His lairdship," she said, "maunna be hurried puttin' on his dressin'-goon. He's no used to see onybody sae ear'. I s' come an' lat ye ken whan he's ready for yer lordship."

Relieved by her departure, lord Lumbiggin began to look about the place, and then first spying Agnes, asked how her grandfather was. She replied he was but poorly.

"Getting old!"

"Surely, my lord. He's makin' ready to gang."

"Poor old man!"

"What wad yer lordship, hae? Ye wadna live on i' this warl' for ever an' a day?"

"'Deed and I would—so long at least as pretty girls like you were in it."

"Suppose the lasses had their ch'ice tu, my lord—to gang or bide as they likit?"

"Well? Which would they do?"

"Gang, I'm thinkin'—sae lang as auld men like yer lordship war intil 't."

"Ha! ha! Sharp!—What makes you so spiteful, Aggie?"

"My lord," said Agnes, "ye ken the story o' the guid Samerritan?"

"I read my bible, I hope."

"Weel, I'll tell ye a bit 'at 's no i' your bible. The Levite an' the Pharisee—naebody ever said yer lordship was like aither ane o' them——"

"No, thank God! nobody could say that."

"—they gaed by o' the ither side, an' loot 'im lie. But there was ane came ower the lan', an' tuik him by the legs, an' wad hae trailt 'im intil the middle o' the ro'd, only, jist i' the nick o' time, up cam the guid Samerritan, an' set him rinnin'; sae 'at he didna muckle ill to onybody but himsel,' wha cudna weel gang straucht to paradise: Ahbraham wad hae a fine time o' 't wi' sic a bairn in 's boasom!"

"Damn the women! Young and old they're too many for me!" said his lordship.

The same moment Grizzie returned, and invited him to walk up to the laird's room. There at once he communicated the object of his visit.

"I told your son, Glenwarlock, when he came to me the other morning, that I would not buy."

"Yes, my lord."

"I have changed my mind, and am come to renew my offer."

"In the meantime we have changed our minds, my lord, and do not want to sell."

"That's very foolish of you."

"It may seem so, my lord; but you must permit us to do our best with what modicum of judgment we have."

"What can have made you come to such a fatal resolution? I am convinced you will not get such a price from another, be he who he may."

"I do not doubt you are right, my lord, but I repeat we do not want to sell."

"Nobody will make you an equal offer."

"It cannot be worth more, I grant, to anyone else, your lordship's property shutting it in on every side; but to your lordship——"

"That is my affair; what it is worth to you is the question."

"It is worth more to us than you can calculate."

"I daresay, in a market where sentiments send the prices up! But that is not your market now. Take my advice and a good offer. You can't go on like this, you know. Why, what are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking, my lord, of the fact that you have scarcely been such a neighbour as to make it prudent to confide our plans to you. I have said we will not sell—and as I am something of an invalid,——"

Lord Lick-my-loof rose, feeling fooled—annoyed with himself, and hating everybody in "the cursed place."

"Good morning, Glenwarlock!" he said. "You will live to repent this morning!"

"I hope not, my lord; I have lived nearly long enough. Good morning."

His lordship went softly down the stair, hurried through the kitchen, and walked slowly home, thinking whether it might not be worth his while to buy up Glenwarlock's few remaining debts.

## CHAPTER LXIV.

### A LIFE WELL ROUNDED.

"PIRATE or not, the old gentleman was a good judge of diamonds!" said Mr. Burns, laying down one of the largest. "Not an inferior stone in all I have gone over! Your uncle was a knowing man, sir: diamonds are worth much more now than when he brought these home. The rough ones will, I trust, also turn out well; we cannot be so sure of them; but they are not many."

"How much suffering they might have forestalled!" said the laird; "and how much more welcome they are that we have had that good first!"

"Sapphires!—and all of the finest quality!" remarked Mr. Burns, in no mood for reflection. "Mr. Cosmo, you must get a few sheets of paper, and wrap up every stone separately—a long job, but the better worth doing! Why, there must be a couple of thousands of them!"

"Why should they be wrapt up?" asked Cosmo.

"To keep them from being hurt, of course."

"How can they hurt, being the hardest things in the world?"

"Put them in any company you please but each others'—wheel them to the equator in a barrowful of gravel, or expose them to an eternal sand-storm, and you may leave them naked as they were born. But bless thy five wits! did you never hear the proverb, 'Diamond cut diamond'? I'd as soon shut up two thousand game-cocks in the same cellar! I don't say they'll scratch each other, but they may, and they could, and they would—in a word, they *might* scratch each other. It was very well so long as they lay dark and still in the wall of this your old diamond-mine, but now you'll be constantly playing with them! Wrap each one up by itself, I say."

"We are so far from likely to keep fingering them, Mr. Burns," said Cosmo, "that our chief reason for wishing you to look at them was the hope that you would oblige us by taking them away, and disposing of them for us!"

"A-a-ah!" rejoined Mr. Burns, "I fear I am getting too old for such a transaction. I should have to go to Amsterdam—to London—to Paris—who knows where?—perhaps to America! And you know I was thinking of retiring!"

"Let this be your last piece of business to finish up with. You can make it a good thing for us all."

"If I undertake it, it must be at a fixed percentage. There will be no risk, but a good deal of labour. I wish you would come with me. I should be able to show you some things you would not otherwise likely see."

"I should enjoy it greatly, but I could not leave my father."

As he went home again, Mr. Burns was a little nervous about the safety of his portmanteau, and would not go inside the coach although it rained, but kept in sight of his luggage.

I will not mention how much the diamonds brought. I would not have my book bristle with pounds as a French novel bristles with francs. It is enough to say that they more than answered even Mr. Burns's expectations.

When all his hope for this world was gone, absorbed in assured solvency, the oil in the lamp of the laird's life began to fail. Cosmo was yet on his way with Mr. Burns and his portmanteau to meet the coach, when his father said to his old friend—than whom none was ever more faithful,

"I'm tired, Grizzie; I'll gang to my bed, I think. Gie me a han'; I winna bide for Cosmo."

"Eh, sir! what for be in sic a hurry to sleep awa' bonny daylicht?" remonstrated Grizzie, shot through with sudden fear, nor daring to allow herself her alarm. "Hae patience till the yoong laird come back; he winna be lang."

"Gien ye haena time to help me, Grizzie, I can manage my lane. Gang yer wa's, lass. Ye hae been a richt guid freen' to yer auld mistress, for ye hae dune yer best, an' a richt guid best, for him 'at she left to yer care!"

"Eh, sir, dinna speyk like that!" expostulated Grizzie. "It's terrible to hear tel ye—fleein' i' the verra face o' the providence 'at 's been at sic pains to mak up to ye for a' 'at's come an' gane! Wad ye noo, whan a' 's weel, an' like to be weel, turn roon' upo' 'im like this, an' spek o' gaein' to yer bed! It's no worthy o' ye, laird!

He was so diverted with her rebuke that he burst out laughing, brightened up, and did not go to bed even after Cosmo came—retired only as the sun was leaving his western window.

The next day, however, he did not rise. He had no suffering to speak of, and his face was serene, as the gathering of the sun-rays to go down together, with a perfect yet deepening peace. Cosmo scarcely left him—watched and waited with a cold spot at his heart, which kept growing bigger and colder as he saw him slowly drifting out on the ebb-tide from the earthly bay. He had now to pass through that most painful experience when the loved seemed gradually withdrawing, not from human contact only, but

even from human affection, while their cares part farther and farther from the cares of those they are leaving, and the gulf between, already impassable as the lapse of ages can make it, is ever widening. But when separation had left the mind free to work for the heart, said Cosmo to himself—"What if the dying who seem thus divided from us, are but only looking over the tops of insignificant earthly things? What if the heart within them is lying content in a closer contact with ours than our dull fears and too level out-look will permit us to share? One thing their apparent withdrawal means—that we must go over to them; we too must rise, forsake, and follow; they are on the way, and they cannot retrograde; they have already begun to learn the language and ways of the old world, begun to be children afresh, while we are still the slaves of new, low-bred habits of unbelief and self-preservation, to them as unwise as unlovely; but our turn will come, and we shall go after, and be taught of them; and in the meantime must so live that it may be the easier in dying to let the loved ones know that we are loving them all the time."

The laird ceased to eat, and spoke seldom, but often murmured the one word *peace*. He would often smile, but there was in his smile too that far off something which troubled his son. Two or three times came as it were a check in the slow drift seaward, and then he spoke plainly. Something much like this he said on one of these occasions:

"Peace! peace!—Cosmo, my son, ye dinna ken hoo strong it can be! Naebody can ken what it's like till it comes. I hae been troubled a' my life, an' noo the verra peace is 'maist ower muckle for me! It's like as gien the sun wad put oot the fire. I seem whiles to be lyin' here naething but waitin' for you to come intil my peace, an' be ane wi' me! But ye hae a lang this warl's life afore ye yet. Eh! winna it be gran' whan it's weel ower, an' you come hame! You an' me an' oor Mar'on an' Jesus an' God an' Grizzie an' a'! Somehoo I dinna seem to be lea'in' ye—no half as whan first ye left me, an' that although ye're ten times mair to me noo than ye war than."

Another time he said something like this:

"There maun be a heap o' fowk unco dreary an' fusionless i' the warl' deith taks us til; an' the mair I think aboot it, the mair likly it seems we'll hae muckle to du wi' them—a sair wark lattin' them ken what they are, an' whaur they cam frae, an' hoo they maun gang to win hame; for deith can no more be yer hame nor a sair fa' upo' the ro'd be yer bed. Mony ane we ca'd auld here, we may hae to tak like a bairn upo' oor knees, an' bring up. Auld bairns as weel as yoong hae to be fed wi' the spune. I see na

anither w'y o' 't. The Lord may ken a better, but I think he 's shawn me this. Them 'at 's Christ's maun hae wark like his, an' what for no the personal ministration o' redemption to them 'at 's deid, that they may come alive by the kennin' o' him?"

The day before that on which he went, he seemed to wake up suddenly:

"Cosmo," he said, "I'm no inclined to mak a promise wi' regaird to ony possible communication wi' ye frae the ither warl', nor do I i' the least expec' to appear or speyk to ye. But ye needna for that conclude me awa' frae ye a'thegither. Fowk may hae a hantle o' communication ohn aither o' them kent it at the time, I'm thinkin'. Min' this ony gait: God 's oor hame, an' gien ye be at hame an' I be at hame, we canna be far sun'ert!"

As the sun was going down, closing a lovely day full of promises, the boat of sleep, a gentle wind of life and birth filling its sail, bore, softly gliding, the old pilgrim across the faint border between this and that. Then, for a season, it may be, like a babe new-born, he needed gentle hands and careful nursing; and if so, and for any necessity wherein one immortal could help another, there was his wife waiting him, who must by that time have grown strong!

Their son wept and was lonely, but not broken-hearted; for he was a live man with a mighty hope and great duties, each of them ready to become a great joy. Such a man I do not think even diamonds could hurt, certainly not death.

## CHAPTER LXV.

### A BREAKING UP.

THINGS in the castle went on in the same quiet way as before for some time. Cosmo settled himself in his father's room, and read and wrote, and pondered and aspired. The household led the same homely, simple life, only fared well. The housekeeping was in Grizzie's hands, and she was a liberal soul—a true *bread-giver.*

James Gracie did not linger long behind his friend. His last words were,

"I won'er gien I hae a chance o' winnin' up wi' the laird!"

On the morning that followed his funeral, when breakfast was over, Agnes sought Cosmo where he sat in the garden with a book in his hand.

"Whaur are ye gaein', Aggie?" he asked, as she approached in her bonnet and shawl.

"*My* hoor's come," she answered, "an' it's time I was awa."

"I dinna un'erstan' ye, Aggie," he returned.

"Hoo sud ye, Cosmo? Ilka body kens, or sud ken, what lies to their ain han'. It lies to mine to gang. I'm no wantit langer. Ye wadna hae me ait the breid o' idleset!"

"But, Aggie!" remonstrated Cosmo, "ye're ane o' the faimily! *I* wad as sune think o' seein' my ain sister, gien I had ane, gang frae hame for sic a naerizzon as that!"

The tears rose in her eyes, and her voice trembled.

"It canna be helpit; I maun gang," she said.

Cosmo was dumb. He had never thought of such a possibility. Aggie stood silent before him.

"What hae ye i' yer heid, Aggie? What thoucht ye o' duin' wi' yersel'?" he asked at length, his heart swelling so that he could scarcely send out the words.

"I'm gaein' to luik for a place."

"But, Aggie, gien it canna be helpit, an' gang ye maun, *ye* ken I'm rich, an' *I* ken there's naebody i' the haill warl' wi' a better richt to what I hae: what for sud ye seek a place? what for no gang til a first-rate school, an' learn a heap o' things?"

"Na na. It's naething but hard wark 'ill haud me i' the richt ro'd. I can aye learn what I hunger for, an' what ye dinna desire ye'll never learn. Thanks to yersel', Cosmo, an' Maister Simon, ye hae putten me i' the w'y o' gettin' what I want! It's no kennin' things—it's kennin' things upo' the ro'd ye gang, 'at 's o' consequence to ye. The lave I mak naething o'."

"But a time micht come whan ye wad want the thing ye micht hae learnt afore."

"Whan sic a time comes, I'll learn the thing than—wi' half the trouble, an' in half the time. Noo, it wad but tak me frae the things I can an' maun mak use o'—an' use is a'thing. Na, Cosmo; I'm b'un' to du something wi' what I hae, an' no bide till I get mair. I'll be aye gettin'!"

"Weel, Aggie, I daurna temp' ye to bide gien ye think ye oucht to gang; an' ye wad but despise me gien I was fule eneuch to try 't. But ye canna refuse to share wi' me. That wadna be like ane 'at had the same Father an' the same Maister. Tak siller wi' ye, an' gang an' get a place whaur ye'll hae some time to yersel', an' winna hae to warstle yersel' to the deith wi' rouch wark. I canna bide to think o' 't. Come awa' intil the house."

"Cosmo, I wad hae thocht ye had mair sense! What wad the like o' me du wi' a heap o' siller? What wad baudrins (*pussy-cat*) there du wi' a silk goon? Ye can gie me the twa poun' ten I gae to Grizzie to help haud the life in 's a'. It's better to hae

something in a body's pooch nae doobt, gien she can; but it's jist won'erfu' hoo little 's wantit whaur there's but ane!"

Cosmo was miserable.

"Ye winna surely gang ohn seen Maister Simon!" he said.

"I tried to see him last nicht, but auld Dorty wadna lat me near him. I *wad* fain say fareweel til him."

"Put aff gaein' awa' till the morn, an' we s' gang thegither the nicht an' see him. Dorty winna haud *me* oot."

Aggie hesitated, thought, and consented. Leaving Cosmo more distressed than she knew, she went to the kitchen, took off her bonnet, and telling Grizzie she was not going till the morrow, sat down, and proceeded to pare the potatoes.

"Ance mair," said Grizzie, resuming an unclosed difference, "what for ye sud gang 's clean 'ayont me. It's true the auld men are awa', but here's the auld wife left, an' she'll be a mither to ye, as weel 's she kens hoo, an' a lass o' your sense is easy to mither. I' the name o' God I say 't, the warl' micht as weel objec' to twa angels bidin' i' h'aven thegither as to you an' the yoong laird bein' in ae hoose! Ye're but a servan' lass, an' here am I ower ye!—Aggie, I'm growin' auld, an' no fit to mak a bed my lane—no to mention scoorin' the flure! It's ill considert o' ye, Aggie—jist 'cause yer father—hoots, he was but yer gran'father!—jist 'cause yer gran'father's deid o' a guid auld age, an' gaithert til *his* gran'-fathers, to gang an' lea' me my lane, wi' mair to du nor I'm able for. Whaur, I beg, am I to get a body I cud bide i' my sicht an' you awa'—you 'at's been like bane o' my bane to me! It's no guid o' ye, Aggie! There maun be temper intil't! I'm sure I ken no cause ever I gae ye!"

Aggie answered not a word. She had said all she could say, over and over. So she pared her potatoes, and was silent. Her heart was sore, but her mind was clear, and her will strong.

Up and down the little garden Cosmo walked, revolving many things. "What is this world and its ways," he said, "but a dream that dreams itself out and is gone!"

The majority of men, whether they think or not, worship solidity and fact: to such, this conclusion of Cosmo's must seem both foolish and dangerous. But a dream may be full of truth, and a fact may be a mere shred for the winds of the limbo of vanities. Everything that *can* pass belongs to the same category with the dream. The question is whether the passing body leaves a live soul, whether the dream has been dreamed, the life lived aright. For there is a reality beyond all facts of suns and systems. Solidity itself is but the shadow of a divine necessity. There may be more truth in a fable than in the most correct biography.

Where life and truth are one, there is no passing, no dreaming more. To that waking all dreams truly dreamed are guiding the dreamer. And the last thing any dreamer needs regard, is the judgment of other dreamers upon his dream. The all-pervading, ill-odoured phantom called Society, is but the ghost of a false God. The fear of man, the trust in man, the deference to the opinion of man, is the merest worship of a rag-stuffed idol. The man who *seeks* the judgment of God will smile at the unsolicited approval as carelessly as at the condemnation of self-styled Society: there is a true Society—another thing quite. The judgment of the world is of some good to those capable of regarding it; to deprive a thief of the influence of the code of thieves' honour, would be to do him irreparable wrong; to deprive the tradesman whose law is the custom of his trade, of the restraint of that law, would be to render him yet more dishonest than he is; but God demands an uprightness, a dignity, a greatness and beauty of very being, altogether beyond and different from that demanded by man of his fellow. He who is taught of God is lifted up out of sight above such law as that of thieves' honour, trade-custom, or social recognition—which are all of the same quality, and is subjected instead to a law which obeyed is liberty, disobeyed is a hell deeper and fouler than even Society's own attendant slums.

But Cosmo had been meditating a very different phase of the matter.

"Here is a woman," he had said to himself, "who, with her earnings and her labour both, ministered to the bodily life of my father and myself, and to our spiritual life with her whole nature and presence! She has been to us an angel of God—the noblest, truest of women! She has ten times as much genuine education as most men take with them from college!—her brain is second only to her heart!—If it had but pleased God to make her my sister! And now, because the house is mine she must leave it! There is, alas! no way to pull out the tongue of Slander, but there is a way to muzzle her mouth!"

The evening was Mr. Simon's best time, and they let the sun go down before they started to visit him. On their way they had a right pleasant talk about old things, now the one now the other bringing some half-faded event from the store-closet of memory.

"I doobt ye winna min' me takin' ye oot o' the Warlock ae day there was a gey bit o' a spait on?" said Agnes at length, looking up in Cosmo's face.

"Eh, I never h'ard o' that, Aggie!" replied Cosmo.

"I canna think to this day hoo it was ye fell in," she went on:

"I hadna the chairge o' ye at the time. Ye maun hae run oot o' the hoose an' me efter ye. I was very near taen awa' wi' ye. Hoo we wan oot o' the watter I dinna un'erstan'. A' 'at I ken is 'at what I cam to mysel' we war lyin' grippit til ane anither upo' the meadow, for the watter was mair nor bank-fou."

"But hoo cam 't 'at naebody ever said a word aboot it? What for did I never hear o' 't?" asked Cosmo.

"I never tellt onybody, an' ye wasna auld eneuch no to forget."

"What for didna ye tell?"

"I was feart they wad think it was my wite, an' no lat me tak chairge o' ye for ever efter. I kent ye was safer wi' me nor wi' ony ither aboot the place, for whan I had ye I 'maist tuikna my e'en aff o' ye. Gien it had been my wite, I cudna hae hauden my tongue; but as 't was, I didna see I was b'un' to tell."

"Hoo did ye hide it?"

"I ran wi' ye hame to oor ain hoose, whaur there was naebody, an' tuik aff yer weet claes, an' pat ye intil my bed till I got them dry."

"An' hoo did ye wi' yer ain?"

"By the time yours was dry, mine was dry tu."

When they reached the cottage, Dorty demurred; but her master heard Cosmo's voice and rang his bell.

"I little thought your father would be home before me!" said Mr. Simon. "I believe I was aware of his death. I saw nothing, heard nothing, but he seemed to come to me when I was not thinking about him; and I said to myself, 'He is on his way.'"

Agnes told him she had come to bid him good-bye; she was going to seek a place.

"Well," he answered, after a thoughtful pause, "while we obey the light in us, and that light is not darkness, we can't go wrong. If we should mistake, he will turn things round for us; and if we be to blame, he will let us see it."

He was weak, and they did not stay long.

"Don't judge my heart by my words, dear scholars," he said. "My heart is right towards you, but I am weary. God bless you both. I may not see you again, Agnes, but I shall think of you there, and if I can do anything for you, be sure I will."

When they left the cottage, the twilight was half-way towards the night, and a softness in the east prophesied the moon. Cosmo led Agnes through fields no longer his to the little valley where she had so often gone in search of him. There they sat down in the grass, and as they waited for the moon Cosmo pointed out the

exact spot where she rose that night she looked at him through the legs of the cow.

"Ye min' Grizzie's rime?" he said:

> "Whan the coo loups ower the mune,
> The reid gowd rains intil men's shune.

I believe Grizzie tuik the queer sicht for a sign o' guid. It's unco strange hoo fowk 'ill mix up God an' chance, seein' there cud hardly be twa mair contradictory ideas! I min' ance hearin' a man say, 'It's 'maist a providence'!"

"I doobt wi' maist fowk," said Aggie, "it's only at best, 'There's nearhan' bein' a God!' For my pairt I see nae room 'atween no believin' in him at a', an' believin' in him a'thegither, an' lattin' him du what he likes wi' a body."

"I'm o' your min' there, Aggie, oot an' oot," responded Cosmo.

As he spoke the moon came peering up, and he turned to Agnes to share the vision with her. The yellow light was reflected from tears on her face!

"Aggie, Aggie!" he said, in much concern, "what are ye greitin' for?"

She made no answer, but wiped away her tears, and tried to smile. After a little pause,

"A body wad think," she said, "'at gien I believed in a God, he maun be a sma' ane! What for sud onybody greit 'at had but a far awa' notion o' sic a God as you, Cosmo, an' the laird, an' Maister Simon believes in!"

"Ye may weel say that, Aggie!" rejoined Cosmo—yet sighed as he said it, for he thought of lady Joan. A long pause followed. Then he spoke again.

"Aggie," he said, "there canna weel be twa i' this warl' 'at kens ane anither better nor you an' me. We hae been bairns thegither; we hae been to the schuil thegither; we hae had the same teacher sin' syne; we hae come throuw dour times thegither—I doobt we hae been hungry thegither though ye saidna a word; we hae warstlet wi' poverty, ay, an' wi' unbelief; we loe the same fowk best; an' abune a' we baith set the wull o' God. It wad be a sair vex to me 'at the first thing w'alth did for me was to sen' my best freen' frae me. It wad 'maist brak my hert to think o' her 'at cam throuw the lan' o' drouth wi' me—ay, tuik me throuw 't, for, wantin' her, I wad hae fa'en to rise nae mair—gaein' on an' on climmin' the dry hill ro'd, an' me lyin' i' the bonny meadow-gerse at the fut o' 't. It canna be rizzon, Aggie! What for sud ye gang? Merry me, Aggie, an' bide. Bide, an' ca' the castel yer ain."

"Hoots! wad ye merry yer mither?" cried Agnes, and burst into laughter and tears together. I believe it was the sole time in her life she ever gave way to discordant emotion.

Cosmo stared speechless. It was as if an angel had made a poor human joke! He was much too bewildered to feel hurt.

But Aggie was not pleased with herself. She choked her tears, crushed down her laughter, and conquering herself entirely, took his hands in hers, and said,

"I beg yer pardon, Cosmo; I sudna hae lauchen. Lauchin', I'm sure, 's far eneuch frae my hert! I kenna hoo I cam to du 't.—But ye're sic a bairn, Cosmo! Ye dinna ken what ye wad hae! an' me bein' a kin' o' a mither to ye a' yer days, I maun lat ye see what ye're aboot.—I wadna insist ower sair upo' the years 'atween 's, though that's no naething; but surely ye haena to be tellt at this time o' day, 'at for fowk to merry 'at dinna loe ane anither, 's little, gien it be onything, short o' a sin."

"I hae aye loed *you*, Aggie," said Cosmo, with a touch of reproach.

"Weel ken I that! An ill hert wad be mine gien it didna tell me that! But, Cosmo, whan ye said the word, didna *your* hert tell ye it didna mean jist the same ye wad hae me un'erstan' by 't?"

"Aggie!" sighed Cosmo, "I wad aye loe ye better an' better."

"Ay, ye wad, gien ye cud, Cosmo. But ye're ower honest to see throuw yersel'; an' I'm no sae honest but I see throuw you. Ye wad merry me 'cause ye're no wullin' to pairt wi' me, likin' me better nor ony but ane, an' her ye canna get! Gien I was a leddy, Cosmo, maybe I michtna be ower prood to tak ye upo' thae terms, but bein' what I am I daurna. It wad need love as roon' 's a sphere for that 'atween you an' me. Gien I war to tak it intil my heid I was ae hair i' yer gait, or ye was ae hair freer-like wi' me oot o' yer sicht, I wad be like to rin to the back-wa' o' creation! Na; it was weel eneuch as we hae been, but *merried!*—Ye wad be guid to me aye, I ken that, but aye wad I be wantin' to be deid to hae ye loe me a wee better. I say naething o' what the warl' wad say to the laird o' Glenwarlock merryin' his servan' lass, for ye care as little for the warl' as I du, an' we're baith some wiser nor hit. But efter a', Cosmo, I wad be some oot o' my place!—wadna I noo? The hen-birds doobtless are aye the soberer to luik at; they haena the gran' colours nor the gran' w'ys wi' them 'at the cocks hae; but still there's a measur i' a'thing. It wad ill set a common hen to hae a paicock til her man. My sowl, I ken, wad gang han' in han', in a heumble w'y, wi' yours, for I un'erstan' ye, Cosmo; but wha like me cud help a sense o' oonfitness, gien

it war but gaein' to the kirk side by side wi' the like o' you? Luik at the twa o' 's i' the munelicht thegither! Dinna ye see 'at we dinna match?"

"It wad be naething gien ye loed me, Aggie."

"Gien *ye* loed *me*, say, Cosmo—loed me eneuch to be prood o' me. But that ye dinna, that ye canna. Exem' yer ain hert, an' ye'll see 'at ye dinna.—An' what for sud ye!"

Here Agnes broke down. A burst of silent weeping, like that of one desiring no comfort, followed. Suddenly she ceased and rose, and they walked back without a word.

They had been sitting in the very place where the body of the old captain was found; and they knew it; but neither of them had thought of him. The clouds had returned after the rain, and for these clouds his diamonds could do nothing.

When Cosmo came down in the morning, Agnes was gone.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

### REPOSE.

COSMO had no need of a searching examination of his heart to discover that it was mainly the wish to make her some poor return for her devotion, conjoined with the sincere desire to retain her company, that had influenced him in the offer she had been too wise and too genuinely loving to accept. He did not fall into any depth of self-blame, for, whatever its kind, his love was of quality pure and good. The only bitterness the memory of the proposal bore was its justification of Agnes's departure.

Grizzie saw no justification of it.

"What I'm to du wantin' her, I div not ken," she insisted. "'*No becomin'*,' quo' he, '*for a lass like her to bide wi' a bachelor like mysel'?*' H'ard ever onybody sic styte! Jist as gien she had been a leddy! I micht wi' as muckle sense objec' to bidin' wi' 'im mysel'! But I s' du what I like, an' lat fowk say 'at they like, sae lang 's I'm nae fule i' my ain e'en!—I'm ower white, Mr. Gled (*hawk*), for you. Ow na! ye're no that, bonny doo (*pigeon*)."

But by degrees Cosmo grew gently ashamed that he had so addressed Agnes. He saw in the action a failure of respect, a wrong to her dignity. That she had taken it so sweetly could not alter its character. Seeming to himself at the time to be going against the judgment of the world, and treating it with the contempt it always more or less deserves, he had in reality and in no

small measure been going with it. For had there not been in him a vague condescension operant throughout? Had he not been acting on the idea, conscious of it too, though never calling it to account, that his position made up for any want in his love? Had she been conventionally a lady, instead of an angel in peasant-form, would he have been so ready to return her kindness with an offer of marriage? There was little conceit in supposing there were some, even of higher position than his own, who would have accepted the offer on even lower terms; but he ought to have known Aggie better, and not have made it to her: she was too large and too fine for such an experiment. This he now fully understood; and had he not been brought up with her from childhood as with an elder sister, the thought of her might even now have begun a powerful rivalry with the sweet memories of Joan's ladyhood. For he saw in her that which is at the root, not only of all virtue, but of all beauty, of all grandeur, of all growth, of all attraction. Every charm—in its essence, in its development, in its embodiment, is a flower of the tree of life, whose root is the truth. I see the smile of the shallow philosopher, thinking of some lady full of charm, with no more love for the truth than a mole for the light. But that lady's charm is not hers; it springs from a source too deep for her knowledge, her conscious and chosen life is antagonistic to it, and by and by she will have destroyed it. From truth elsewhere it comes; she will not have the truth, and its garment which is her beauty will one day leave her naked and not lovely. In Agnes the truth was merely supreme. To have asked such a woman to marry him for reasons lower than the highest, was good ground for shame. Not therefore even then was he *painfully* ashamed, for he loved Agnes so truly that he felt safe with her, as with the elder sister that pardons everything.

It was some little time before they had any news of her; but they heard at last that she had rented Grannie's cottage from her granddaughter, her own aunt, and was going to have a school there for young children. Cosmo was greatly pleased, for the work would give scope to some of her highest gifts and best qualities, while it would keep her within reach of his service.

Cosmo now gave himself heartily to study, and not only read but wrote regularly every day—no more with the design of printing, but to shape more thoroughly and so test more certainly his thinkings and conclusions. I scorn the idea that a man cannot think without words, but words are endlessly helpful towards the clarifying and crystallizing of thought. Accuracy of utterance reacts in accuracy of thought. A slovenly writer can hardly be a correct thinker. Cosmo strove to utter accurately, that is, to say

the thing he meant, and keep from saying the thing he did not mean.

Again he occupied the room over the kitchen, which had been his grandmother's, making it his study. From it to the drawing-room, with the assistance of a mason, he excavated a passage—it was little less than excavation—under that in which had lain the diamonds.

But he had already long discovered how little place without person is to the human soul. So dreary was the castle and its surroundings, so without *raison d'être*, that he seemed to care for it only through Grizzie. He thought sometimes that if she were to go, he would forsake it at once, and travel for a few years at least. It was to him almost like the presence of a dear friend waiting in idiocy for death to release him. The man was gone out of it, the soul vanished! But a dream in which his father came to him, not in the old body, but in the new, most like the old, and wandered with him lovingly about the place, talking of the past, did much to restore the home-feeling to the stones of his Jerusalem.

The first main issue Grizzie's new command of money found was in a torrent of cleaning. If she could have had her way, she would, I fancy, have erected scaffolds all over the outside of the house, and scrubbed it from chimneys to foundations. On the opposite side of the Warlock river, the laird rented a meadow, and there she soon had the long unaccustomed delight of seeing two cows she could call hers, the finest cows in the country, feeding with a vague satisfaction in the general order of things. The stable housed a horse after the laird's own heart, on which he made solitary *chevachie* after land in the market.

All he allowed to be known concerning the change in his circumstances was, that he had come into a large fortune by the death—its date he did not mention—of a relative with whom for many years they had had no very direct communication. The inquisitive Lick-my-loof made repeated endeavours to gain some knowledge of particulars in regard of this relative, but remained foiled, and was of course vaguely suspicious.

How the spending of the money thus committed to him was to change the earthly course of his life, Cosmo had not yet learned, and was waiting for light on the matter. A man is not bound to walk in the dark, or work in the night; for the mere sake of doing something, he must not run the risk of doing evil. "He that believeth shall not make haste;" and he that believeth not shall come no speed. Cosmo had nothing of the usual mammonistic feeling of the enormous importance of money, neither felt that his

new fortune laid upon him so heavy a weight of duty as others of the gifts God had given him. If a man is not bound to rush into the world with his poem, surely a man is not bound to rush into the world with his money. Rather a herd of wild horses loose in a city! A man must know first how to *use* his money, then begin to spend it. And the way to use money is not so easily discovered as some would think, for it is not one of God's ready means of doing good. It is not the potent instrument for the betterment of the world that so many who would fain do the impossible and serve both God and Mammon imagine it. The rich man has no reason to look upon himself as specially favoured. He has reason to ask whether he be not specially tried. Jesus loving a certain youth, and doing him the greatest kindness he could, counselled him to give his wealth to the poor, and follow him in poverty. The first question is not how to do good with money, but how to keep from doing evil with it. Money is important as dynamite is important—mainly because it is exceeding dangerous. A man must first of all do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with his God; so, be he rich or poor, will he learn of God how to spend. There must be ways in which, even now, a man may give the half, or even the whole of his goods to the poor without helping the devil; but who yet has discovered any one of those ways? It is not because of God's poverty that the world is so slowly redeemed. Not the most righteous expenditure of money will save it, but the pouring forth of life and soul and spirit, carrying with it nerve and muscle, blood and brain—and money too if there be any. All those our Lord spent—spent them in Godlike fashion—but not this, no money. Therefore I say, that of all means for the saving of the world, or for doing good as it is called, money comes last, and far behind.

Out of the loneliness in which his father left him, grew a great peace and new strength. More real than ever was the other world to him now. His father could not have vanished like a sea-bubble on the sand! To have known a great man—perhaps I do not mean such a man as my reader may be thinking of—is to have some assurance of immortality. One of the best of men said to me once that he did not feel any longing after immortality, but when he thought of certain persons he could not for a moment believe they had ceased. He had beheld the lovely—believed therefore in the endless.

Castle Warlock was not soon altered in its general appearance. In its worst poverty it had kept its look of dignity. There was more life about it now, and more freedom, but not so much happiness. The diamonds had come and the debt was gone, but

his father was gone too, Aggie was gone, Mr. Simon was going, and Joan would not come! Cosmo had scarce a hope for this world. Yet not the less he waited the will of The Will. What that was, time would show, for God works in time!

## CHAPTER LXVII.

### THE THIRD HARVEST.

As the days went by, Cosmo saw his engagement to Mr. Henderson drawing near, nor had he the smallest inclination to back out of it. The farmer would have let him off at once, no doubt; but Cosmo felt, without thinking, that it would be undignified, morally sneaking, even to desire to avoid, because he was now in plenty, the engagement granted by friendship to his need. Nor was this the whole; for to avoid it would almost be to allow that, driven by necessity, he had undertaken a thing unworthy, or degrading; whereas no degree of hunger could justify a poor man in doing what would disgrace a rich man. Neither will any true man ever ask fellow-creature, man or woman, on terms however extravagant, to do a thing he could not himself do without a sense of degradation. Were the thing conceivable to him as necessary, the conception would involve the doing of it himself, and not by his brother. There is no leveller like christianity—but it levels by uplifting to a table-land accessible only to humility. He alone who is humble can rise—and rising he lifts with him.

In thus holding to what he had undertaken, a man of lower nature might have had respect to the example he would so give: Cosmo thought only of the honourable and grateful fulfilment of his contract. Not merely would it have been a poor return for Mr. Henderson's kindness to treat his service as something beneath him now, but, worst of all, it would have been to accept ennoblement at the hands of Mammon, as of a power able to exalt his station in God's world. To change the spirit of one's ways because of money is to confess oneself a born slave, a thing of outsides, a knight of Riches, with a maggot for his crest.

When the time came, therefore, Cosmo presented himself. With a look of astonishment, in which were mingled both pleasure and disappointment, the worthy farmer held out his hand.

"Laird," he said, "I didna expec' *you!*"

"What for no?" returned Cosmo. "Haena I been yer fee'd man for months?"

"Ye pit me in a painfu' doobt, laird! Fowk tellt me ye had fa'en heir til a sicht o' siller!"

"Allooin', hoo sud that affec' my bargain wi' you, Mr. Henderson? Siller i' the pooch canna tak obligation frae the back."

"Drivin' things to the wa', nae doobt!" rejoined the farmer: "I micht certainly hae taen the law o' ye, failin' yer appearance. But amo' freen's, Mr. Warlock! An' 'deed, sir, gien a body wad be captious, michtna he say it wad hae been mair gracious to beg aff?"

"A bargain 's a bargain," answered Cosmo; "an' to beg aff o' ane, 'cause I was nae langer i' the same necessity as whan I made it, wad be a mere shame. Gien my father had been wi' me, an' no weel eneuch to hae me oot o' 's sicht gien it cud be helpit, I wad hae beggit aff fest eneuch, but wi' nae sic rizzon it wad hae been ill-mainnert, no to say dishonest an' oongratefu'. Gien ye hae spoken to ony ither i' my place, he s' hae the fee, but I maun hae the wark. Lat things stan', Mr. Henderson."

"Laird!" returned the farmer, not a little moved, "there isna a man I wad raither see at my wark nor yersel'. A' o' them, men an' women, work the better for haein' you amo' them. They wad be affrontit no to haud up wi' a gentleman! Sae come awa' an' walcome!—Ye'll tak something afore we fa' tu?"

Cosmo accepted a jug of milk—half cream it was, from the hand of Elsie.

The girl was much improved, having partially unlearned a good deal of the nonsense gathered at school, and now took a fair share with her sisters in the work of the house and farm—enlightened doubtless thereto by her admiration for Cosmo.

When the laird reached the end of the first bout, and stood to sharpen his scythe, he was startled to see, a little way off, gathering, a form he could not mistake. She did not look up, but he knew her every movement too well to take her for other than Aggie. *She* had known he would keep his troth! That she exposed herself to misinterpretation and misrepresentation Aggie was well enough aware, but with the knowledge of how things stood between her and Cosmo, she was above heeding the danger. Those who do the truth are raised even above defying the world. Defiance betrays latent respect, but Aggie gave herself no more trouble about the opinion of the world than that of a lower animal. Those who are of the world may defy, but cannot ignore its judgments.

She had declined being a party to Cosmo's marrying his mother, but was not therefore prepared to expose him undefended to any she that might wish to have him, and Agnes knew one who would at least be hampered by no scruples arising from conscious

unfitness. It were even better he should marry the cottar's than the farmer's daughter! She must keep an eye on the young woman so long as Cosmo was within her swoop. He was chivalrous and credulous, and who could tell what Elsie might not dare? Her own refusal to be his wife did not deprive her of her antecedent maternal rights! And so there she was, gathering behind Cosmo, as the year before!

The instant she was free, she set out for home, not having exchanged a word with Cosmo, but meaning to linger on the way in the hope of his overtaking her. The Hendersons would have had him stay the night, but he had given his man orders to wait him with his horse at a certain point on the road. Aggie had not gone far before he came up with her.

Whatever was or had been the state of her feelings towards Cosmo, she had never mistaken his towards her, neither had failed to see that his heart was nowise wounded by her refusal of his offer. I will be so far treacherous towards her as to confess that it would have been a comfort to her, having had to be more or less severe with herself, to see some little sign of suffering in him; but she had got over much, and was now not the least annoyed at the cheery unembarrassed tone in which he called out when he saw her before him. Turning she greeted him with like unconstraint.

"An' sae yer gaein' to tak the bairnies 'aneth yer wing, Aggie," said Cosmo as they walked along. "They're lucky little things 'at gang to your schuil! What pat it i' yer heid?"

"Mr. Simon advised it," answered Aggie; "but I believe I pat it in his heid first, sayin' hoo little was dune for the bairnies jist at the time they war easiest to guide, an' easiest to misguide. Rouch wark maks the han's rouch, an' rouch words maks the hert rouch."

"The haill country-side 'ill be gratefu' to ye, Aggie!—Ye'll lat me come an' see ye whiles?"

"Nane sae welcome," replied Aggie. "But wull ye be bidin' on, noo 'at ye haena him 'at's gane? Winna ye be gaein' awa' to write buiks, to gar fowk fin' oot what's the maitter wi' them?"

"I dinna ken yet what I'm gaein' to du," answered Cosmo. "But for writin' buiks, I could du that better at hame nor ony ither gait, wi' a'thing min'in' me o' my father, an' you near at han' to gie me coonsel."

"I hae aye been yours to comman', Cosmo," replied Aggie, looking down for one moment, then immediately up again in his face.

"An' ye're no angert wi' me, Aggie?"

"Angert!" repeated Aggie, and looked at him with a glow angelic in her honest handsome face and her eyes as true as the

heavens. "It was only 'at ye didna ken what ye was aboot; an' bein' sae muckle yoonger nor mysel', I was b'un' to tak care o' ye; a wuman as weel's a man maun be her brither's keeper. Ye see yersel' I was richt!"

"Ay was ye, Aggie," answered Cosmo, ashamed and almost vexed at having to make the confession.

He did not see the heave of Aggie's bosom, nor how she held back and broke into nothing the sigh that would have followed.

"But," she resumed after a moment's pause, "a' lasses michtna ken sae weel what was fittin' them, or care sae muckle what was guid for you! Naebody livin' can ken ye as I du; an' it micht weel be 'at gien ye war to lat a lass think ye cared aboot her, though it micht be but as a freen', she micht sae misun'erstan' ye, an' sae be taen wi' ye—'at—'at maybe she micht gar ye think she cudna live wantin' ye;—an' syne what wad ye du than, Cosmo?"

It was a situation in which Cosmo had never imagined himself, and he looked at Aggie a little bewildered.

"I dinna freely un'erstan' ye," he said.

"Na, I reckon no! Hoo sud ye! Ye're jist ower semple for this warl', Cosmo! But I'll put it plainer:—What wad ye du gien a lass was to fa' a greitin' an' a wailin', an' fling hersel' intil yer airms, an' mak as gien she wad dee?—What wad ye du than, Cosmo? What wad ye du wi' her?"

"'Deed I dinna ken!" replied Cosmo with embarrassment. "What wad ye hae me du, Aggie?"

"I wad hae ye set her doon whaur ye stude, gien upo' the ro'd, than upo' the dyke, gien i' the hoose, than upo' the nearest cheir, an' tak to yer legs an' rin. Bidena for yer bonnet, but rin for yer life. Rin an' rin till ye're better nor sure she canna win up wi' ye. An' specially gien the name o' the lass sud begin wi' an E an' gang on til an L, I wad hae ye rin as gien the auld captain was efter ye."

"I hae had sma' occasion to rin frae *him*," said Cosmo with a laugh.

And therewith, partly to change the subject, for he could not talk even about a suppositional girl as if she might conduct herself in the manner supposed, partly because he had long desired an opportunity of telling her, he began at the beginning, and gave her the whole story of the discovery of the diamonds, omitting nothing, even where the tale involved mention of lady Joan's part in it. Just as he got to the end, they reached the place where the man stood with his horse, and as that was the point where Aggie must turn off to go the nearest way to Muir o' Warlock, there they parted.

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### A DUET, TRIO, AND QUARTET.

THE next day Elsie was not in the field. Cosmo, who had been thinking much over what Aggie had said, and was not flattered that she should take him for the goose he did not know himself to be, could hardly wait for the evening to have another talk with her.

"Aggie," he said, as he overtook her in a hollow not many yards beyond the march-ditch, "I dinna like ye to think me sic a gowk! No 'at I believe ony lass wad behave sae oon-lass-like 's yon! Whan cam ye to fancy sae ill o' yer ain kin'? There 's nae siccan a lass."

"What maitter whether there be siccan a lass or no, sae lang as gien there was ane, she wad be ane ower mony for ye?"

"That's ower again what I'm compleenin' o'!—an' gien it war onybody but yersel' 'at has a richt, I wad be angry, Aggie."

"Cosmo," said Aggie solemnly, "ye 're ower saft-hertit to the women-fowk. I do believe—an' I tell ye 't again in as mony words—I do believe ye wad merry ony lass raither nor see her greit."

"Ance mair, Aggie, what gies ye a richt to think sae ill o' me?" demanded Cosmo.

"Jist the w'y ye behaved to mysel'."

"*Ye* never tellt me ye cudna du wantin' me!"

"I houp no, for it wadna hae been true. I can du wantin' ye weel eneuch. But ye alloo it wasna richt!"

"Ay—it was a presumption."

"Ay! but what made it a presumption?"

Cosmo could not bring himself to say plainly to the girl he loved so much, that he did not love her so as to have a richt to ask her to marry him. He hesitated.

"Ye didna loe me eneuch; that was it," said Aggie looking up in his face.

"Aggie," returned Cosmo, "I'm ready to merry ye the morn gien ye'll hae me!"

"There noo!" exclaimed Aggie, in a sort of provoked triumph, "didna I tell ye! There ye are, duin' 't a' ower again! Wasna I richt? Ye're fit to tak care o' onybody but yersel'—an' the lass 'at wad fain hae ye! Eh, but, sir, ye need a mitherly body like mysel' to luik efter ye!"

"Tak me, than, an' luik efter me at yer wull, Aggie; I mean what I say!" persisted Cosmo, bewildered with embarrassment and momentary stupidity.

"Ance mair, Cosmo, dinna be a gowk," said Agnes with severity. "Ye loe *me* ower little, an' I loe *you* ower muckle for that."

"Ye 're no angry at me, Aggie?" said Cosmo yet again, almost timidly.

"*Angry at ye*, my bonny lad!" cried Aggie, and looking up with a world of tenderness in her eyes, and a divine glow of affection on her face—for hers was a love that knew not shame—she threw her two strong shapely honest arms round his neck. He bent his head, she kissed him heartily on the mouth, and burst into tears.

Surely but for that other love that lay patient and hopeless in the depth of Cosmo's heart, he would now have loved Aggie in a way to satisfy her, and to justify him in saying he loved her! And to that it might have come in time. But where is the use of saying what might have been, when all things are ever moving towards the highest and best for the individual as well as for the universe! —nor the less that hell may be the only path to it for some—the hell of an absolute self-loathing!

At that very moment, who should appear on the top of a moorland mound, where the light of the setting sun seemed to centre upon her, but Elsie, neatly dressed, glowing and handsome! A moment she stood, then descended, a dark scorn shadowing in her eyes, and a something that tried to be a smile showing the whitest of teeth.

"Mr. Warlock," she said, "my father sent me efter ye in a hurry,"—and she heaved a deep breath—"to say he forgot to tell ye 'at he doesna think the bear on the Gowan-brae 'ill be fit for cuttin' this two days, an' they'll gang to the corn upo' the heuch instead."

"I'm muckle obleeged to ye, miss Elsie," returned Cosmo. "Ye hae saved me a half mile i' the mornin'."

"An' my father says," resumed Elsie, turning to Agnes, "yer wark 's no worth yer wages."

Aggie faced round on her with flashing eyes.

"I dinna believe ye, miss Elsie," she said. "I dinna believe yer father said ever sic a word. He kens my wark 's worth my wages whatever he likes to set me til. I s' gang back an' speir."

She turned, and set off at a rapid pace.

Cosmo looked at Elsie. She had turned white—with the whiteness of fear, not of wrath. She had not expected such decisive

action. She would be at once exposed! Her father was a terrible man in his anger, and her conscience told her he would be angry indeed, angrier than she had ever seen him. She stood like a statue, her eyes fixed on the retreating form of the indignant Agnes. She had reached the top of the rising ground, and was beginning to disappear, ere the spell of her terror gave way. She turned with clasped hands to Cosmo, and murmured, her white lips hardly able to fashion the words.

"Mr. Warlock, for God's sake, cry her back. Dinna lat her gang to my father."

"Was the thing ye said no true?" asked Cosmo.

"Weel," faltered Elsie, searching inside for some escape from admission, "maybe he didna jist say the verra words!——"

"Aggie maun gang," said Cosmo.

"'T was a lee! 't was a lee!" gasped Elsie.

Cosmo ran, and from the top of the rise, called aloud,

"Aggie! Aggie! come back."

Beyond her he saw another woman approaching. Aggie turned at his call, and came to him quickly.

"She confesses it's a lee, Aggie," he said.

"She wadna, gien she hadna seen I was gaein' straucht til her father!" replied Agnes, shaking her head a little vindictively.

"I daursay; but God only can see intil the true differ 'atween what we du o' oorsel's an' what we're gart (*compelled*). We maun hae mercy, an' i' the meantime she's ashamed eneuch. At least she has the luik o' 't."

"It's ae thing to be ashamed 'cause ye hae dune wrang, an' anither to be ashamed 'cause ye're f'un' oot!" insisted Agnes with a touch of obstinacy.

"Ay; but there compassion comes in to fill up. An' whan ye trait a body wi' generosity, the hert wauks up to be worthy o' 't."

"Cosmo, ye ken maist aboot the guid in fowk, an' I ken maist aboot the ill!" said Aggie.

Here the woman, who had been nearing them scarce observed while they talked, came up, and as they went back to Elsie where she still stood, followed them at her own pace.

"I beg yer pardon, Aggie," said Elsie, holding out her hand. "I was ill-natert, an' spak the thing wasna true. My father says there isna a better gaitherer i' the country-side nor yersel'."

Aggie took her offered hand, and said frankly,

"Lat by-ganes be by-ganes. Be true to me an' I'll be true to you. An' I winna lee whether or no."

And now the stranger joined them. She was a young woman in the garb of a peasant, but with something about her not of the

peasant. At the first glance Aggie took her for a superior servant out for a holiday, but the second glance was bewildering.

She stopped, with a half timid, quiet look.

"Will you please tell me if I am on the way to Castle Warlock?" she said, and dropped her eyes with a blush, and a quiver about the mouth which made her look like a child trying not to smile.

Cosmo had been gazing at her. The moment he heard her voice, he began to tremble. The next, he gave a cry, and was on his knees before her.

"Joan!" he gasped, and seizing her hand drew it to his lips, and held it there.

She made neither sound nor movement; her colour went and came; her head drooped; she would have fallen, but Cosmo rising received her in his arms, and taking her like a child, began to walk swiftly homeward.

Aggie had one short fierce struggle with her rising heart, then turned to Elsie and said quietly,

"Ye see we're no wantit!"

"I see," returned Elsie. "But eh, she's a puir cratur!"

"No sae puir!" answered Aggie. "Wad *ye* dress up like a gran' leddy to gang efter yer laad?"

"Ay wad I—fest eneuch!" answered Elsie with scorn.

Aggie saw her mistake.

"Did ye tak nottice o' her han's?" she said.

"No, I didna."

"Ye never saw sic han's! Did ye tak nottice o' her feet?"

"No, I didna."

"Ye never saw sic feet! Yon's ane 'at canna gether, nor bin', nor stook, but she's bonny a' throuw, an' her voice is a sang, an' it's throuw fire an' throuw watter she'll gang, ohn blinkit, for her love's sake. Yon's the lass for oor laird! The like o' you an' me needsna trible heid nor hert aboot the likes o' *him.*"

"Speyk for yersel', lass," said Elsie.

"I tellt ye," returned Aggie quietly, "'at gien ye wad be true to me, I wad be true to you; but gie yersel' airs, an' I say guid nicht, an' gang efter my fowk."

She turned and departed, leaving Elsie more annoyed than repentant. It may take a whole life to render a person capable of shame, not to say sorrow, for the meanest thing he has done.

As she followed Cosmo with his treasure, Aggie's heart lay stone-like within her, but her brain was alive and active for his sake. Cosmo set Joan down, and they went walking on side by side.

"What are they gaein' to du?" thought Aggie. "Are they

gaein' straucht hame thegither? What for cam she never till the auld laird was awa'? An' what for comes she noo?" Question after question she kept asking herself in her carefulness over Cosmo.

They passed the turning Aggie must take to go home. She passed it too, following them steadily.—That old Grizzie was no good! She must go with them! If the reason for which she left the castle was a good one, she must now for the same reason go back to it! Those two must not be there with nobody to make them feel comfortable and taken care of! They must not be left to awkwardness together! She would be a human atmosphere about them, to shield them, and make home for them! Love itself may be too lonely! It needs some reflection of its too lavish radiation!—Such was practically, though not altogether in form, what Agnes thought, or rather felt.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

### ANOTHER DUET.

In the meantime, the first whelming joy-wave having retired, and life and thought having resumed their operations, the two had begun to talk.

"Where have you come from?" asked Cosmo.

"From Cairntod, the same place we came from that first fierce winter night," answered Joan.

"But you are . . . When were you . . . How long . . . have you been married?"

"*Married!*" echoed Joan. "Cosmo!"

She looked up in his face, wild and frightened.

"Well, you never wrote, and——"

"It was you never wrote!"

"I did not, but my father did, and got no answer."

"I wrote and wrote again, and *begged* for an answer, but none came. If it hadn't been for the way I dreamed about you, I don't know what would have become of me!"

"Some one has been at such tricks as I should have thought out of fashion!"

"Doubtless! I fear. . . . I dare hardly. . . ."

"And Mr. Jermyn?" said Cosmo, with a look half shy, half fearful, as if after all some bolt must be about to descend upon him.

"I can tell you very little about him. I have scarcely seen him since he brought me the money you sent me."

"Then he didn't . . . ."

"Well, what didn't he?"

"I have no right to ask."

"Ask me *anything*."

"Then—didn't he ask you to marry him?"

Joan laughed.

"I had begun to fear he had something of the kind in his head, when all at once I saw no more of him."

"How was that?"

"I can only guess: he may have spoken to my brother."

"You must have missed him!"

"Life *was* a little duller."

"If he *had* asked you to marry him, Joan?"

"Well?"

"Would you?"

"*Cosmo!*"

"You told me I might ask you anything!"

She stood, turned to the roadside, and sat down on the low earth-dyke. Her face was white.

"Joan! Joan!" cried Cosmo, darting to her side; "what is it, Joan?"

"Nothing; only a little faintness. I have walked a long way and am tired."

"What a brute I am," cried Cosmo, "to let you walk! I will carry you."

"Indeed you will not!" she answered, moving a little from him.

"Do you think then you could ride on a man's saddle!"

"I think so. I could well enough if I were not tired. But let me be quiet a little."

They were near the place where Cosmo's horse must be waiting him: he had told his groom not to come so far as the night before. He hurried on to bring the horse, and send the man home with a message to Grizzie.

To Joan it was a terrible moment. Had she, frightful thought! acted on a holy faith which yet had no foundation? Had she come to him to be asked whether she would not have married his friend! Alas, she had taken much for understood that was not understood!

When she sat down, Agnes stopped—a good way off: till the moment of service should arrive she would be nothing. Once and again she started to run to her, for she feared something had gone wrong, but checked herself lest she should cause more mischief. When, however, she saw her at last sink sideways on the dyke, she ran; but seeing Cosmo hastening back, she stopped yet again.

Before he reached her Joan had sat up. The same faith, or perhaps rather hope, which had taken shape in her dreams, now woke to meet the necessity of the hour. She rose as Cosmo came near, said she felt better now, and let him put her on the horse.

But now Joan was determined to face the worst—to learn her position, and know what she had to do.

"Has the day not come yet, Cosmo?" she said. "Will you not now tell me why you left me so suddenly?"

"It *may* come with your answer to my question whether——"

"You are cruel, Cosmo!"

"Am I? How? I don't understand."

This was worse and worse! It made Joan more than almost angry. It is so horrid when the man you love *will* be stupid! She turned her face away, and did not speak.

A man must sometimes take his life in his hand, and at the risk of even unpardonable presumption, suppose a thing yielded, that he may know whether it be or not; but Cosmo was truly somewhat of the innocent Aggie took him for.

"Joan, I don't see how I am wrong, after the permission you gave me!" persisted he, too modest. "Agnes would have answered me straight out!"

"How do you know that?" she asked, almost imperiously, turning towards him, but widening the distance between them.

"I asked her to marry me," replied Cosmo.

"*You asked her to marry you!*"

"Yes; but she wouldn't."

"Why wouldn't she?"

Joan's face was now red as fire, and she was biting her lip hard. It was well she was angry, or the blood would have gone elsewhere.

"She had more reasons than one. Oh, Joan, she *is* so good!"

"And you are going to marry her?"

Cosmo turned and called to Agnes, following some thirty yards behind them:

"Come here, Aggie," he said.

Agnes came quickly.

"Tell lady Joan, Aggie," he said, "what for ye wadna merry me."

"'Deed, my leddy," said Agnes, her face also like a setting sun, "ye may believe onything he tells ye, jist as gien it war clean gospel. He disna ken hoo to mak a lee!"

"I know that as well as you," replied lady Joan.

"Na, ye canna du that, 'cause ye haena kent him sae lang."

"Will you tell me why you would not marry him?"

"For ae thing, 'cause he likit you better nor me. Only he

thoucht ye was merriet, an' he didna like lattin' me gang frae the hoose."

"Thank you, Agnes," said Joan, with a smile nothing less than heavenly.

And therewith she slipped from the saddle, threw her arms round Aggie's neck, and kissed her.

Aggie returned her embrace with simple truth, then disengaged herself gently, and said, putting her hand before her eyes as if she found the level sun too strong for them,

"It's verra weel for you, my leddy, but it's some sair upo' me; for I tellt him he cudna merry his mither, an' ye're ful as aul' 's mysel'!"

Joan gave a sigh.

"I am a year older, I believe," she answered, "but I cannot help it! Nor would I if I could; for three years ago I was still less worthy of him than I am now. And after all, time is but a trifle."

"Na, my leddy, it's no a triffle. But some fowk cairry their years lichter nor ithers."

Here Cosmo set Joan up again, and as they went on gave her a full explanation of his leaving her as he did. Neither of them thought of suppression because of Aggie's presence. She would have fallen behind, but Joan would not let her. She put down her hand, and made Agnes give her hers, and so kept her: she walked alongside of the horse, and heard all the story—with the rest of it, how Cosmo yielded Joan because poor Jermyn loved her. She now laughed and now cried as she listened.

When Cosmo ceased, she put the hand that was free upon his shoulder, said, "Cosmo, ye're worth it a'!" then without removing her hand, turned her face to Joan and said,

"My leddy, I dinna grudge him to ye a bit noo 'at he's yours, an' a' 's come aboot as it sud. I'll be mysel' again noo—an' that ye'll see. But ye'll mak allooance, my leddy! for ye hae a true hert, an' maun ken 'at whan a wuman sees a man beirin' a'thing as gien it was naething—'maist like a god, no kennin' he's duin' onything by or'nar', she can no more help loein' him nor she can help loein' the mither 'at bore her, or the God 'at made her. An' mair, my leddy, I mean to loe him yet. But seein' 'at them 'at God has j'ined, man nor wuman maunna sun'er, I winna pairt ye even i' my min'. Whan I think o' the tane it'll be to think o' the tither; an' the love 'at gangs to him 'ill aye rin ower upo' you—forby what I beir ye on yer ain accoont.—Noo ye'll gang on thegither again, an' I'll come 'ahin'."

It was now to Agnes as if they were all three dead and in the

blessed world together—only she had brought with her an ache which it would take time to get tuned. Pain is discord.

"Ye see, my leddy," she concluded, as she turned aside to sit a moment on the bordering turf, "I hae been a mither til 'im!"

Who will care to hear how Joan went to visit relatives who to her surprise had begun to take notice of her! how she came with them, more gladly than they knew, on a visit to Cairntod! how such a longing seized her there that, careless of consequences, she donned a peasant's dress, and set out for Castle Warlock! how she thought she had lost her way, and was growing very uneasy, when she saw Cosmo against the sky before her!

"But what am I to do now, Cosmo?" she said. "What account of myself and my absence am I to give to my people? You must get me out of the scrape somehow."

"I won't."

"What is to become of me then?"

"You'll have to stop in it. You must just tell them that you met an old lover, and finding him now a rich man, like a prudent woman consented to marry him off-hand."

"I must not tell a story."

"Pray, who asks you to tell a story?"

"You do, telling me to say I found my lover a rich man!"

"I do not. I am rich."

"Not in money."

"Yes, in money."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I forgot. How could I remember with you there, filling up all my seeing and thinking!"

"But what am I to do to-night?"

"To-night?—Oh!—I hadn't thought of that!—Aggie!"

Aggie came again to his call, and was consulted. She thought for a minute.

"As sune 's ye're hame, Cosmo," she said, "ye'll sen' yer man straucht awa' upo' the horse to lat my leddy's fowk ken what's come o' her. She better write them a bit letter, an' jist tell them she's fa'en in wi' an auld acquantance, a lass ca'd Agnes Gracie, a dacent yoong wuman, an' haein' lost her ro'd,—for ye did lowse the straucht ane, my leddy, an' hae come far aboot—an' bein' unco tired, she's gaein' hame wi' her to sleep. That w'y the' 'll be nae lees tellt, an' no ower muckle o' the trowth."

Cosmo began to criticize, but Joan insisted it should be as Aggie said.

When they arrived at the castle, Grizzie was not a little scandalized to see her young master with a country-lass on his

horse, and making so much of her. But when she was given to understand who she was, and that she had *dressed up* in order to make her way to Castle Warlock on foot, she was filled with approbation even to delight.

"Eh, but ye 're a lass to mak a man prood, my leddy!" she exclaimed. "Sit ye doon, my leddy, an' be richt walcome.—I' the auld laird's ain cheir, my leddy!—Eh, but ye 're bonny, as ever was ony! An' eh, but ye 're steady as never was leddy! May the Lord bless ye, an' the laird kiss ye!"

This outbreak of benediction rather confused Cosmo, but Joan laughed merrily, being happy as a child. Aggie turned an expostulating face to Grizzie in dread of more; but the true improviser seldom, I fancy, utters more than six lines together.

They had supper. And then a cart came rumbling to the door, half full of straw, into which Joan and Aggie scrambled. A few eggs, and some milk, and several other things were handed in, and thus the friends set out for Muir o' Warlock. In the morning lady Joan declared she had never slept sounder than in old Grannie's box-bed.

Cosmo and Joan were married almost immediately, and nobody's leave asked. Cosmo wrote informing lord Mergwain of the fact, and had in return, from one writing as his lordship's secretary, an acknowledgment of the receipt of his letter.

Of what they told each other, and what they did; of the way they lived, and how blessed they were even when not altogether happy—of these things, I say nothing, leaving them to the imagination of him who has any, while for him who has none I grudge the labour, thinking he would rather hear how much Cosmo got for his diamonds, and whether lord Mergwain married, or Cairncarque came to lady Joan. But neither will I tell him these, for upon such things even *he* is capable of employing his fancy, and it would be a pity to prevent his doing the little he can.

I will close my book with a poem Cosmo wrote—not that night, but soon after. In the height of joy the poet may flash out in a phrase or two, but he writes no poem then. The joy has begun to be garnered ere the soul to sing of it. How we shall sing when we believe and know and *feel* that *our life is hid with Christ in God!*

Here is my spiritual colophon.

All things are shadows of thee, Lord;
The sun himself is but thy shade;
My spirit is the shadow of thy word,
Thy candle sun-bedayed!

Diamonds are shadows of the sun;
They gleam as after him they hark:

My soul some arrows of thy light hath won,
  And round me slays the dark !

All knowledge is but broken shades—
  In gulfs of dark a wandering horde :
Together rush the parted glory-grades—
  And lo, thy garment, Lord !

My soul, the shadow, still is light,
  Because the shadow falls from thee ;
I turn, dull candle, to the centre bright,
  And home flit shadowy.

Shine, shine ; make me thy shadow still—
  The brighter still the more thy shade ;
My motion be thy lovely moveless will !
  My darkness, light delayed !

**THE END.**

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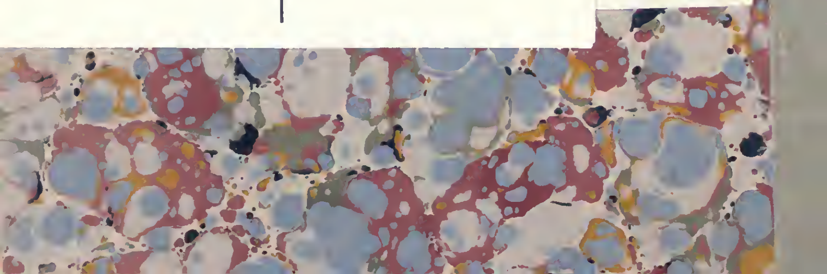

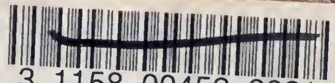
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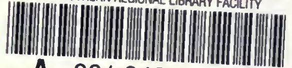
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