A LOVE STORY OF TO-DAY.

By JAMES STURROCK,

Author of "Sketch of Dr. Norman Macleod," "Sermons on Scottish Song," "The Prince's Charm," &c.

"Mightier far
Than strength of nerve or sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun or star,
Is Love, though oft to agony distrest,
And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's breast."
Wordsworth's "Laodamia."

CHAPTER I.

"We are born into the world, and there is something within us which, from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness."—
Shelley, "On Love."

CHRISTMAS was drawing near—merry Christmas! with its glad memories and bright hopes—when one particular Friday night, as David Graham sat alone reading before a cosy parlour fire, his old friend, Allan Marchmont, knocked gently at the door and stept in. David was always delighted to see Allan, and very naturally too, for they had been bosom friends and companions ever since they sat together on the same form at school.

Both were natives of Lochdale, a royal burgh in the north-east of Scotland, whence they came to Glasgow nearly six years ago, and within a few weeks of each other. Both were promising young men about twenty-five years of age; tall, well made, good-looking fellows.

Graham was fair and somewhat ruddy, with a rich light brown beard; his forehead was broad, smooth, and well rounded at the temples. In quiet moods his large, deep-grey eyes were thoughtful

and dreamy, but they would flash with fire and merriment in the presence of gay company.

Marchmont had dark hair and a pale olive complexion; his head was moderately high and long; his brain, however, was fine, and his clear fresh blue eyes reflected a superior practical intelligence, lively feelings, and a keen sense of humour. Though he had only a slight moustache, his was one of those pale classic faces which require no whiskers to set them off.

Graham was now the manager of one of the departments in the warehouse of Mercer & Co., general drapers. Marchmont had passed as a Procurator, and was chief clerk in the office of Sharp, Easy & Stately, solicitors.

Graham knew very little about law, and Marchmont as little about drapery. In some important points of character, too, they differed widely; yet these two friends had much in common, and each seemed to be the complement of the other.

Marchmont was in capital spirits this evening, and it was soon evident that he was very desirous that Graham should go home with him to Lochdale at the New Year. After the usual enquiries about health and mutual friends, "My dear fellow," said Marchmont, "you are living in clover. Here you are in your own sanctum, with all your choice books and your fiddle within easy reach of you. The time is your own. You can read what you like, and do what you like. Happy man! Compare your studies with mine, and be thankful. Ah, well, merry Christmas will soon be here." Then slapping his friend affectionately on the knee, he exclaimed, "My dear fellow! Are you going home at the New Year?"

"I don't know yet; I'm just considering the matter," answered Graham cautiously.

"You should go, man. Just think of it—Friday—Saturday—Sunday—(counting slowly on the points of his fingers): remember we won't get such a chance again in a hurry."

"It would be very tempting if Lochdale wern't such a dull place in winter. Are you going?"

"Certainly! Why, it will be like a week's holiday."

They were earnestly discussing the matter when some one tapped at the door. It was the landlady, to say that a gentleman wished to see Mr. Graham for a minute.

Graham excused himself to Marchmont, and left the room.

"Then you have quite decided upon going?" said Marchmont,

after some further talk, on Graham's return. The Christian sentiments of the season had quickly turned the scale. Though Glasgow was more attractive than Lochdale at the New Year, Graham had resolved to deny himself for the sake of others, and replied emphatically—

"Most certainly."

"Then give me your hand. We'll go home together."

"Agreed," said both; and ratified the engagement by a hearty shake of the hand.

"The fire is low," remarked Graham; "we have been quite oblivious of it during the heat of our debate."

After putting on coals he went to a side table, and lifted a large jug.

"Hallo! What's that? a Roman jug?" cried Marchmont, "one would think so from its nose. You recollect Artemus Ward said, 'I could cry like a child over a jug a thousand years old, especially if a Roman one?'"

Graham laughed. Pouring out the liquor—it was only buttermilk—in a tumbler. "Here, Allan, take a draught of that for auld langsyne. It will remind you of The Haws."

Marchmont, being dry, took a big drink; smacked his lips, winked, and showed other signs of enjoyment. "Zounds, old boy, but that's rare stuff."

"Not bad for Glasgow. You mind the delicious nectar we used to get from Sally at The Haws, with the sweet golden flakes of butter among it? Of course, this couldn't compare with it; still it is good and fresh. I call it the poor man's claret." Waving his arm,

> "Bold and erect the Caledonian stood,
> Sweet was his mutton, and his claret good."

"Now, Allan, you like plain fare. There you have cheese and butter from The Haws, and biscuits and jam from Lochdale. You see how liberally my people furnish my table, and yet I—ungrateful dog!—would hesitate about going to see them at the New Year. Help yourself."

"Many thanks. Well, I must say, the buttermilk is good kitchen to biscuits and cheese. I shall keep a supply too."

After supper, Marchmont said, "Here is a curiosity I have brought; I had almost forgotten it." Unfolding a paper: "This is the draft of a love letter which Jonathan Weathercock gave me to-day for perusal. You remember the old clerk in our office who

writes poetry—that is Weathercock. The gay old boy handed me this, saying, 'Take it home and read it; don't let any one in the office see it.'"

"Oh! I shall be keen to hear it," cried Graham eagerly, rubbing his hands briskly.

"To let you appreciate the epistle better, I must explain that the poet affects to be in love with a handsome young lady, who passes the office nearly every day about twelve o'clock. They tell me that as the hour approaches he gets restless, and fidgets about on his stool 'like a hen on a het girdle.'

"To proceed, however, with the epistle," said Marchmont, clearing his throat affectedly; "Lend me your ears—listen to this seraphic strain—

"My dear Miss W * * * * *

You may remember the gentleman who had the pleasure of picking up the book you let fall one day last week. It was I, your humble servant.

The little incident may have slipt from your memory, but on mine it is stamped in letters of gold. Oh, that I were a book of yours, to be caressed by your soft white hands, and to bask in your sweet smiles. Foolish books! they know not how enriched they are when near you—they feel not the glory which gilds their pages when your bright eyes shine on them.

Ah, how well I remember the matchless way you thanked me: it would have made your fortune on any stage. Speech like yours 'sounds as if it should be written on satin;' your musical 'thank you' sings in my ear like an air from heaven, while the accompanying angelic smile haunts me night and day."

"Eh! Master David—you ardent lady worshipper—what think you of the gay Jonathan?"

"He'll do: an old stick burns fiercely."

"Oh, but that isn't the half of it—read the rest to yourself till I set my pipe agoing."

"What a gush!" exclaimed Graham, after finishing the document, as he met Marchmont's smiling gaze, now smoking serenely.

"Yes, a fine piece of verbal flower work," answered Marchmont.

"Very showy, indeed," rejoined Graham, glancing over the manuscript again; "comes more from the fancy than the heart, I think. Certainly an extraordinary letter to send to a lady—an entire stranger. Do you really think he despatched it?"

"I cannot say. I hope not. I should have told you that when Weathercock handed me the scroll, he also remarked, 'I cannot

stomach the letters you lawyers write: they are husks only fit for swine! Now, there's the sort of thing in which the soul of a man can find ample scope and pleasure.'"

"That is perhaps a key to it, Allan. The poet is disgusted, and no wonder, with your legal style, and has given you here a specimen of letter-writing after his own heart. His admiration for the lady, I believe, is quite sincere, and he has only relieved his pent-up feelings by expressing them. But who is Miss W.? Who is the peerless beauty who hath waked the poet's sigh? I see a number of stars after the W; quite a constellation in fact, hiding the fair lady's name."

"Five stars in all," said Marchmont; "I counted them—for I was curious to guess her name—six letters in all. But I could make nothing of it. Some day, however, the number of the stars may form a clue."

"Singular being! Weathercock. I should like much to be introduced to him."

"That can easily be done. After we return from Lochdale I shall ask him up to my lodgings some evening; he will be glad to come; and if he will drink a little toddy, we may expeet some amusement."

"Very good—capital! I wish you would invite Joshua Leadbetter too; he would sing a love-song—quite the thing for Weathercock."

"Certainly I shall tell Joshua to come—he would enjoy the fun immensely."

"Thank you. We shall have a rare night of it." After a meditative pause, "I WONDER WHO IN ALL THE WORLD MISS W. IS!"

Well, Weathercock in that letter, you see, terms her a sweet girl graduate—in plain language, I suppose she is either a student or a teacher—more than that I cannot tell you. And as to whether he ever despatched a fair copy of this letter, I rather think not. I'll tell you why. He was speaking to me the other day about a married lady whom he esteems very highly. He had passed her house the previous evening after dark, and he could not resist looking up at the windows, and ceremoniously doffing his hat! I asked him, what earthly good lifting his hat would do? the lady did not see him, or even know that he was passing, 'Oh, it doesn't matter for that,' he replied quickly, with feeling. *Ergo*, the man who could lift his hat to a lady in secret could also indite a letter to one without the least intention of sending it."

After some further discussion relative to the letter, Marchmont looked his watch, and finding it was later than he expected, at once rose to take leave.

Before separating, they arranged to have another meeting to settle about the homeward journey.

After seeing Marchmont to the door (off the premises they humorously called it) Graham resumed his seat by the fire, and mused. Looking dreamily at the fading embers, he said to himself, "Poor Weathercock! how I pity him. Another soul out of its sphere: a lawyer's office is no meet nurse for a poetic child—Marchmont, though a clever, good fellow—and a merry, cannot fully understand the poetic soul: he hath no wings to cleave the empyrean."

CHAPTER II.

"Anticipation forward points the view."

Burns.

"And so it is settled about going home," said David Graham to himself before going to bed after the delightful evening he had spent with Marchmont. "I am glad to-morrow is Saturday—yes I shall write to my father to-morrow afternoon, he would get it no sooner though I wrote it just now, and posted it in the morning."

"What does my father say?" reads his letter; 'we shall be very glad to see you at the New Year, if you find it convenient.' "There's a fine door of escape, if I had liked. My dear father! how unselfish you are. Well, I shall certainly try and make it convenient."

After going to bed, and before falling asleep, he was greatly charmed by hearing the Waits, on the quiet street, playing the *Adeste fidelis.* It gave such a sweet flavour to his new born happiness.

On Saturday, after tea, he penned the following letter to his father.

Miss Drysdale's,
45 WAVERLEY PLACE,
GLASGOW, *19th December, 18—.*

My dear Father,

I duly received your letter. Many thanks for your cordial invitation home at the New Year. You may be sure I shall try to come, and I do sincerely trust nothing will prevent me—not even a snow storm—so much would I like to spend two or three days in the old home. Only one who, like myself, has been away for half a dozen years

and living in lodgings, can realize the wondrous charm of being once more under the paternal roof. I fully expect it will be convenient for me, and certainly I shall leave no stone unturned so as to get away.

Allan Marchmont was up seeing me last night, and we had such a pleasant talk about going north. Allan said his mind was quite made up; he was bent on the journey 'weather permitting fither or no,' as the Aberdeen carter put it. So we shall go home together. Won't it be delightful?

Kindly tell grandfather that Marchmont and I will be along at The Haws on first Saturday of the New Year. I am eager to see how the dear old farm is looking in mid winter. And the everlasting hills, too, in their mantles of snow, will be grand. Even in winter nature is beautiful to the artistic eye, but yet I would not much care just now for being at the other side of Ben Katelow. I shall be content to admire the noble Ben at a discreet distance.

How happy I shall be if I find the folks at home all well and in good spirits—not, of course, forgetting my particular friend old Sally, who will rejoice to get another blink of her favourite. But I must stop: a friend has just called. Other news when we meet.

Please tell Robert (he likes to hear from his big brother) that I shall answer his letter very soon. With kindest love to you all.

I am,

Your very affectionate son,

DAVID GRAHAM.

Mr. MATTHEW GRAHAM,
Bookseller and Stationer,
LOCHDALE.

CHAPTER III.

"O thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars."

Marlowe.

"But to see her was to love her,
Love but her, and love for ever."

Burns.

After Graham had written to his father, the current of his thoughts was homeward bent. His mother wished him to try and leave Glasgow by the two o'clock train, and thus accomplish the half of the journey in daylight. David replied that both he and Marchmont were to endeavour to start at that hour. But they did not manage it. Marchmont came up to Graham's lodgings, on the evening preceding Hogmanay, and told him that a crotchety old lady had taken it into her head to have her will signed before the year expired, and that Mr. Sharp, who was going out of town, had

asked him to attend to the lady when she called. There was no help for it but to take the four o'clock train.

"We can drop a line to our folks to-night telling them when to expect us," said Marchmont, "they'll get it to-morrow forenoon sometime."

"That will do nicely," answered Graham, "I'm quite glad that my mother will go to bed to-night still in the happy belief that we are to arrive at tea-time,"

"Yes, I am sure it will be jollier going by the four o'clock train, for it will then be dark," said Marchmont, rubbing his hands with glee. "Does not your favourite poet, Longfellow, say some fine things about the evening lamps being lighted.

"So he does. Upon my word, Allan, what a man you are for striking the electric chord. But if I remember rightly, it is "*Ere* the evening lamps are lighted," that the poet sings of the "Footsteps of Angels."

"Never mind, my dear fellow, you may sit beside a wingless angel in the carriage, and make love to her under the dim lamp light."

"Ah, that would be a joy indeed; more especially if, in the after time, I could fondly say of her in the poet's words,

> And to me the being beauteous,
> Who unto my life was given,
> More than all things else to love me—

Time enough for what follows after we have met that fair saint on earth. She must be somewhere, you know, Allan."

"To be sure, she is; or you are to marry a girl more than twenty-five years your junior! Well, we shall see. I am sure the ladies will be franker in the lamplight. We must keep a sharp outlook for one or two nice girls."

"We must. It would be very pleasant indeed if we were successful. We shall do our best."

Graham and Marchmont expected the pleasure of their holiday to begin in the railway carriage. They were to enter one where there were some young ladies whose appearance promised some romantic entertainment on the long journey. No difficulty was anticipated in choosing their fair fellow travellers, provided they were both forward in good time.

In Graham's quiet cosy parlour it seemed so easy to walk along the platform, and pick and choose their companions, but when they

reached the station they discovered they had 'reckoned without their *host*. So it happened they found themselves bundled in among a bevy of mothers and babies. Hogmanay, however, not being the season for giving way to melancholy, they accepted the situation cheerfully, and soon found the 'overland route' to the heart of the mothers by toying with and praising their children.

At Perth Station twenty minutes were allowed. On alighting Graham and Marchmont hurried to the Refreshment Rooms, which they found full to overflowing, and, as they expected, drinking rather than eating prevailed. Elbowing their way through the crowd they got to the far end of the counter, away from the liquor taps. Soon they caught the eye of one of the barmaids, who, smilingly, brought them coffee and sandwiches.

"Now I feel ready for an adventure," said Graham gaily on quitting the Refreshment Rooms. "Oh! if the being beauteous would only appear now, Allan."

"Hardly worth while for all the distance. I wouldn't give a smoke at this moment—no—not to travel with a Countess."

On being assured that the Aberdeen train would not start for ten minutes yet, Marchmont lit his pipe and strolled along the platform.

Graham sat down and watched the bustling scene. Among the crowd he noticed the learned and popular Sheriff of Perth, and at once there flashed across his mind's eye the gay scene he had witnessed when incidentally on the same platform in Autumn last. What a change! Then the afternoon sun filled the station with a flood of warm light, and he was privileged to see the Prince and Princess of Wales and many of the nobility and gentry. Between the royal carriage and the dining saloon a crimson carpet was laid, on which a white gloved and swallow tailed guard of honour moved about, armed with shining batons; and the gay, elderly gentleman who delighted to chaff the young ladies pressing forward on the rope fence, eager and panting to catch a glimpse of Royalty, was the Sheriff alluded to—now alas! no more. Graham remembered well, after the Prince and Princess had stepped into their carriage after dining, how the pent-up emotions of some of the young ladies found vent in a gush of tears. Others sighed heavily, and envied the wedded bliss of the royal pair. In particular, he observed one handsome lady whose languid air and stately eyes seemed to betoken an empty heart—a heart still "thirsting after its likeness,"

and yearning to give it to some noble swain in exchange for his. Very touching to see the proud and haughty belle, conscious of her beauty, and that she was the cynosure of all eyes, looking somewhat wearily, as if she beheld nothing to admire, just such a lady as Alexander Smith, in his Life Drama, has so finely pictured; one who soothed herself to sleep with her own lute, who floated about the lake feeding her swans, and had nought to stir her blood unless she scolded her women thrice a day. Opulent but unhappy darling, her passionate cry was,

> Oh, empty heart!
> Oh, palace rich and purple chambered,
> When will thy lord come home?

On this Hogmanay the scene was changed. A motley crowd of the "lower ten" jostled each other in the gaslight. Their dress was sombre, and, in many cases, ill-fitting enough, but quite warm and comfortable, judging from the happy faces and the merry laughter. Graham's imagination, in Autumn, was kindled by the dazzling show of Royalty and the assemblage of youth and beauty, but on this eventful night his bosom throbbed with kindly feelings as he heard the broad northern accent, familiar to his ear in the old home; he rejoiced to think that, beneath the plain garb and rough exterior, there beat hearts as noble and as fond and true as ever palpitated under robes of silk and satin.

He sauntered towards one end of the station where it seemed quieter and the lights fewer. He almost started when he saw his shadow on the wall. Then, while retracing his steps, he remembered again Longfellow's lines, and, glancing at the tall grim shadows, he sighed, saying to himself; "Ah, but where is the being beauteous?" He was awakened from his reverie by two ladies moving past him in haste to catch the Dundee train. These were the Misses Thimble, two sisters, employed in the same warehouse as himself. He was glad to see them. They, too, were having a holiday—a much needed one. Poor and plain looking, what chance had they of a husband? Marriage was a happiness too great for them. Their only hope was a bigger wage and shorter hours. What a contrast to the lazy sybarite of the palace, stretching out her white hand to the warmed air, and wondering when her lordly sweetheart would come home. The poor Misses Thimble, if they ever dream of a husband—and, no doubt, they sometimes do—the longing of

their heart is of a more homely kind. In their hours of ease they may be heard cheering themselves with a popular song, the chorus of which has nothing to do with lords and earls, but is simply, "I wonder wha'll be my man!"

As Graham approached the bookstall he saw Marchmont waiting for him.

"Well, you've had a pleasant smoke, I hope."

"Delightful! Now you may ask any favour you like."

"Thank you. Then let us try for better luck this time."

Here the bell rang loudly, and the porters shouted that all passengers were to take their seats. Then followed a sudden rush to the carriages.

Graham and Marchmont joined the throng. The train was already pretty well filled. They opened a few doors without finding an empty seat; some of these doors they closed again reluctantly where they saw one or two fine young ladies. At length they were successful. Graham had opened a door and glanced in, saying to Marchmont, who was close by, "there's room for one here;" at the same time looking a mute appeal into the face of the lady next the door on the left side. Quickly interpreting his wish, her eyes beamed and she kindly edged up a bit. With a "Thank you" Graham sprang into the limited space thus set free, fearing to lose the seat by a moment's delay.

Marchmont quietly took the vacant seat opposite, apparently well pleased.

Graham was more than pleased—he was happy. The lady's face was one of the type he dearly loved. Apart from her good looks her courtesy was prepossessing. Some ladies with a spurious modesty would have thought it imprudent to make room for a gentleman, but this young lady had evidently enjoyed a wiser and a happier training. He will never forget her lambent smile and gracious movement in answer to his anxious look for a seat.

To accommodate a stranger she had made a sacrifice, for Graham, when he sat down, found there was just room for him and nothing more. He liked his seat all the better for that: he enjoyed the lady's proximity immensely. She was pressed closely up to his left arm—near his heart. How auspicious!

The snow—the expected snow—had come, indeed it was now falling heavily, causing some to fear there might be a block on the line; while others were delighted with the snow: it was so season-

able for Hogmanay. As for Graham, he was like Tam O'Shanter,

"The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam didna mind the storm a whistle."

Since the snow began to fall the temperature had risen somewhat, but it was still cold and dark enough outside, so that the warm sense of comfort within made Graham nestle more snugly into his corner. Stimulated by the coffee and sandwiches he felt a delicious glow kindling within him, which was nursed by the genial surroundings and the pleasant thought of going home. But more than all was he charmed by the nice young lady, whose presence alone filled his heart with a sweet tranquil joy.

Lounging back in his seat, he meditated on his fair and amiable neighbour. As he peeped slyly towards her, all he saw were glossy braids of dark hair, a cheek, pale but smooth and plump and ready to dimple with smiles, and, in particular, he saw an extremely handsome ear. Unadorned with ring or pendant, that ear was a jewel in itself. He well knew that such a shape and texture—such fine and delicate convolutions—were the symbols of divine harmony.

"Who can tell" he said to himself "the angelic music to which that ear hath listened. How many God-fearing generations have gone to the moulding of that lovely gem? Hath it been daily tuned by the organ in the dim cloister? or by the rippling flow of a Highland stream, with all the woodland choir in full concert?"

He might have mused in this way a long time, but Marchmont broke the spell. He wanted to talk.

"Graham, when do you expect to be entered at Stationer's Hall?" This was a playful allusion to Graham's paternal roof.

"In an hour and a half or so—that is, if the snow don't hinder us."

"After you have entered Stationer's Hall, of course, all rights will then be reserved."

"Yes, to do as I please, and to eat and drink *ad libitum*."

"Ah! speaking about meat and drink, do you mind the feeding we had on board the Columba, sailing round the Kyles of Bute. At this festive season, what would one not give for a sailor's appetite?"

Marchmont delighted to recount his pleasure trips. Graham encouraged him to talk, now and then interjecting a humorous remark, and watching to see whether his fair neighbour were

interested. Her bright face looking towards them left no doubt of that, and he at once became animated, if not inspired. Leaving scenery, hotels, &c., they contrasted the characters and manners of the people of various nations—particularly the Scotch, English and French. In that theme there was more inherent eloquence for Graham, and he went into it *con amore*.

Marchmont contended that the French were very frank (he meant no pun) and were thus excellent travelling companions. "We Scotch," he continued, "are as a rule a dour lot with strangers —*dour*, yes, that is the word—now what is the use of wrapping ourselves up in a thick fold of reserve? why be so terribly clannish? Is not every man a brother? and is not every woman a sister?" glancing at the lady opposite, who smiled; "and does not our religion, of which we are so proud, exhort us to be kind to strangers, for thereby we may be entertaining angels unawares?"

Graham took up the weapons of defence. If he had a weakness, a pardonable weakness, it was to merit the virtuous approbation of the ladies. Now was the time to lodge himself in his fair neighbour's affections, and he thought he saw his way clearly.

He maintained that the gaiety of the French was hollow; they "made talk"—a poor apology for conversation—and their tongues were often mere tinkling cymbals. "The Scotch, on the other hand, have really something to say when they open their lips, and their words go straight to the heart." He concluded with a glowing panegyric on the many virtues of his fellow countrymen; their sincerity, their thoughtfulness, their patriotism, and the deep well of human affection behind all their reserve of manner."

After pausing a moment, Graham looked with flushed face towards the lady beside him, eager for her sympathy and support, then impulsively, yet softly, said—

"What is your opinion, Ma'm, please?"

A pleasant smile was all the answer.

"Do tell us, if you please," coaxingly uttered. "Don't you prefer the Scotch?"

"Yes, certainly. I've had a little experience of both the French and English in their own countries, but I like my own people best. But you know I may be too clannish!" glancing modestly and yet with charming humour across at Marchmont.

Graham turned triumphantly towards him. "Do you hear that?" he cried. But somehow or other that French partisan, for the

nonce, did not want to hear, and allowed his companion and the young lady to have it all their own way.

The train had now reached Woodside, a station beautiful with shrubs and flowers in summer, and Graham, after asking the lady's permission, opened the window and looked out.

"Well, Watchman! what of the night?" exclaimed Marchmont.

"Rather cold— sky murky, and the stars not up to their usual doin's, as Artemus Ward would say. But I see that the fairies have spread their snowy table-cloth for their banquet to-night."

It was the off window Graham was at, and seeing a boy with a branch of holly, he signalled him to approach.

"Will you sell me a bit of that holly? just a twig of it?"

The boy handed him a small branch.

"That's a fine fellow. Thank you"—handing him a few coppers.

Graham chucked in his prize with great glee. "We must have our Christmas decorations," he said archly; and proceeded to fix the sprig about the carriage lamp. Being a draper, the art of dressing was familiar to him. In a twinkling he saw that the neatest mode of adjusting the holly branch was to fasten it with a pin, which he instantly produced, as if he carried "the shop" about with him.

Marchmont watched the operation with an amused look, and as if coining something smart to say.

"I know, Graham, you would like very well if that were mistletoe, and that you were dodging about trying to catch a pretty lady under it."

"And perhaps I know some other body who would rival me in that bewitching game." Then looking at the lamp admiringly, "why, the dark yellow light and the green leaves appear to my fancy like the tiniest blink of an orange grove." Turning to the young lady, "Did you ever see oranges growing?" he blandly asked her.

"Oh, yes. I have had the pleasure of walking in an orange grove in the South of France."

"Ah, you have been highly favoured. And just fancy us—the like of us! home keeping-youths, who never crossed the Channel, prating about the manners of people in whose country we never set foot, and who know little or nothing about them at first hand. What presumption. I trust you will pardon us."

"Oh, no offence at all. I believe you both expressed the generally accepted opinions about the people you referred to.

After some farther talk, Graham and the young lady became quite gracious. Marchmont, who was not a lady's man, did not join the conversation, but sheltered himself behind a comic annual, and, alas, for the inconsistency of man, was thus practising what he had been condemning a minute or two ago; while his friend, wise man! was enforcing his arguments by showing what a Scotchman *can* do, when once the ice is broken.

Drawn out by Graham's questions and by his flattering attention, the lady told him some of the places she had visited while on the continent, and spoke also of the manners and customs of the people. She had the art of presenting the salient points of interest in few words and with fine picturesque effect, all the more attractive as there was no apparent effort or affectation about her style. It was charmingly natural. The dim light from the lamp—none the brighter for the holly decoration—and the drowsy looks of the other passengers, were all favourable for this quiet but delicious chat. No one (excepting Marchmont, of course) seemed to know or care that the young couple were strangers to each other—the happier for them! Her voice was low and sweet, and he felt serenely happy leaning slightly forward, looking up into her face with all the varied play of a loving intelligent soul beaming upon it. While looking at the stars at Woodside, he thought of her, and murmured to himself—

> "O thou art fairer than the evening air,
> Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars."

He could not help wondering who the lady might be, and what she might do. "A lady, who has been so much on the continent, now travelling alone in a third class carriage—at this season. How is that? Has she seen better days? Then a bright thought struck him, "perhaps she's a governess." That she might be so rendered her intensely more interesting to him.

Without a doubt she was exercising an extraordinary influence over him; he yielded himself entirely to the spell of the lady's presence, and to the thoughts and feelings that were surging and swelling within him regarding her.

After a brief silence, conversation was again resumed; in the course of which Graham exclaimed with subdued fervour:

"What an advantage you have over us in having beheld with the eye of sense so many grand sights. What looms in our imagination as mere shadows, are living realities in your memory

—clear and bright as the noon-day. I have enjoyed your descriptions very much, and thank you heartily for your kindness."

The lady smiled, and bowed graciously.

Graham looked his watch and glanced across at Marchmont; so absorbed had he been, he had taken no notice of him for some time.

That gentleman peeped slyly over his book and saluted Graham with one or two nods, which, freely translated, meant: "go it, old fellow; never mind me; you're doing very well," and then pretended to busy himself with a new page of comic pictures.

"You come from Glasgow—are you going far, may I ask," said Graham in his blandest tones to the lady.

"To Montrose," she answered frankly.

"No doubt some eye will look brighter when you come," he ventured to remark.

"I hope so," she whispered with charming naivete.

"Glasgow to Montrose—That's a long road to travel alone: you must be tired of it by this time?"

"Yes, it is somewhat tiresome; but I can't say that I have wearied since we left Perth."

"May I accept that as a compliment?"

A sweet smile lit up her countenance, conveying far more meaning than any spoken reply.

"You seemed to have no one to speak to—that must be my apology for intruding upon you. But after all"—smiling—"frankness is not a *bad* thing on a long and otherwise tedious journey."

"No, not *very* bad;" uttered with a decidedly humorous emphasis on very.

That touch of nature made them both kin.

"Lochdale will be here too soon," thought Graham, and sighed. Never had the journey from Perth been so pleasant, or seemed so short—and yet, in point of fact, thanks to Hogmanay and the heavy snow fall, the time on the road was really the longest in his experience—a most fortunate thing, considering the rare joy he had in the fair stranger's company. How he wished he were going all the way to Montrose with the lady. There was no help for it. Soon they must part—very likely for ever! What was to be said or done in the interval? How could he best crowd a lifetime into a few minutes? Might he ask her name, or address? No; modesty forbade: moreover, he had the instinctive feeling of a canny Scot that it would be injudicious to do so. Because the

lady had frankly entered into conversation with him, as a fellow-traveller, to vindicate, it might be, the charge of dourness laid against the Scotch, was it right or proper to intrude further than the courtesies of the journey permitted? He thought not; but wished very much he could have reasoned otherwise.

He actually trembled at the near prospect of parting from the lady: so deeply had she impressed him. Surely at last he had found his affinity; so much was he charmed with her face and conversation. Her beauty was not the showy kind which catches the vulgar gaze; she had not the peachy complexion which kindles the poet's frenzy; nor the golden locks which delight the painter. But to the discerning eye the lady's charms were of a high order; and Graham had the prophetic insight to appreciate these thoroughly. And yet he was not aware of her crowning charm until the lady opened her lips, and her sweet tones dropped from them like pearls. Beautifully white pearls, too, were visible when she smiled, and a bewitching dimple sported on her smooth and healthy cheek. Graham admired the face for its fine blending of strength and tenderness, intellect and good-nature. Just the kind of girl he had often thought of as an intellectual companion and a loving wife.

While engaged in talk with the lady, and as he felt how much she thrilled his being, these lines, which Marchmont and he had been quoting, recurred to him with tenfold significance—

> "No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
> So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

"Ah, indeed! How very well that sounds in Hamlet," he breathed inwardly; "but how different this evening is the reality—to me, at all events. Hath not this fairy taken my heart? Hath not this witch been endowed with power to charm? And this is Hogmanay—the Christmas season—so hallowed and so gracious is the time, forsooth! And that callous man opposite hath left Cupid to fire as many arrows as he pleased into this poor heart of mine. Well, well—I have done my duty—a very pleasant one. Still I wish that cool-headed lawyer had joined more in our conversation—then we might easily have arranged to cultivate the lady's acquaintance without either of us betraying a special interest. He is surely jealous of me—or indifferent, or both: just like him—always the refrigerator when a lady is in the case. I would hand her my card, but his eyes would be on me instantly; if I took out my card case.

What a pity there isn't a snow block and let him go out for a minute. Ah then, wouldn't I make it all right and secure with her!"

Graham looked his watch again, so concerned was he that the journey was nearly ended.

Turning to the lady he said: "I am sorry Lochdale will be here in a few minutes, where we must bid adieu. But I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you soon again in Glasgow."

"Thank you."

"I shall look out for you every time I am taking a walk. You are down the town pretty often, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. Generally on Saturdays I go into town to see the newest things in the shop windows."

"That is fine. We can hardly fail to meet each other some day."

While he spoke he looked intently at her face, as if trying to imprint it indelibly on his memory. He had never got a full view of it—only something like three-fourths of the lady's face being visible to him. Her hat, too, was worn well down on her brow. How would he be able to recognize the lady—say if meeting her full in the face, and she wearing a different style of hat? He saw the difficulty and immediately said—

"Would you kindly not pass by when you meet me, but stop and speak? I know that ladies are much quicker than gentlemen at recognizing their friends. May I ask you to do me that favour?

"Since you have asked me, I suppose I may try."

"Thank you very much. Now take a good look at me (turning fairly round, and smiling, quite regardless of Marchmont) so that like a detective you can say to yourself: '*I shall know that man again!*'"

The lady blushed and answered, "I'm afraid your photograph taken just now wouldn't be a good one to detect you by; the chances are you wouldn't be so animated and smiling."

"Then I must compose my features (makes an effort); now do I look grave and business like? (bursts into laughter). Its no use—my normal expression won't be forced."

The whistle sounded, the train was now within half-a-mile of Lochdale.

"Lochdale!" exclaimed Graham, with a nervous shiver, and on glancing at the lady, he noticed that her bright face had become suddenly clouded, as if she, too, was grieved to part. This marked evidence of reciprocal feeling touched him tenderly.

As the train slowed, he stooped down and pulled out from below the seat, what he supposed to be his own portmanteau. It was like his—the only apparent difference being a leather strap round this one, and it happened to intersect a written address. His quick eye caught thus much of the address—

MISS W , MONTROSE.

"Beg pardon," he said, hastily returning the portmanteau to its place, and securing his own, which he now remembered placing below the seat occupied by his friend Marchmont.

"Now we must say good-bye. I hope we shall meet soon again."

"Perhaps we may," she said, hopefully, holding out her hand.

Graham gave it a cordial pressure, which he felt was returned, and as their eyes met he trembled.

His father and his brother Robert were at the station waiting for him, and Marchmont's two sisters were waiting for their brother.

They all stood on the platform for a short time talking to each other.

In five minutes the train moved off into the darkness, carrying with it at least one bright spirit. As our hero gazed at the last carriage disappearing round the corner, he mentally ejaculated: "God bless you, my dear girl! May your journey be safe, and your welcome a hearty one."

Before the train left Lochdale, and while the other passengers in the carriage, just vacated by Graham and Marchmont, were gathered about the platform door looking out, the young lady, now known as Miss W, Montrose, rose and unpinned the sprig of holly. Gazing at it fondly, she smiled in wonder when she saw that the shining leaves were thornless: a bit from a high branch of the tree. Touching the holly softly with her lips, she then placed it in her bosom—henceforth to be cherished as a precious souvenir!

CHAPTER IV.

"One whom the strong sons of the world despise.
For lucky rhymes to him were scrip and share,
And mellow metres more than cent for cent."

Tennyson.

According to promise, Allan Marchmont invited Jonathan

Weathercock to his lodgings to have a tumbler of toddy and a chat with one or two congenial friends. Weathercock was delighted, and Friday evening, the 8th of January, was the date fixed upon for the little party.

Marchmont had been fortunate in falling in with an old school fellow of Weathercock's, from whom he obtained the full history of Jonathan's career, and also the loan of one of his photographs.

On the night previous to the party, Marchmont went up to Graham's lodgings to tell him all about Weathercock, and to show him the portrait. There he found Joshua Leadbetter, their common friend, who was also to be present at the convivial meeting.

After fully discussing Weathercock's history, and comparing it with his photograph, Marchmont said: "from his soft pensive expression perhaps you think there is no fun in old Jonathan, and that he cannot laugh—laugh! just wait till you hear him. If he does not make the roof reverberate, he will be in very low spirits indeed. After a night with him you can judge for yourselves if it was wise to send such a mercurial and poetical spirit to undergo the drudgery of a lawyer's office.

On Friday evening Graham and Leadbetter were both at Marchmont's at half-past seven. Graham brought his violin with him, as Marchmont wished the poet-clerk ushered in with music.

At eight o'clock, when Weathercock was expected, Graham began to play "Welcome, royal Charlie," his companions joining bravely in the chorus. All three were singing with great spirit—

"O! ye've been lang o' coming,
Lang, lang, lang o' coming;
O! he was lang o' coming,
Welcome, royal Charlie,"

when the door bell rang. The door being on the common stair the poet could not but hear the music. Graham laid down the fiddle. A clear bell-like voice was heard enquiring for Mr. Marchmont. It was Weathercock's.

On entering the room he immediately burst out: "Good evening, gentlemen, I heard the sweet sound of music, and I said to myself 'Surely there is joy to-night in this land.' But I did not expect to come to the very fountain-head of the music. Pray who has been charming the evening air in so sprightly a manner?"

"This is the musician—Mr. Graham—an old friend of mine—and Mr. Leadbetter, another chosen friend."

Weathercock shook the hands of his new friends very cordially, saying: "Gentlemen, I feel proud to be introduced to you." The poet's face was radiant at finding so merry a company, truly a feast to a solitary man like him.

The bell was rung and the servant girl appeared—a young thing in her earliest teens.

"Bring the brass kettle and hot water, if you please, Polly."

"Thank you," said Marchmont kindly, as the little girl placed the requisites for toddy on the table. "Put on coals now, Polly, like a good lass, and we won't trouble you again for a while."

"How pleasantly you address Polly," said Weathercock. "It does one good to hear you syllable her name."

"Ah, Mr. Weathercock, you should hear how Polly-syllables his name," cried Graham with glee.

"What, a pun! Gentlemen," said the host gaily, "let us drink to the prosperity of that jest, the first-born of this merry night. Mr. Weathercock, help yourself to this prime North Port, and may you be able to say 'His port I love.'"

After drinking and laughing at one joke or another, Mr. Leadbetter was called on for a song.

Whereupon the minstrel boy, as they termed him, with a roguish twinkle in his eye, took a sounding pipe from his waistcoat pocket. "Nothing like blowing your own trumpet," he remarked, meanwhile adjusting the pipe. "I don't pretend to be a scientific singer, Mr. Weathercock, and like sometimes to astonish the audience with a flourish of this trumpet before starting a song. It throws dust in the eyes of those charlatans who affect to tell you to a semitone the dual notes of the cuckoo. I have no patience with these cold scientific warblers. But this pipe strikes them dumb. They dare not criticise after the careful and elaborate way I pretend to pitch the keynote. All the rest, I assure you, are native wood notes wild. I shall try 'Bonnie Bessie Lee.'"

Having a fine tenor voice and a strong affectionate nature, Leadbetter rendered this song in a manner which delighted Weathercock.

"Thank you, Mr. Leadbetter," said he warmly. "If I were you, I would take my goods to the best market."

"Well, I'm a mercantile man, and always try to do that. But perhaps you are hinting that I should become a professional singer."

"Oh, dear no, Mr. Leadbetter; not that exactly. No doubt you would be handsomely paid as a vocalist; but what I mean is, that

with your other gifts and graces, physical and mental, you could, with your splendid voice, mesmerise any lady you please. Do you comprehend! I see by your smiling that you do. Yes, Mr. Leadbetter, just you sing once with all your heart to the girl you wish to capture—and—well, you may whistle o'er the lave o't."

"Indeed, Mr. Weathercock, you flatter me highly."

"Try some of this homemade cake, Mr. Weathercock," said the host, "I can recommend it. My sister made it."

"She did. Then it must be very fine." Eats a bit with a critical air and expresses his enjoyment.

"Perhaps you will kindly make a couplet on the cake to send to my sister. It will please her very much, I'm sure."

"Ah, Mr. Marchmont, I am not a good *improvisatore*, but I shall make an effort."

After several laughable attempts, uttered aloud for the merriment of the company, the following was the couplet chosen.

"Sweet cake, so rich and soft, so fine and free,
The girl who made it, is the wife for me."

"Capital! my sister will be charmed with it."

"She would be more delighted to hear our friend singing Bonnie Bessie Lee. I tell you, Mr. Leadbetter, you have but to sing and you invest yourself in a golden halo. No lady could resist its fascination, any more than the poor moth can keep out of the flame. My dear sir, I would not have you selling yourself for money, but you should go where money is, and get it thrown into the bargain."

"I've no objection to that, Mr. Weathercock. Will you help me? Will you introduce me to one or two of the good looking heiresses that come about Sharp & Coy's."

"Apply to him," (pointing to Marchmont); he is the man who comes into contact with the fair clients, and if he dosen't secure a rich wife for himself—he's a Dutchman."

"I'm no ladies' man, Mr. Weathercock. You know well that I have nothing to do with the fair clients except on business."

"Don't tell me. Where there's a *will* there's a way! And the proverb means more to a lawyer than to anybody else. Now, there is Miss Dallas—and her sister—each worth half a dozen thousands or so. Why, gentlemen, two of you could have a wife out of that family."

"Are they nice girls?" asked Leadbetter; "are they as charming as Bonnie Bessie Lee?"

"Ask him" (nodding to Marchmont), "if they could hold the candle to Bessie, the sooner you get your artillery in order the better. See that your voice is clear and mellow that night of the introduction, for the first impression is all important. What a bewitching creature was Bonnie Bessie Lee wi her face fu' o' smiles!"

"But not to be compared to Miss W.!" said Marchmont slyly.

"Compared to Miss W.!" echoed Weathercock, "not for a moment. I would as soon think of comparing a frisky Highland pony to a noble Derby racer!"

The mention of Miss W. startled Graham, he coloured, moved suddenly in his chair, and drank off a glass of toddy to cover his confusion.

"Miss W. must be a stunner," said Leadbetter, lifting the glass to his lips, and looking at the fresh holly sprigs adorning the gasalier. "Is she fresh and blooming like that holly? is she ruddy as the berries?"

"A thousand times brighter than the berries—not much of the ruby in her complexion, however. But oh, she is far above rubies!"

"You dont say so," exclaimed Leadbetter with enthusiasm. "We must drink better health to the pale faced Miss W."

"Oh no, gentlemen—the lady needs no cosmetic—her complexion is simply perfect. Let us toast her with brimming glasses as "The Golden Lily"!

"Yes, gentlemen, "The Golden Lily!" shouted Graham with sincere fervour, for in his mind's eye he saw his own Miss W. and he was transported at the bare probability of Weathercock's Miss W. and his being—to use an Irishism—one and the same lady. Their complexions were alike. Better still, they had both rare and wonderful voices.

"The Golden Lily" was drunk with all the honours, Leadbetter causing some laughter by singing gaily, For she's a jolly good fellow! For she's a jolly good fellow! which nobody can deny."

And nobody sought to deny it!

Apart from the curiosity which Graham had to meet Mr. Weathercock, he had, since his journey to Lochdale, as the reader is aware, another and very important reason for wishing to make that gentlemen's acquaintance, and that was, To ascertain, if possible, whether the "My dear Miss W." of the historical epistle had any connection with his own Miss W., and whether indeed she might not be that

veritable lady herself, as some hints and circumstances would seem to render very probable. But nothing further could be elicited from Weathercock this evening, although the combined efforts of the whole three—Graham, Marchmont and Leadbetter—were exerted with the view of drawing from the poet-clerk such a confession about his ideal lady as would lead to the desired indentification.

Our hero would never despair. HE WOULD TRY OTHER WAYS AND MEANS TO DISCOVER HIS MISS W. Impossible for him to wait the chance—perhaps the far-off chance—of again meeting her—her! the lady he so much admired, in the unromantic and crowded street.

(To be continued).

A LOVE STORY OF TO-DAY.

BY JAMES STURROCK,

Author of "Sketch of Dr. Norman Macleod," "Sermons on Scottish Song," "The Prince's Charm," &c.

CHAPTER V.

"A fair being, whose soft voice
Should be the sweetest music to his ear,
Awakening all the chords of harmony,
* * * * * * *
And woo his spirits to those fields Elysian,
The paradise which strong affection guards."

—*Alexander Bethune.*

ANUARY had gathered up all the Christmas and New Year cards, and with a tempestuous shake of her tail departed. February was advancing with smiles, decked with a grand array of valentines. January had taken with her the symbols of friendship, but February came with a prodigal supply of the symbols of a dearer passion than friendship. Holly, mistletoe, and other evergreens had eloped with January; whilst snowdrops, hyacinths, tulips, and other spring darlings were the radiant and perfumed attendants of the month sacred to Saint Valentine.

The change was one for the better. One good reason why David Graham did not feel depressed when the Christmas garlands disappeared. Nor was he disposed to give way to melancholy because a certain young lady whom he greatly admired had been out of his sight for a full calendar month. Certainly not! She had planted in his heart a flower of Hope, which he felt sure would bloom for ever.

But he must now try and find out Miss W. Having failed as yet to elicit information from Weathercock regarding *his* Miss W., the next thing to do was to look out for her as she passed Sharp & Co.'s office at the hour of noon, the time indicated in Weathercock's epistle to the lady. As Graham could not attend at that hour himself, he commissioned his companion, Marchmont, to watch for her and report. He had great faith in his friend's ability to recognize a face which he had once seen, having often observed how quickly he knew on the street clergymen, singers, and actors, whom he had seen only at a distance, in the pulpit or on the stage. Marchmont accepted the commission, not a little pleased with the flattery implied in the appointment.

He began his observations on the first Monday after Weathercock had been in his lodgings. At twelve o'clock he went to Weathercock's room, and engaged him in conversation, in the hope that Miss W. might pass during the dialogue. No lady having passed to arrest Weathercock's attention, Marchmont hinted to him that, if he had no particular objection, he would like to see the lady he had distinguished in so masterly a style. Weathercock was evasive and playful to begin with, but latterly promised to point her out if Marchmont gave his word that he would keep the matter private from the other clerks.

Accordingly, relying upon Weathercock's promise, Marchmont when he found it convenient went to his room for several days a little before twelve o'clock, in the hope of beholding the mysterious lady walking past the windows. But, unfortunately, the much-desired Miss W. never appeared. Nor had Weathercock seen her at any other time of the day. So Marchmont ceased his meridian observations. To please Graham, however, he volunteered to accost *his* Miss W. on the street if she should happen to cross his path—a likely enough thing, as he was often out.

The fact that Weathercock's dulcinea had evidently given up her customary walk at noon confirmed Graham all the more in his conjecture that she might be the fair passenger bound for Montrose on Hogmanay. And just to think that she possessed all the charms referred to in Jonathan Weathercock's high-flown epistle!

What was to be done now to recover the lost treasure? Advertise? Happy thought! What was the use of searching for a single lady among half-a-million of people? Yes, an advertisement is the thing! So he spent about an hour framing short

advertisements before he succeeded in drafting one to please him. After bestowing the final touch upon the successful copy, he laid it aside, resolving to take a night to consider the propriety of inserting it. "There is no oracle like the pillow," says the genial Oliver Wendell Holmes.

In the morning Graham examined the proposed advertisement carefully. It ran as follows:—

"Would the lady who journeyed to Montrose on Hogmanay, and who spoke to her neighbour about her travels on the Continent, kindly send her address to *** *Herald* Office."

Daylight had cooled his ardour. No, he would not insert it—not in the meantime, at least. He preferred meeting the lady by accident: he would trust to her promise to stop and speak to him if he did not seem to recognise her. Yes, he considered that the most prudent course, after weighing all the pros and cons. Why, for aught he knew the lady might be lame, or in fact almost anything; for he could say nothing about her figure or her walk. It was most unlikely, however, that so handsome a face, and so cheerful, could belong to a lady suffering from any bodily defect. Indeed, he never doubted that the lady was sound in wind and limb. And, apart from her youth (he guessed her to be about twenty), he had other reasons for believing her to be a spinster. Very probably, too, judging from her travels and her fine culture, she was a teacher or governess, as he had imagined while in the train beside her. Nor could he overlook the fact that she mentioned Saturday specially as the day when she went into town—really the only available day a teacher has. And as Weathercock's Miss W. was believed to be a teacher, was that not another strong point in favour of both ladies being one and the same?

Still Graham would not advertise. He would rather enjoy the luxury of seeking the hidden treasure in his own prudent way, more especially as he fully expected the lady would assist him.

The winter months rolled away, but still no signs of Miss W. The advent of summer, however, revived his hopes. How pleasant it was in fine weather to saunter along the streets where the youth and beauty of Glasgow mostly promenade! The hope of discovery, slight as it was, imparted a zest to his city rambles.

Vivid as was his memory of the lady's profile, he required to be near her before his recollection could be of any real service to him.

Often when approaching a lady from behind, especially one rather over the middle size, with full and graceful contours, and with the dark hair and pure, pale complexion, so like Miss W.'s, his heart would beat violently and his breath be suspended until he had passed. Then his circulation returned to its normal state, and he was able to say to himself, "Very like her—very like, indeed; but, ah! the ear and cheek are not so finely moulded."

Graham, as you know, was trusting to the lady saluting him some fine day: he fully expected she would stop and speak to him if she happened, only happened, to cross his path. It did not occur to him—strange to say—that Miss W. might be *cruising* as well as he, and that he was the gallant ship she wished to capture. He was too modest to imagine that he could occupy that splendid girl's thoughts to such an extent. He erred, however, in looking at the matter entirely from his own standpoint. An adept in the ways of women would certainly have given Miss W., handsome though she was, credit for a good deal of active exertion, and all for the express purpose of giving our hero a first-rate chance of renewing his acquaintance with her, if he really desired it.

When summer was far advanced—still no appearance of the fair Miss W. All the young ladies of good families were at the coast or in the country, so that Graham did not expect to see his lost charmer, unless it might be by the merest chance at some one of the lovely Clyde watering-places.

For all that, Miss W. was ever fresh in his memory. She had fairly dethroned the bachelor's wife—that fair being of all imaginable virtues. His affinity had been revealed to him in flesh and blood, and that alone afforded him no small satisfaction. What a consummate fool he often thought himself for not taking better means at the first meeting for securing so desirable a friend, and, if possible, something more dear.

The idea of an advertisement still now and again recurred to him, but was soon dismissed as being more inexpedient than ever. There were so many tricks, too, in advertising. Was it likely that a lady, who had any respect for herself, would reply to his advertisement, no matter how great its appearance of genuineness? He did not think so. He would have patience. He might never meet Miss W. again. The chances were being reduced to a minimum. But he did not despair. And he was, moreover, thankful for the

revelation he had obtained: the precious glimpse of his ideal incarnate would be a sure light to guide him in choosing a wife.

CHAPTER VI.

"Samivell, my boy, beware of the widders."—*Pickwick Papers.*

The allusion in the previous chapter to the ladies being at the coast reminds us of a pleasant remark by a well-known Glasgow schoolmaster—a very worthy man. "It is a mystery to me," he said, in his pawky way, "how the young ladies of Glasgow manage to pick up their education, for they dance all winter, and they dook all summer." But while the pedagogue complained that the protracted sojourn at the coast was detrimental to the minds of the young ladies, their male admirers, on their return, were lavish in praising their improved physical appearance. The salt water, as a cosmetic, had thrown into the shade the famed Arabian bloom and magnetic rock water. At the end of the 'dooking' season the Glasgow belles were either as brown as berries or radiant as peaches. Their vital energy, too, was greatly increased—so much so that their pretty feet were all tingling with eagerness to begin the winter's dancing.

Graham, on three or four Saturday afternoons of June and July, had taken a sail down the Clyde; not specially in the hope of seeing Miss W. about the coast somewhere, but it must be confessed that he had her always in mind when he surveyed narrowly the groups of gaily-dressed young ladies gazing from the various piers at which the steamer called. True, the steamer's deck, nor even the paddle-box, was the best place for accurate observation; besides, the difficulty of recognizing Miss W., in circumstances differing so greatly from her first appearance, was such that he could not place any reliance on his own detective skill unless the lady herself kindly gave him the cue. Consequently the end of the holiday season had come round without his having yet, to his certain knowledge, seen the lost one.

In the fine autumn days, however, when the main thoroughfares of Glasgow were again thronged with fair promenaders, he would sally forth, at times with a strong presentiment that Miss W. would present herself to-day. His presentiment was nothing more than the wish being father to the thought. Again the mellow glories of autumn faded into the dull and dreary tints of winter,

and no conscious vision of the much-desired maiden had been vouchsafed to him.

But as the shortest and darkest day drew near, light began to break on Graham's horizon: in the gathering gloom, thickened by the yellow fog, Hope's glimmering taper cheered him with a new sense of joy. He actually danced about his room, exclaiming, "Eureka! Eureka!"

Jonathan Weathercock caused this access of joy. Graham had been hearing various rumours of late which inspired him with a strong wish to meet that gentleman again. So when he came upon him quite accidentally in the street one cold December day, he did not merely bow to him and hurry past—no, he deliberately stopped, and greeted Mr. Weathercock with a sincere cordiality which had its desired effect. He invited Graham to his lodgings—in fact pressed him to come and take tea with him on a certain Wednesday evening. To induce him to come and grace his little party, Weathercock promised to invite a nice young lady to it (no less than the Miss W. so enthusiastically toasted at Marchmont's), and if she came, he was sure that Graham would not be disappointed.

Weathercock was very glad that he had secured Graham, as the lady would be much more likely to come when assured that a young and eligible gentleman was to be of the party.

How did Weathercock find out the lady's name, and something more about her? He saw her emerging from a stationer's shop in New College Street, and nothing was easier than to slip quietly into that shop, and make some trifling purchase. The girl behind the counter gave him a knowing smile when he asked, in a seemingly indifferent way, "Who was yon lady that went out just now?" She parried the question playfully, but was soon won over by Weathercock's irresistible gallantry to disclose the name. "Where does she stay?" was the next leading query; and it, too, was met with feminine evasion. She had eventually, however, to confess that, while she knew the lady's name (Miss Wilson, if she remembered rightly), from hearing a companion addressing her while both were in the shop, she did not know where she lived—very probably she lodged with some one in the neighbourhood, being a pupil-teacher attending one of the Normal Seminaries.

Weathercock rolled this information as a sweet morsel under his tongue while he walked along New College Street, wondering where this bewitching girl graduate deigned to take up her abode. He

wandered about the neighbourhood in the evenings, hoping to find out where she dwelt; but it was not till September, after the school holidays, that his patient efforts were crowned with success. He was taking his evening ramble, when he saw a young lady walking some distance before him: he hurried up, and was delighted to find that she was none other than the handsome pupil teacher of whom he had been long in search. He could not be mistaken with her "bounding grace of step and symmetry of mould." She went into the door or "close" No. 46 New College Street.

Having looked at the number, like Captain Cuttle, he took a note of it. The next thing was to be sure that this was the lady's lodgings, and not merely the house of a friend. To satisfy himself he sauntered about the door next morning, shortly before nine o'clock, and he had not been there above three minutes when he saw her emerge from No. 46. This he considered conclusive proof.

What was he to do now? Get lodgings at the same number if possible. He had no compunction about leaving Mrs. Hashaway—he was tired of her, and must have a change. Fortunately there was a lodgings ticket out at the top flat of No. 46. He went upstairs the same evening about seven, and rang the left hand door-bell. It was answered by a middle-aged lady neatly dressed in black. "Yes, I have a parlour and bedroom to let," was her smiling reply. "Will you be pleased to step in and look at the rooms?" He did so, and was charmed with them, as well as with the landlady's manner. He was delighted with the view from the oriel window. A row of flower-pots inside enhanced the beauty of this window, and confirmed his impression that Mrs. Smillie, besides having a pleasant manner, was a woman of taste. The rooms were considerably dearer than Mrs. Hashaway's—no matter, he would have them: a single gentleman at his age, and with his culture and refinement, must have some luxuries in lieu of a wife.

Mrs. Smillie's cheering, beaming countenance was an agreeable contrast to the anxious, toil-worn face of Mrs. Hashaway. She always welcomed Mr. Weathercock with a smile and a remark about the weather when she opened the door to him. And when she brought in his tea (he dined outside) she had always something more to say to her gentlemanly lodger. Thus they soon became very gracious. So the landlady thought.

Before long he resolved to have the company of Miss W. at his table. Nothing seemed easier. She lodged in the same flat, and Mrs. Harley, her landlady, was on friendly terms with his. He was all the more eager to have the young lady invited, because on the two or three occasions he had passed her on the stair, she had courteously exchanged civilities with him. Yes, she must be a superior girl, well educated, with no spurious modesty about her.

He asked Mrs. Smillie to invite her to tea on a particular Wednesday evening, along with a friend of his.

"Well, you know, Mr. Weathercock," said Mrs. Smillie, "there's little enough time, but I shall do my best. Of course we must ask Mrs. Harley also: it would never do to invite the young lady without her."

"All right, Mrs. Smillie, do what you think proper; but four women to two men (Mrs. Smillie's only daughter was also to be present, as well as herself)—well, never mind; I'll see if I can bring other two gentlemen."

Weathercock pressed Marchmont to come, but he had a previous engagement; and as Leadbetter was out of town, there was no other one he cared to invite.

Well, on the Wednesday evening in question, Graham was seen wending his way along New College Street, and turning in at No. 46. With mingled feelings of delight, eager curiosity, and doubt he ascended the stairs, and as he paused on the top landing to take a breath before ringing the bell, he was astonished at the extraordinary palpitation of his heart.

His excitement was soon over. He was ushered into Weathercock's parlour, where the tea things were on the table. So far all was promising, but the calmness of the host's welcome awakened a suspicion that there was to be a disappointment. It was too true. The young lady had a prior engagement; indeed, she had to go out every evening, and did not return till between ten and eleven. If home by ten, she would be glad to look in, if they wished it. "Wish it!" cried Graham, "of course we do: send a message to her at once that we shall be most happy to see her—even though after ten, anytime."

Weathercock immediately left the room to instruct Mrs. Smillie to deliver that message to Mrs. Harley for the young lady.

Anon Mrs. Smillie and her daughter entered. The mother got the post of honour, whilst Weathercock officiated as croupier; and

for his *vis-a-vis* Graham had the daughter. Mrs. Harley did not enter appearance. The square table was rather large for so small a party, seated as they were: the distance between the guests gave an air of stiffness and formality which made Fanny (the daughter) look ill at ease and uncomfortable.

"Fair was she to behold, that young maiden of seventeen summers"—that is to say, her hair and complexion were fair, but *quoad ultra*, as the lawyers phrase it, denied. To apply the term sweet seventeen to her would be gratuitous irony. The only child of her mother, and she a widow, Fanny ought to have been interesting, but Graham was sorry to find she was not. Her features were agreeable enough, but her expression was the opposite. Fortunately she had some slices of bread and butter to employ her hands and mouth with, for without this occupation Fanny would have been simply miserable.

Graham felt it his *duty* to smile and address a simple remark to Fanny now and again; but as she always glanced at her mamma to reply for her, or to give her a hint, he soon gave over speaking to the young lady.

But why all this about Miss Fanny, poor creature? Because our hero felt her to be such a provoking substitute for the splendid girl he expected to see—the wonderful lady around whom the genius of his host had cast such a halo; and if it had only happened, as was probable, that Weathercock's Miss W. and his Miss W. were identical, then indeed Miss Fanny would be a beggarly apology for such a brilliant star.

Still there was hope. If Miss W. did not present herself this evening, great care must be taken to secure her attendance on the next occasion.

Tea being over, mother and daughter withdrew. When the door was carefully closed behind them, Weathercock sat down beside Graham, and whispered in his ear, "Thank goodness! they are gone. I am sorry you have had such an infliction, but now we can have some rational talk."

"We shall hope for better luck next time," answered Graham complaisantly; "and as it is only nine o'clock, we can have a good crack till ten. And then, eh! suppose Miss W. should come in."

"Ah! that were a consummation devoutly to be wished," exclaimed Weathercock, with rising fervour.

"By-the-bye, what did you say the lady's name was?"

"Miss Wilson."

"Well, seeing we have not the pleasure of talking *to* that young charmer, let us delight ourselves by talking about her. You begin first," said Graham, rubbing his hands and drawing his chair nearer his interlocutor.

"With all my heart. But where shall I begin? Well, let me see (looking about vaguely, as if the subject matter were to be suggested from without)—would you believe it, Mr. Graham, there is only this wall between me and the lovely Miss Wilson? What a rich contralto voice she has!"

"You don't say so! Why, you may have a Pyramus and Thisbe courtship for aught I know."

"Ha! ha! I wish we had. To touch lips so divine would be a rapture too great. But only think of the pure joys imagination can give. When I lounge on the sofa, does it not add to my pleasure to fancy that *she* is doing likewise on the other side of the wall? Ah, that reminds me of something I must tell you. Some folks are not content with the eye of fancy. As a proof of it: A few summers ago my Uncle Oliver and I were travelling in the Highlands, and we stopped for a night at the Glen Dreary Hotel. We had a double-bedded room; my uncle slept in one bed, and I in the other. When we extinguished the candles and lay down, it would be about eleven o'clock, and was quite dark—no moonlight. Well, after pulling the clothes up to my chin, I lay awake for a minute or two, as one generally does in a strange bed. In a little I saw a yellow luminous spot on the wall, shining like the head of a brass nail. What the dickens can that be? I thought; a glow-worm? I rubbed my eyes, and looked again; still the tiny luminary was steady as a beacon-light. I was tired, and disinclined to stand up in bed to get a close view of the star; but no! it wouldn't do—I must be an astronomer for one night. I got excited. How on earth could I fall asleep with that mystery unexplained? You've heard, or read, of the prisoner who went mad because he knew that, day and night, there was ever an eye watching him through an aperture in the wall of his cell. I was like that prisoner. I must get up and examine that bright focus. I rose quietly to my feet, and placed my eye to the luminous point. Good gracious! I saw into the adjoining bedroom; and there stood before the mirror a fair being——"

"A fair being!" echoed Graham. "You electrify me. Were

you not afraid of being struck blind?" uttered in a grave tone of affected reproof.

"No, indeed, I was not. You see I didn't bore the augur hole and I could'nt help peeping through it."

"And so you gazed with all your soul—in fact—you looked and sighed—and sighed and sighed and looked again—until the lady, like another Christabel,

> Her gentle limbs she did undress
> And lay down in her loveliness."

Weathercock was smiling. "Why, man alive! your imagination is running away with you. I did not mention the sex of the fair being; but, of course, you—you amorous fellow! you must always have a lady in the case. Now I must bring you down a little—not altogether to mother earth, for there is still an element of romance in the incident. The form that stood before the mirror was indeed fair—but for all that a gentleman, an old school-fellow of mine, whom I had not seen for a generation; indeed, to my surprise, it was none other than Will Warren, the gay and volatile Will, who would stick to no business, and was now a bit of a Bohemian, sleeping with the head waiter for the night, as I afterwards discovered."

The relation of the augur hole incident was followed by a discussion, started by Graham, as to what was Weathercock's duty in the circumstances with a view to protect the public from the prying curiosity of the hotel servants. They had not settled the question when the door bell rang. Graham pulled out his watch—it was a quarter past ten. "Will it be she?" he whispered eagerly, not a little agitated. Both held their breath for a minute; the door opened; voices were heard in the lobby; then the sound of a door shutting grated on their ears—and all was silent.

"I fear we are not to see Miss Wilson to night," sighed Graham.

"We must try and arrange better next time," said Weathercock, consolingly. "I feel as much disappointed as you. She is such a fascinating girl."

When the clock in the lobby began to strike eleven, Graham said: "no chance of Miss Wilson being here to-night now, so I must be off (taking up his half empty glass of claret). Never mind, here's to Miss W., and may we have better luck next time."

"I heartily join you in that toast," cried Weathercock, rising to his feet, and suiting the action to the word with a glass of sherry.

While Graham was in the lobby, on his way out, accompanied by his host, Mrs. Smillie, ever on the alert for footsteps, sallied gaily forth from her room to bid Mr. Graham good-bye. She said little about coming back again, and nothing at all about Miss Wilson. No wonder, therefore, that he hated as well as suspected the smiling widow's extra bland and polite manners.

CHAPTER VII.

"Life is a drama of a few brief acts:
The actors shift, the scene is often changed."
Alex. Bethune.

Three years and seven months have elapsed since the date of the opening chapter. And David Graham was still a bachelor. Are you surprised? His friends marvelled at his continued celibacy, especially when he himself knew and felt so keenly that it was not good for man to be alone. Even Marchmont—then a benedict of two years' standing—declared that a wife would be the very life of David: he was such an affectionate fellow, it seemed altogether unnatural for him to remain single.

So his friends thought. As for Graham he gave himself little concern about their matrimonial considerations. To their friendly hints about taking a wife he listened with much good nature of course—so pleasing was the subject to him, as to all young bachelors. But he turned a cold eye upon designing mammas who pressed him to give them a call—they would be so pleased to see him any evening.

His conduct, he did not think, was at all influenced—not consciously at any rate—by the possible chance of some day meeting again with Miss W. Though still fondly cherishing the memory of that lady, he had long ago set her aside in his mental album, only to be looked at when in a sentimental or retrospective mood. Why should he be in a hurry to marry? He was very comfortable in his lodgings, 45 Waverley Place; where Miss Drysdale still ruled the roast, and was as kindly and attentive as ever.

He had never yet, to his knowledge, seen Miss Wilson, the young lady teacher, though he had hoped long ere this to have had the pleasure of meeting her, and of satisfying his longing curiosity as to what relation, if any, there might be between her and the

Miss W. of the railway train adventure. Weathercock again and again had urged his landlady, Mrs. Smillie, to arrange a small party, at which Miss Wilson should be a *sine qua non;* and she—so politic was the buxom widow—always professed her delight to do her best in the matter. When Weathercock, however, enquired what progress she was making with the proposed party, she always answered that the lady teacher (she did not name her) was so much occupied with her lessons—this being her last session at college—she could not spare an evening. It turned out to be true that the session then current was indeed the last one, for the young lady left Glasgow for good at the beginning of the summer vacation, and Weathercock had not seen her since. But whether Mrs. Smillie ever gave the sweet girl graduate a chance of meeting one or two eligible young gentlemen is very doubtful.

Perhaps Graham was difficult to please in choosing a wife. Thirteen years behind a draper's counter may have done something to dispel his illusions about women; or, it may be, he was too familiar with the lovely young Lavinias and Juliets of the ideal world, and the Ruths and Esthers of history, to yield his heart entirely to the worship of any living damsel. Certain it is, steeped to the lips in poetry and literature, the beautiful creatures of fancy occupied a large share of his devotion. So happy was he in the contemplation of the heroines of romance, and so delightfully absorbed in his intellectual pursuits and his music, that he felt sometimes, like Hugh Miller, as if he could make up his mind to live a bachelor life without being very much impressed by the magnitude of the sacrifice. That was how he would feel after two or three nights' pleasant seclusion in his sanctum. But let him be once again in the presence of live and real charmers, his notions about a celibate condition melted into thin air. Still it must be conceded that his taste was rather fastidious, and although he had a clear idea of the qualities he desired in a wife, it was not easy to find a lady endowed with all these qualities. True, he had once or twice met with a girl whom he could have married, but it turned out that she was either engaged, or there was some other insuperable obstacle in the way. On such disappointing occasions he would be vividly reminded of the unrivalled Miss W.: to her dear image he ever turned as the painter turns to his beloved ideal.

By this time, however, his regret at the loss of Miss W. was only

a dainty sort of melancholy, not in the least likely to break his heart. Though highly improbable he would ever see her again, yet, like all imaginative people, he had at times a strong presentiment that the two wandering stars would come together eventually once more.

Jonathan Weathercock: what about him? poor fellow. Was he, too, like our friend Allan Marchmont, a married man now? Graham could not say; nor could Marchmont;—indeed not one of Jonathan's acquaintances in Glasgow could tell. They all knew he went off suddenly to London in June last year to push his fortune as a litterateur, and no tidings had been heard of him since.

Joshua Leadbetter, the only remaining friend of our hero, who has played an active part in this history, comes last to be noticed.

You will remember that Joshua figured at Marchmont's little party as a capital singer. Well, he was now a merchant in Glasgow on his own account, and had been so for a year past. He was still a bachelor, a very pleasing fact to Graham, who enjoyed his company all the better, for, like himself, he was as yet a pilgrim of love, clad in a rainbow of illusions about the divinity of woman.

Fortunately, Leadbetter was endowed with a splendid constitution and great natural buoyancy of spirits, for without these excellent gifts the legacy of family misfortunes to which he succeeded would have crushed him. He had now, however, triumphed over the most of his difficulties, and being fairly prosperous and comfortable, was, like his friend Graham, looking out for a wife. No wonder, therefore, that these two gay bachelors dearly loved the society of each other more than ever.

Leadbetter was a year or two older than Graham. He would have started business much earlier, but he had not the requisite capital, a matter of surprise to every one, because for a number of years he had enjoyed a large salary, and now and again speculated successfully on a small scale. No one could understand where the bulk of Leadbetter's money was going to, and why he was so careful and economical; but that was simply because he did not trouble his friends with an account of his expenditure.

Graham, however, his bosom friend, eventually came to know for certain—what he had previously only suspected—that a third, ay, and at one time even a half, of Joshua's income went towards the support of his poor and unfortunate relatives; and he loved and

honoured him all the more for his self denial, and for his affectionate loyalty to his near kindred.

That was why Graham so readily offered to advance to his friend a substantial sum to enable him to begin business. It was only two hundred pounds; but that sum, added to Leadbetter's own capital, was quite sufficient for the purpose. Not wise perhaps in Graham to risk the most of his savings, especially as he could not tell how soon he might fall in love and require his money to furnish a house. He had, however, small fear on the score of safety: from conversations with Leadbetter it was clear to a demonstration that unless something extraordinary and unforeseen occurred in the commercial world, and assuming that Joshua kept his health, he was bound to succeed. Graham had the utmost faith in his borrower: faith in his uprightness of character, and faith in his great business capacity. And even although the worst were to happen. What then? Why, he would school himself to consider the loss of his money as only a contribution to the sacred cause of philanthropy; and, if Joshua remained in the city, as he hoped he would, their friendship, he was sure, instead of being broken, would be cemented all the closer by their mutual misfortune.

Happily, at the close of the first year, Leadbetter's profits exceeded his most sanguine expectations; and when he handed over a round dozen of pounds, as one year's interest on the two hundred pounds, Graham felt it to be a privilege, in more senses than one, to accommodate so liberal a giver.

CHAPTER VIII.

"In meditatione fugæ."

Lochdale and Glasgow were to David Graham the Eyes of Scotland, just as, in the days of old, Ephesus and Smyrna were the Eyes of Asia. Now the holiday season had again come round, and another place—an unexplored country as yet to him—was looming in his imagination, and his hopes of enjoyment, when he got thither, were very sweet and romantic.

The new wonderland about which he was dreaming by night and by day was Glen Rhymen, the fairy realm on the other side of Ben Katelow. He had long intended making a pilgrimage to this glen; from his earliest boyhood, he had fancied it adorned with every conceivable charm. Now, hurrah! the happy time was

at hand; in a few days he would be on the other side of the Ben, wandering on the beautiful banks of the Rhymen.

What was tempting him thither in this particular year? A very pertinent question. The temptation lay in his now having relatives—beloved relatives!—staying in the glen, a visit to whom alone would be a rare delight, were they dwelling in a barren wilderness. How much, therefore, was his joy enhanced at the prospect of sojourning with them at so charming a spot!

Adam Brownlea, his grandfather, lately tenant of The Haws, near Lochdale, had removed his household gods to Glen Rhymen, his native parish, where they had been located since the lease of the farm expired a year ago last Whitsunday.

Graham knew that his grandfather's cottage basked in the sun on the southern front of a long stretch of hill covered with fir trees, in the immediate neighbourhood of Rathie Castle, the seat of the Earl of Rathie. Just the place for a fellow of his romantic turn to explore.

Another reason for being so jubilant was, that this year he was to have an extra allowance of holidays. Owing to a pressure of business in the warehouse the previous summer, he had been asked to waive his claim for holidays, on the understanding that he would get double time the following year, or, in his option, a money consideration instead. Charged to buy time, and not to sell it, he chose the double holidays—making in all three weeks.

Three weeks—what an El-dorado of leisure to him! How he revelled in the glorious idea of three weeks' unchartered liberty! And then he was to leave for Lochdale on the Friday afternoon of Glasgow Fair week—a circumstance which promised to increase the pleasure of the journey.

Before leaving, Graham went to Cambuslang to see Allan Marchmont, who resided at Birchfield Cottage there.

"And so you are actually *in meditatione fugæ*," said Marchmont (who delighted to jerk in a legal phrase if in the least applicable to the topic of conversation); "actually going away like a schoolboy for three weeks to play yourself. Happy man! I wish I were you!"

"You wish you were me! Why, you are your own master, with lots of money: what's to hinder you from taking—well, even a month, if you feel inclined?"

"And what for no, David? Nothing easier than to lock the door, and put up a ticket, "Will be back in a month." That would be nice, wouldn't it? No, no: when a man has put his hand to the plough—eh! You know what I mean. But, my dear fellow, where are you going? and what are you going to do with yourself?"

Graham pictured to him his grandfather's cottage and garden, with the fir wood sloping behind it, and Rathie Castle half-a-mile or so down the road, together with the beautiful Rhymen at the foot of the fields before Woodbank Cottage.

"No doubt you will be having some adventures there—meeting with another Miss W., and falling over head and ears in love. You will see plenty of farmers' daughters who will look greedily at you."

"I expect to see something grander. What would you think of an Earl's daughter?"

"An Earl's daughter! Nonsense! Pray explain yourself."

"Nothing easier, and, I may add, pleasanter. You know Woodbank Cottage is on the Earl of Rathie's estate, and belongs to him. Well, the Countess, it seems, is fond of dropping in upon the cottagers sometimes, and oftenest on those who show some taste for flowers. My grandfather, you remember, had always some rare pansies, and so the Countess comes to admire them, and, if you please, generally brings with her Lady Helen, her eldest daughter. What do you think of that, my boy? They are to have a Flower Show in the grounds of Rathie Castle; I hope I shall be there to see the flowers—and, of course, Lady Helen. But, better still, I may have the good luck to meet them in grandfather's garden before that."

"Quite so. Is Sally still with the old folks?" asked Marchmont, who did not see much practical good in being noticed by an Earl's daughter.

"Sally is always with them, I am glad to say. She wearies a little, though, for want of work. The live stock at Woodbank consists only of a few hens and a cat."

Graham and Marchmont were seated in the garden at Birchfield during the above colloquy; Marchmont as usual enjoying his pipe.

By-and-bye Joshua Leadbetter appeared at the gate, and shortly after, Miss Dallas (Mrs. Marchmont's sister). They talked for

some time, and then all four went into the house to have a little music.

Nothing in the way of music or conversation specially worth recording was heard this evening at Birchfield, and Graham and Leadbetter left at nine o'clock to catch the last train for the city.

"Marchmont is to be envied with that fine villa and garden," remarked Leadbetter, as they walked to the Station. "He should hang up a hammock between the two old ash trees, and have a rustic table within easy reach to hold his pipe, his claret jug, a book, or anything he wanted. Lucky man! he has attained at a bound what it takes even many successful men a whole lifetime to achieve."

"You may go and do likewise," said Graham promptly. "There is Miss Dallas, with the same fortune as her sister."

"No chance there, Davy lad—at least for me. Young Scrymgeour, you may be sure, has marked Kitty Dallas out for his prize. Let ministers alone for capturing a fat dowry."

"A fat dowry!" echoed Graham—"sounds awfully like a fat dowager. Ah, that reminds me of the Countess of Rathie, and the other grand people I'm to see in the north. Just think of the plump Lady Helen, with whom I may exchange glances, if not words. How would she do for a prize?"

"Well, if report speaks truly, Helen is a lass wi' a lang pedigree. Ha! ha! Good joke, that. Marchmont has gone in for money, and you are to go in for blood. A pretty pair you are."

"And where is a poor counter-louper like me to get the wealth worthy of Lady Helen?"

"Wealth of soul! wealth of mind and character! And are you not a merchant in Glasgow?—with a potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice?"

Graham laughed outright at the patness with which Dr. Johnson's swelling phrases were used.

"Unfortunately, *merchant in Glasgow* is not exactly my designation, but it is yours; and, excuse me for saying so, there is no man in the city more likely to add lustre to the name for honourable dealing than yourself; and if you had only the requisite capital you would become one of our merchant princes in no time. That is why I should like very much to see you and Miss Dallas drawing together."

"No, thank you! I'd rather marry some poor orphan lassie—

one who would love me sincerely, and—and—ever cherish a feeling of gratitude for giving her a home."

"And the priceless treasure of a manly heart," added Graham with emphasis, the ring of his voice attesting his sincerity.

"I wish I were going with you, David; we'd have such fun together. Well, at anyrate, after you have spied out the beauties of the land, I shall be delighted to hear all about them. If the attractions prove anything worth, and if there be a nice, snug inn up at Rathie, why, you know, I could easily arrange, next time I am at Lochdale or Redmuir, to walk up to Rathie and spend from Saturday till Monday there. Ah, you can't tell how keenly I enjoy a quiet Sabbath in the country."

"I have some idea. I shall write to you, of course, in any event, and I do hope I shall have something pleasant to report."

On nearing Glasgow, our two friends were joined by a gentleman to whom they had both been introduced by Marchmont some time ago—a Mr. Wilkie, who hailed from Redmuir: the gentleman who had been at school with Jonathan Weathercock, and to whom our friends were chiefly indebted for what they knew of Jonathan's private history.

Mr. Wilkie this evening, on learning that Graham was shortly to start for the north, and was to pass through Redmuir on his way to Rathie, indicated where he would find the house of Weathercock's father; and that if he had any curiosity to see the old man, he might be seen any day promenading in front of his house, or along the central walk of his garden, which ran close to and parallel with the Rathie road. Graham was keen to behold the sire of so original a son, and took a careful note of the address.

Mr. Wilkie (singular how this name should also begin with W!) related a few more characteristic facts about Weathercock's father, which will be referred to when Graham arrives in Redmuir. But as to Jonathan, he could say nothing of him since his memorable flight to London.

Graham enquired if there was not a woman at the bottom of Jonathan's escapade, it being well known what an ardent admirer he was of the fair sex, although all his attachments were believed to be purely platonic.

Mr. Wilkie had heard Mrs. Smillie, his landlady, assigned as one reason for Jonathan's leaving Glasgow: the aim of the brisk widow's very kind, but obtrusive and gratuitous, attentions was

becoming too obvious, and as he did not care a straw for her he wished to get out of her clutches.

"Was there not a Miss Wilson—a teacher—a very handsome girl—for whom Jonathan had a passionate admiration?"

"Miss Wilson? Oh, very likely—very likely, Mr. Graham. I am not aware of the fact, but I know there is a Miss Wilson, or rather there was a Miss Wilson, from Redmuir, attending one of the Normal schools—a tall and strikingly handsome girl, they told me, for I did not know her personally. You see" (smiling), "unfortunately, I was born a generation before her."

This bit of news was sensational in a high degree to Graham. He suddenly concluded that this lady was the "My dear Miss W.," the queen of Weathercock's poetic affections; and, for aught he knew, she might turn out to be his own Miss W.

"And so Jonathan's dulcinea actually belongs to Redmuir?" said Graham, very anxious to know more about her.

"Oh, there is no doubt of it. I know her father very well by sight; he has a good business, as a provision merchant, in Redmuir, and supplies the most of the gentry. I remember his marriage; there was a lot of talk about it at the time, and two or three of the Redmuir damsels, whose parents were good customers of his, were bitterly disappointed at being overlooked by Mr. Wilson—he was such a frank, fine-looking man, as well as a prosperous. You see, he married an Englishwoman, who happened to be one of the upper servants at Rathie Castle."

Graham was getting very excited, but as they were walking in the lamp-light, Mr. Wilkie did not observe how intensely interesting was his information.

"Was *she* good-looking?" asked Graham quietly, as if quite unconcerned, though it took an effort to subdue his voice.

"She was a strapping woman, I can tell you; so it was only natural that their first-born child—a girl—should be very handsome."

"So it was," assented Graham. "Have you any idea where she is?"

"Where she is now? Well, the chances are, this being the school vacation, that she is at home with her parents in Redmuir. But I have heard she went to a situation in Montrose."

In Montrose! More sensation for Graham. No need to ask Mr. Wilkie anything further. He was now next to morally certain that the lady they were talking about could be none other than his own Miss W. All the facts pointed in that direction.

Graham expressed himself as having been exceedingly pleased at meeting Mr. Wilkie, and thanked him warmly, adding that the information he had kindly supplied would considerably heighten the interest of his journey to Rathie. And well it might!

Clearly our hero was in great glee about his forthcoming holidays. No wonder: healthy, happy, fairly prosperous, and highly cultivated—with such rich well-springs of joy, who would not envy him? But was there no shadow in his bright prospect? no fly in his precious box of ointment? There was. The shadow in his bright prospect—the fly in his precious box of ointment—was the junior partner of Mercer & Co., Thomas Bringlow by name (a name of ill omen), a person to whom the honourable title of gentleman would be misapplied. Happily, however, for Graham, there was another partner—Mr. James Barnhill, to whom the grand old name of gentleman was instinctively given by everybody who knew him.

It was at Bringlow's special desire that Graham gave up his holidays last year, and yet when he reminded him the other day that he was promised three weeks this year, Bringlow looked at him with blank astonishment; and on putting the question whether he might take the double holidays, the unworthy junior, in a dry and surly manner, blurted out, "I suppose so," then turning on his heel walked away. Now, if he had given a gracious reply, as he ought to have done, it would have helped greatly to set the young man on his way rejoicing.

Graham was thankful he had Mr. Barnhill, whom he considered his friend, to fall back upon for comfort. This gentleman, like our hero, was a native of Lochdale, and through him Graham obtained the situation in Mercer & Co.'s. But Bringlow for some considerable time had been jealous of the good feeling that existed between Mr. Barnhill and Graham, and had tried in various ways to find fault with the latter: indeed, Graham shrewdly suspected afterwards that the request to forego the much-prized holidays last year was only an experiment to try his temper. Bringlow, however, made nothing by the subterfuge; for Graham acquiesced with the utmost good nature, having previously resolved to be always studiously civil towards his troublesome master, and thus avoid an open rupture.

(To be continued).

A LOVE STORY OF TO-DAY.

By JAMES STURROCK,

Author of "Sketch of Dr. Norman Macleod," "Sermons on Scottish Song," "The Prince's Charm," &c.

CHAPTER IX.

"Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum
Who have characters to lose."
—*Burns's Jolly Beggars.*

BEFORE starting for the North to spend his three weeks' holiday David Graham was moved by a strong impulse—almost irresistible—to pay a visit to Glasgow Fair. Having seen it several times since he came to the city, some nine years ago, he had not been thinking of going to see the Shows this year; indeed nowadays he had little taste for jostling among an unruly crowd of all sorts and conditions. But he fancied that a still small voice whispered to him that a tour round the Fair, on the eve of his departure for Lochdale and Glen Rhymen, would have a special interest for him. What that special interest might be he could not conjecture. He knew that he would see many ferlies and perhaps some fresh novelties in and about the Shows; and these would supply him with something new and entertaining to talk about to his friends in the far North. He could fancy, too, that after the noise and riotous revelry of the Fair he would enjoy all the more sweetly the idyllic peace and quietness of Glen Rhymen, where his maternal grandparents had now their abode. Still, for the life of him he could not imagine that anything else of a special nature would result from his going round the Shows.

For all that, he felt himself quite bent on "doing" the Fair once more.

On Thursday evening, 11th July, the only evening Graham could spare, he found the great annual Saturnalia in full swing. Rainy weather had so often prevailed during the holidays that it seemed a sarcasm of some ironical wag to call it the Fair week: this year, however, the term Fair week was no misnomer, for the days were indeed golden.

Though the public works had not been closed till this afternoon, many, for some evenings past, were getting a foretaste of their holidays by visiting the Shows at the Green. No lack of entertainment there of one kind or another; all and sundry would find some attraction suitable to them: so many and varied were the exhibitions at the foot of the classic Saltmarket.

Graham did not this evening patronise many of the Shows; and after seeing one or two, he elbowed his way quietly through the ever-increasing crowd to make a leisurely inspection of all that was to be seen outside. Having donned an old suit, with nothing in his pockets but a few coppers, he moved about with a mind at ease, keenly alive to the humours of the Fair.

Anon he paused before one of the Shows to look at two girls dancing on the stage. Why did the name "Hammond's Temple of Varieties" startle him? why gaze so attentively at these girls in white muslin and skin-tights? He had witnessed a similar performance in front of some other shows without particular emotion—why should a livelier feeling be kindled before "Hammond's Temple of Varieties"? Could it be possible he was interested in one of the girls? he—the son of a pious father, a respected elder in the church, and himself a Sabbath School teacher, is it credable that he could be taken up with a play-actor girl? It must be confessed he was! Gently, fair puritan! don't condemn till you hear further. He was interested in Mr. Hammond's daughter because, strange as it may seem, she was a pupil in the Sunday school where he taught: "Hammond's Temple" being located near the school, though during the holidays it had been removed to the Green. One of Graham's scholars had whispered to him one Sunday evening lately, that there was a show-girl in the class near him, at same time turning round and staring at the girl with suspicion and contempt. Graham's curiosity being instantly aroused, he asked with bated breath—which girl? Immediately three fingers of three boys darted out with sure aim at the culprit: for such the poor girl appeared to be in the eyes of these young heathens. What a different feeling their teacher had for the Showman's daughter. "That's her—that's her with the white straw bonnet," cried one of the boys. Graham at once gently rebuked them for speaking so loud; and, without turning, took a mental note of the girl's head-gear for future use. He longed to have a peep at the girl. He had not long to

wait. At the close of the lesson, on changing his seat, as usual, he had a full view of the class in which this interesting pupil sat; and as he gazed at the fine pale face and soft dark eyes, beneath the white straw hat, his thoughts—even in the Sunday school—wandered away to Miss Faucit, Miss Neilson, and other great actresses whose performances he had dared to witness, and in young Miss Hammond he conjured up a possible future star tragedienne, who might some day electrify the world. He watched to see how the Showman's daughter would shake hands with the lady teacher at parting. How gracefully she did it! What a premium he would give to have the privilege of teaching that young actress: unfolding to her the great drama of life. What a grand Juliet she will make some day. So he mused. Clearly he was bewitched. On her way out the girl glanced modestly into Graham's face; he smiled kindly in return: thus assuring the daughter of the poor player that he for one had no prejudice against her.

But we must return to Hammond's Show, and the two girls dancing. Was Miss Hammond one of them? No: Graham did not recognise her. He would go in and perhaps see her. She came to the Sunday School—why not return the compliment? and thus encourage purity of entertainment.

The boys were right. Miss Hammond did take a part in her father's show, and there she was, to be sure, modestly dressed in white. The performance with which we have to do, as it greatly concerned our hero, was when Miss Hammond brought into the ring her highly trained pony—a pretty creature that had been taught various laughable tricks. It could tell who stole the jam, who drank the cream, who kissed the girls; and, in its own way, answer other such-like stereotyped questions. By and by Miss Hammond gave one question, or rather command, to the pony, which Graham certainly did not think was stereotyped. He was sitting in front quite visible to the girl, and although he did not catch her eye, he believed she had noticed him, but was too well-bred to look to him for a recognition; so at least he fancied. The command, which almost stunned him, was this: *Now, Donald, point out the gentleman who first met his sweetheart in a railway train!*

The pony at once started round the ring, followed closely by Miss Hammond, who carried a riding-whip, making with it certain motions best known to herself and Donald: onwards came the pony till exactly opposite Graham, at whom he nodded his head three times! "What, three times, Donald! You seem to be very sure about the gentleman," cried Miss Hammond, now glancing at Graham, with a slight blush—but nothing to the scarlet which suffused his face, notwithstanding his efforts to hide it, by laughing with the others.

The girl then led the pony quickly away to the other side of the

ring, and gave him another command, thus diverting the gaze of the people from the last victim.

As for Graham, he had neither eyes nor ears for anything more, so absorbed was he in speculating how Miss Hammond could know anything about his meeting in the train with Miss W. He never mentioned the incident to any of the Sunday School Teachers, and he could not imagine what bird of the air had whispered the secret to the Showman's daughter. Possibly there might be nothing in it; the girl might simply have been drawing her bow at a venture. Still, he would like to be sure of that; hard to say what might come out of it. What a pity he was going away on the morrow—it would be so easy to get hold of Miss Hammond at the Sunday School, and ascertain if she really possessed the secret. He could not bear the idea of going off for three weeks without finding that out; it might have such an important bearing upon his future, and even upon his forthcoming holidays. So he resolved to try and see the clever young girl at the close of the performance.

Accordingly he lingered in the Show till about the last, when he had a good chance of speaking to her father.

"Capital entertainment yours, Mr. Hammond."

"Not bad for the Fair," he answered with a knowing smile.

"I must say I was rather tickled with the pony's performance; he's a clever rascal: he found me out very unexpectedly."

"Oh, he did," smiling. "If you are Mr. Graham, Patricia told me she was to astonish you."

"And so she did—most effectually. May I ask what prompted her to give such an order to the pony? I will ask Miss Hammond herself if you kindly give me permission."

"Oh yes, do, Mr. Graham." Then he signalled his daughter to approach. "You will be interested in what Patricia has got to say about your railway adventure."

Graham instinctively held out his hand to the girl, and she took it quite naturally, but not without blushing. At first Patricia seemed a little afraid she had given offence, and was now to be called upon to apologise: the friendly smile and hand-shake, however, relieved her mind completely, and made her feel at home with her interrogator.

The sum and substance of the brief interview was this:—On the memorable Hogmanay, Patricia, then a girl of eleven or thereabout, was travelling in the same train, and in the same carriage with Graham, Marchmont, and Miss W.; moreover, like the lady, she, too, was bound for Montrose. She was sitting in the corner at the off window, her mother being right opposite. When she entered the carriage at Perth she was very sleepy, and curled herself up in the corner for a nap. After a short sleep she awoke, much refreshed; and then her attention was at once arrested by the talk between Graham (whom she knew by sight as a

teacher in Dr. Blow's Mission School, which she attended when at home), and the young lady beside him. She witnessed the interesting scene when our hero asked the lady to take a good look at him, so as to know him again. His request sounded like a challenge to the little observant girl in the corner to do the same—albeit quite unnecessary for her. However she took his photograph afresh, (the scenery being rather different from the Sunday School accessories,) and not *his* photograph only, but also, as will immediately be seen, an indelible portrait of the lady. She likewise told him a very interesting fact, (with which you—the reader—have been long acquainted), and a very striking bit of news it was to him. It was this: When he left the carriage at Lochdale, Miss W. took down the sprig of holly, kissed it! and placed it in her breast!

After this astounding information, he felt almost distracted—not knowing for the moment very well what to do or say; and had Patricia's information stopped there, his position would have been terribly tantalizing and perplexing. What a sharp little girl to observe and remember so well: young girls are notorious for perceiving a thing in a twinkling; and Patricia's natural quickness of perception was no doubt much cultivated and sharpened under her father's professional training.

"Have you ever seen the lady again?" Graham asked with quivering voice: "I am sorry to say I have not."

Yes, she had seen the lady twice. Sensation! Where had she seen her? Once in Montrose, on the New Year's Day following the historical Hogmanay, and again last summer in the Show at Redmuir. She was sure—even the second time, that it was the same lady she saw in the train; for after she (Patricia) returned to the Sunday School and found Mr. Graham there as usual after the New Year holidays, she often thought of the scene in the carriage on Hogmanay, and wondered whether the lady had also seen him again. Observing the same lady, therefore, in the Show, it was easy when going round with the pony to ask him to point out the lady who met her sweetheart in a railway train; and the result convinced her that her conjecture was right, But she could say nothing further.

Graham thanked the girl warmly; told her he expected to be in Redmuir on Saturday, and he might be fortunate enough to hear some tidings of the lady in question, though he might not have the happiness to see her. But whether he saw her or not he would bring something from Redmuir to give to herself, as a souvenir, for the information she had kindly given to him.

"No more Shows to-night: clearly the purpose (although not mine) which brought me here has been fulfilled; and my duty now is to reflect upon it." So Graham thought, as he quitted "Hammond's Temple of Varieties." The Fair was not quite the place,

perhaps, for a Sunday School Teacher; but what was he to think after what had just happened? Simply,

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough hew them how we will.

When talking with Patricia, Miss W. was brought so vividly to his mind, and the train of circumstances for bringing them together again, seemed so complete, it looked as if he would have nothing more to do than go to Redmuir, when, lo! the long lost Miss W. would appear. But that was not the feeling he had the moment he was out of the Show. What had he learned? That the lady had been seen last summer about this time in Redmuir. What good would that do him? Not much, perhaps, but still it would be a pleasure—a great pleasure—to be passing through a town with even the barest possibility of meeting the lady. And it was indeed a singular coincidence that Miss W. and Miss Wilson seemed both to belong to Redmuir!

But Miss Hammond had told him something further about the lady—something more deeply significant than merely seeing her—extremely important though that was—namely, the striking incident—Miss W. kissing and treasuring the sprig of holly! He believed from certain signs that the meeting in the train was fully as interesting and impressive to her as to him; but the holly incident—now known to him for the first time—made assurance doubly sure that their feelings towards each other were mutual.

He wondered whether she had done anything to find him out; very likely she heard Marchmont mention his name; assuming she remembered it, she could not forget that he went out at, and belonged to, Lochdale; how easy for her, therefore, if a native of Redmuir, to find out from friends all about him. And yet she did not seem to avail herself of these advantages (advantages which he did not have), and do something to bring them both together again. The whole thing was involved in mystery. He could not fathom it.

Doubtless the mystery—the double mystery—would clear up some day. Accustomed in his Sunday class to show the working of Providence in sacred history, he tried to trace the Divine fingers overruling his own life. He felt as if he were being led towards some promised land, a blink of which he got from time to time, and then it vanished from sight: sometimes proving as delusive as the mirage of the desert. He must have patience. If he is destined to meet Miss W. again, Providence must have a wise end in view in keeping them so long apart.

He was glad to be free from the crowd round the shows, and on his way home by the quietest route, enjoying the banquet of his own thoughts. Now his desire to be on the wing was intensified! And how powerful the new motive for passing through Redmuir!

"Oh for to-morrow!" he mentally exclaimed, "Oh, for to-morrow—to be off to the heather hills and flowery valleys, the green pastures and the quiet waters. What happiness may wait me there! Farewell to the smoke and the din of the city; and welcome, thrice welcome! the silence, the joy, and the health giving aroma of the woods and glens."

CHAPTER X.

"O for Friday nicht,
Friday i' th' gloamin'.
O for Friday nicht;
Friday's lang o' comin'.
Feather beds are saft,
Painted rooms are bonnie;
But ae kiss o' my true love
Is sweeter far nor ony."

Anon.

The Galloway herd, whom Dr. John Brown supposes to be the author of the above homely verses, had clearly a special longing for Friday night. In love, probably with one of the servant lasses up at the big house, and having been favoured by her with a sight of its grand interior, he delights to sing in its praise. But his ramble through the baronial mansion was not for a moment to be compared to the pleasure of Friday nicht i' th' gloamin', and the joy which culminated in the kiss o' his true love.

Like him, David Graham had been longing for the Friday night on which he was to start for his three weeks' tour. No doubt it would have given a keener edge to his enjoyment if at the end of his first journey a sweetheart had promised to await his arrival: so that he might experience the felicity which was the height of bliss to the Galloway herd. As our readers, however, well know, Graham had not yet been fortunate in securing the fair partner he had chosen; nevertheless on this Friday night, or rather afternoon of the 12th of July, his joy was great, for although he had no dulcinea to embrace, he could now, metaphorically, take to his bosom and kiss the Goddess of Liberty!

He was at the station early, as he thought, for the four o'clock train. It was crowded—though a very long one; but by the time he had walked to the end of it, searching in vain for a seat, two more carriages were being shunted to the front, and were soon rapidly filled up. He was fortunate in getting what he wanted—the corner at the near window with his face towards the engine.

His fellow passengers were all in a flutter of excitement; they had been despairing of getting away with that train; every carriage being full to overflowing; and as there was still a crowd eager to be accommodated, they were all exceedingly thankful and

delighted at their good luck. Graham relished the hearty spirit of gratitude displayed; and after all parties had settled down comfortably he began to study his companions. But nothing pertinent to this story happened until the train had reached Perth.

Strange it was here too—at this famous station—that our hero met the never forgotten Miss W.! Where was she now? What would he not give to meet her again? or even for some more authentic intelligence regarding her? Was there any chance of seeing or hearing about her, when in Redmuir, on the morrow? or any time during his stay in the North? Yes, he believed it was possible—nay even very probable, that he would find her out in Redmuir, or at least learn where she was to be found. He placed considerable faith in young Miss Hammond's circumstantial account of being in the same train along with himself and Miss W., and of seeing her in Montrose, and specially marking her out in the Show at Redmuir; and as it was a small town he would leave no stone unturned (not literally of course) to discover her.

His reverie was soon broken by a tall young lady in a closely fitting dress of blue serge. As she walked past it made him hold his breath for a moment—she was so handsome. He noticed that even the porters—though in a hurry—turned round to catch a glimpse of her. Having occasion to go to the Bookstall he lost sight of the lady for a minute or two; indeed he took his seat in the train, not expecting to feast his eyes again on such a grand specimen of womanhood. Fancy, therefore, his consternation —the paroxysm of joy that seized him when the veritable lady in blue entered the same carriage and sat down opposite to him. Was it a dream? Could it be possible that this living picture—the observed of all observers—was before his eyes? It seemed too good to be true.

"Hallo! Miss Wilson," cried a young gentleman who had caught a glimpse of her in passing—the door being still ajar. "You are going to Redmuir, I suppose; my sister is in the next carriage—you might come in beside us—there's plenty of room."

Graham could have felled that man at a blow! The moment the lady entered the carriage and caught sight of our hero, the flush of admiration suffusing his countenance was instantly reflected on hers; and now when invited to leave the carriage, he thought she cast a regretful look towards him, as if she would rather remain. But in the circumstances she could hardly do so.

"My usual luck," he sighed after she left—

> "I never loved a tree or flower
> But 'twas the first to fade away."

When he came to himself, what were the thoughts that flashed upon him? Naturally these: "Miss Wilson, Redmuir! Can it be possible? none other than Jonathan Weathercock's 'My dear

Miss W.'" Wonders will never cease! What an extraordinary fate is mine: just at the very moment when a very desirable lady friend seems within my reach, she eludes me like a shadow. How dreadfully tantalizing. The worst of it is—that for aught I can say, Miss Wilson may really be my long lost Miss W.! Had she remained I would soon have found that out. Something about her reminded me of my Miss W.—unless the wish was father to the thought. She looked at me as if she had met me before, but was not quite sure; and, being hurried out of the carriage, had no time to make certain, and, if really the veritable Miss W., to accost me according to our arrangement. I shall try and see her again at Lochdale, where carriages are changed for Redmuir. No, it is not so easy to recognise a young lady again after a lapse of three years and a half; especially when one has only sat beside her at night in the train, and has but a dim idea of her height and figure. And how a young lady changes in form and expression—from, say nineteen to twenty-three.

He was slow to relinquish the hope that Miss Wilson might be his Miss W.; and when hope began to fade, a happy thought came to cheer him. "Perhaps the lady I have just seen may be a sister, a younger sister, of my Miss W. Well, well, I shall not remain many days in uncertainty. I have got a clue which will unravel the mystery."

When the train was nearing Lochdale, Graham fondly turned his gaze to the North. The faint line of smoke, on the rising ground some miles off, marked the town of Redmuir, now famous to him as the birth-place of Miss Wilson (if not one more dear!) and of Jonathan Weathercock. Farther north and west, a striking object in the landscape presented itself of much greater interest to Graham than even Redmuir: namely, Ben Katelaw, whose twin tops were then being gilded by the rays of the setting sun. What a grand picture! And thinking of his dear friends on the banks of the Rhymen beyond it, how very pleasant and suggestive! How sweet the prospect—how rich the enjoyment awaiting him away on the other side of those sunlit hills!

He fully intended on arriving at Lochdale to look out diligently for Miss Wilson, but found it inconvenient, owing to the friends who had gathered at the Station to await his arrival. Had no one been meeting him he would have lingered on the platform and seen the departure of the Redmuir train. Even when talking with his friends he could not avoid glancing about for one more glimpse of the lady before reluctantly tearing himself away. He had the pleasure of seeing her alighting and standing for a moment or two the centre of an admiring group.

"Ah, well!—no matter," he said to himself on his way home to his father's house; "no matter; three weeks will be ample time to find out all about the lady, and perhaps—who can tell?—to get

introduced to her. Then surely, surely, there will follow a revelation!"

CHAPTER XI.

I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid.
—*Psalm cxxi.*

Breathing a pure religious atmosphere from his cradle upwards, and familiar as a nursery rhyme with the metrical version of the favourite Psalms, what more natural to David Graham, when he set his face towards Ben Katelow, than to remember the above lines of the royal bard? What kind of aid would come to him from the hills he knew quite well, so far as Reason could prophesy. But when he pondered the words *mine aid*, various synonyms were suggested, the most welcome in his present state of feeling being such as were poetical rather than philological, namely—my help; my help-meet; my wife!

Before leaving Glasgow he had resolved to start the very next day for his grandfather's; and now that Saturday had come, and the weather all that could be desired, he was still bent on carrying out his design. The romantic element of his nature was yearning to be gratified. New scenes and new friends, or old friends long separated—female ones, including Miss W., if possible—were absolutely requisite. Lochdale could not supply all these, and he must be off. His friends at home wondered what was all the hurry—why he could not be contented to pass the first Sunday under his father's roof: there was abundance of time afterwards, surely, for going North.

"I think, David," said his mother, smiling, "you must have a tryste with some bonnie lass away about Rathie, for I cannot see what is tempting you to be off so soon."

"Ha! ha! That is a good joke, mother. Why, excepting our own folks, I don't know a single person in the whole glen. Of course I've heard about the Rathie family, and grandfather told me that the Countess and Lady Helen have been at Woodbank two or three times this summer looking at his famous pansies. Eh? How would you like to see me eloping with an Earl's daughter?"

"You've more sense than that, David," smiling, "but I would be very happy to see you well married, and I hope you'll take my advice about choosing a wife. You've waited long, and I hardly think you'll make a fool of yourself now."

"Trust me. When I marry I expect you will be proud of my choice. Lady Helen may do for a belted knight, but not for me: some other 'Helen of the Glen' may fall to my lot. Grandfather or Sally, perhaps, will assist me to the sort of bride you would like."

"It's high time, David. But are you really going North after dinner?"

"Not a doubt of it. You know I can be with you the next Sabbath, and the next—ay, hooray! and even the next after that. So you will kindly excuse me; I'm so hungry to breathe the mountain air."

"'He that will to Cupar maun to Cupar;' and as you are determined to be off, I must at once send the girl out for some things to take with you—it would never do to go up yonder and trust to pot-luck. You don't mind being troubled with a parcel do you?"

"Well, I'll be glad to take anything reasonable, but, you know, don't saddle me with a week's provisions. I'll get some tobacco and snuff for grandfather, and a packet of sweeties for the women-folks—so, of course, you won't buy these things."

"You won't have any bother with the parcel: the machine will put you down at grandfather's door."

"All right, mother. I give you *carte blanche*. But, take heed! if you wish me back soon, you had better not provision the garrison too lavishly."

Graham was happy when seated in the train for Redmuir. He was well pleased with his fellow-travellers: two young ladies being the only other occupants of the carriage. One of them was reading a small paper-covered hymn-book. How did he know? Because "another of the same" was lying on the seat with its title, "Evangelical Hymnal," facing him—evidently laid down by the other lady to take a turn at her knitting for a change.

"This is promising—I rather like it," thought Graham, quickly comprehending that a wave of religious revival had embraced the ladies before him; "according to the new creed of these dear creatures we are all brothers and sisters, and all pilgrims to the better land. No fear of a rebuff from them if sympathetically addressed."

"May I take a look at this?" he said, pointing to the hymn-book, shortly after the train had started.

"Certainly—with pleasure," cheerfully answered the lady with the stocking; and he assisted himself to the book, and glanced over a few pages.

After some talk on the revival movement, Graham changed the subject, being very anxious to ask these young ladies, natives of Redmuir, if they knew the Wilson family. They did—very well: Miss Wilson being a frequent attender at the Evangelical meetings. On telling them about the Miss Wilson he had seen in the train yesterday, he learned that she was Miss Effie, a younger sister, a teacher in Glasgow. Miss Wilson was not quite so tall as Miss Effie, but a nice, amiable girl, and engaged to be married to the Parish Minister.

As Graham had somehow got it into his head, for the moment, that this engaged Miss Wilson was none other than the long-lost Miss W., the news made him start. He took care, however, not to betray himself He simply thanked the ladies for their information, adding, "I am sorry our journey is such a short one—I should like to have had a longer talk with you, ladies."

They were glad to hear it, and were good enough to give him their name and address. They also informed him when and where certain religious meetings were held, so that, if he happened to be spending a night or two in Redmuir, he might have the privilege of attending. They were themselves invariably present, and sat in the choir. Their father, the Rev. Mr. Lee, generally conducted the services, and would be very glad to see him.

An omnibus was at Redmuir Station waiting to take passengers to the "Rathie Arms"—the very thing Graham wished. At the hotel he hired a dogcart to drive to Rathie at four o'clock.

The intervening hour he was to devote to a ramble through the town. Being Saturday afternoon there was some stir abroad, and as he sauntered through the streets and lingered about the shop-windows the sight of every tall girl thrilled him. But no Miss Wilson appeared. Not being favoured with a sight of the lady, he could at least have a peep at her father's house. It was easy to find. A charming villa on the brow of the hill, with a southern exposure, the garden sloping gently down to the road, was truly a fit abode for so elegant a family. On leaving it, or rather when passing the gate, Graham lifted his hat. No one was at the window, but, like Jonathan Weathercock, he had lived long enough to realize the virtue of secret admiration.

Next he went in search of Caleb Weathercock's house. He might have asked the Misses Lee where it was, but on second thoughts he refrained: he did not wish to spoil any good impression he may have made on these pious ladies by leading them to suppose that he was connected in any way with such a skin-flint. The hotel people could have told him at once, but he had no desire to damage his credit even with them.

He knew that the west gable of Weathercock's house was flush with the Rathie road, and that the garden before the door ran parallel to it. The house was easily found—uncomfortably easy, in fact; for a boy in sadly faded corduroys was far too demonstrative in pointing it out. Graham had also been told that on a fine day he could not fail to see old Weathercock walking in his garden, generally airing a large blue handkerchief—a process he indulged in to save the tear and wear and expense of washing. So the wives about the doors maintained. The house was soon reached. Graham passed it very slowly and with seeming indifference, scanning the building and the garden carefully, however; but, unfortunately, the owner was not enjoying his usual promenade. Continuing his

walk up the road as if his mission had been fulfilled, Graham returned in a quarter of an hour or so, to try his luck again. "Ha! there he is—the veritable Caleb: no doubt of his identity, though not at this moment airing the blue handkerchief." He was dressed exactly like his son Jonathan, in a black suit, open frock-coat, and dress hat. Being under the middle size, he preferred to wear habiliments that seemed to add to his stature, hoping thereby to rule and impress all about him more powerfully. The proud old man stood very erect to be nearer eighty than seventy, and moved along the garden walk with a wonderfully elastic step.

Graham was sorry he could not decently pause to study Weathercock more minutely; but, being unobserved, he retraced his steps to have another glance at him. By this time Caleb had come to the gate to see better what was doing on the road, and in repassing Graham got a fine front view of his face. The expression was very characteristic: thin lips firmly compressed, a square jaw, stern, imperious eyes that seemed never to melt into tenderness, and Graham fancied he saw his right hand clutching at something imaginary, in such a way that when once anything was fairly within his greedy grasp, it would never be let go—unless for its equivalent. As might be expected of a hard-fisted old man, his clothes, though well brushed, were rather threadbare, and very shiny at the 'points of maximum attrition.'

When Graham's dogcart was on the way to Rathie, he had another glimpse of Weathercock, and was quite tickled this time to see the old screw manipulating the notorious blue handkerchief.

"What old gentleman is that?" asked Graham of the driver, curious to hear his opinion of him.

"That auld carlie?—that's Caleb Weathercock. I see the auld chap is a-dryin' his hanky as usual, he! he! he! Queer chap that, mind ye."

Graham was amused, not only with the driver's remarks, but with his peculiar laugh. "Indeed?—he seems a quiet, decent old man."

"Ay, ay, sir; it's easy seen ye're a stranger here—he! he! he! D'ye ken what the laddies—curse thae flees!—ay, d'ye ken what the laddies ca' auld Weathercock? The flagstaff! for he's aye hoistin' that blue napkin—he! he! he! What a nuisance thae horse-flees is; I'd like to het that beggar;" and, suiting the action to the word, John cracked his whip at a fly that would persist in buzzing about the horse's ears.

"Mr. Weathercock must be well known from what you say."

"Ay, ower weel—the greedy beggar! I'll wager ye don't catch me drivin' him if I can help it—he! he! he!—never since he gae me a saxpence for drivin' him sax mile. Of coorse I grumbled, an' he, the sleek-heidit auld rascal! says he to me in his big solemn wey:—

"John; you've no cause to complain," says he; "a penny a mile is the proper parliamentary allowance, and I can't give you any more."

"From what you say, John, I'm sure he must be the father of a Jonathan Weathercock I used to know in Glasgow."

"In Glesca! of coorse he is. Man, I hav'na seen Jonathan for mony a lang; they say he's in Lunnon now. But I'm feared, though he's a clever chield, Jonathan, that he's no makin' money, and that pits his father greatly against him, poor chap."

"Does Jonathan ever come now to see his folks? I'm sure his mother would be happy to see him."

"Ah! puir feckless body: she has nae say i' the hoose. Jonathan was aye his mither's favourite, an' it maun be a sair heart to her no' to see her son. I hinna seen him for a lang time: lat me see—ay, it micht be a dizzen years or so; but mebbe, of coorse, he's been in Redmuir for a' that I ken. Weel do I mind ance o' drivin' him an' twa or three mair young nabs to Rathie; ay, I kent fine that day that Jonathan wasna a chip o' th' auld block: man, min, he gied me half-a-crown that day, an' as mony nips oot o' his flask as I liket. He, he, he! he, he, he!!"

"You drove the party to Rathie: is there a hotel there?"

"O bless you no, Sir! Her leddyship, the Countess, ye see, wadna allow a hotel on the estate. But ye'll be gaun to stop wi' a freend?"

"I'm glad to say I am. But surely there's a howf of some kind in the clachan?"

"Oo ay, to be sure: there's Mrs. Forman's Inn—a bit thack house. But sall, they tell me she's makin' money like sclate stanes. Ay, Mrs. Forman would like verra weel to hae a hotel; in fack she gaed to his Lordship's factor, and says she—'if Lord Rathie bigs a hotel to me, I'll advance the money.' She thocht because his Lordship wasna ower flush, as they said, he micht tak' a len' o' a thousan' or twa frae his alehouse tenant. Na, na: the Coontess wadna hear o't. She winna alloo spirits to be selt on her grund ava. He, he, he!"

"Is the Rathie family anything well liked?"

"Aweel her leddyship, ye ken, cam' frae England, an' is juist raither ower parteekler, some folk think. Ye see she has naething ado, an' she gangs aboot, an' ca's on a' the farmers' wives, an' gars them egg up their men to plant flooers, ye ken, an' keep a snod garden; an' lots o' thae farmer chaps canna be fashed wi' flooers. They dinna pey. He, he, he!,'

"I have found that Lady Helen goes about the estate with her mother. Is that the case?"

"Oo ay, she does that. I ken Lady Helen fine; she's a braw hearty lass. I mind fine ae time, when a big pairty o' strangers was gaun oot to the Castle, an' their ain kerridge no bein' big

eneuch, the Earl hired a machine at the Hotel for his ain family. Aweel, Lord Douglas, a young stout callant about twal, cam' up on th' dickie aside me. Leddy Helen looked up at him lauchin', and, says she, 'you seem very comfortable up there, Douglas;' He, he, he! He, he, he!! "

Graham was not forgetting to ask the driver about the Wilson family, but kept his question—one of his leading questions—to the last.

The information got from John corroborated what the Misses Lee had told him; so that Miss Wilson's engagement to the minister was evidently well known. One fact mentioned by the driver was rather interesting to Graham, though it agitated him somewhat.

"She's a fine affable lass," said John, effusively, "so my Missus says, an' she kens her brawlie. Ye see, Miss Wilson is ane o' thae leddy track distributors, an' when she comes to oor hoose she just sits doon an' cracks awa' wi' my wife, as if she was her sister. Ay, she's a nice lass an' a bonnie; an' its my thocht she's a wheen ower gude for the minister."

Graham made no reply: preferring to ponder what he had just heard in silence and alone.

In order to view the country properly, being new to him, he thought at first of walking from Redmuir to his grandfather's, and would very likely have done so, had there been a carrier to take his portmanteau. Now he was very glad no such chance had occurred, as he would have lost the pleasure of a delightful drive, and the gossip of a lively and original driver, original certainly in his stereotpyed laugh, which was, however, thoroughly genial and unmistakably borrowed from the stable, albeit a gentle spontaneous *nicher*, not at all like the proverbial horse laugh. Springing lightly over the ground behind a first-rate trotting bay, whose graceful action was in itself a treat to witness; learning the names of the various farms and gentlemen's seats on the way—obtaining, in short, just the kind of information he wished—he felt indeed doubly thankful he had been so fortunate. And the air was so delicious! laden with the odours of countless wild flowers, conspicuous among them being the wildrose, the blossoms of the bramble and raspberry, and, here and there, clusters of meadow sweet and stately fox gloves. He could not help manifesting his joy: expanding his chest and sucking in the air. "What delicious air! how I envy you breathing it every day."

"Oo, ay: mebbe you comin' frae Glesca think it grand; as for me, I never feel it—I ken nae difference."

Graham was certainly in a gracious mood, despite the news about Miss Wilson. The driver thought him as happy as a bridegroom, and, so friendly had they become, even chaffed him pleasantly about going to see his lass in Glen Rhymen. No doubt the

lovely dears had something to do with his joyous spirits; in fact, the Misses Lee as well as the Misses Wilson had contributed not a little to his elevation. They had struck a rich chord in his heart, still vibrating in undertones of the most enchanting music. "Miss Effie is still free! Hooray! She is more likely to be my Miss W. than her elder sister."

Near Rathie they came to a watering-trough at a picturesque turn of the road, flanked by a commodious rustic seat. While the horse was drinking Graham alighted and tasted the water, to contrast it with the Loch Katrine water, which supplies Glasgow; then he sat down on the rustic seat for a minute—just to try it also.

Mounting the vehicle again, a hundred yards or so down the road brought them to Rhymen bridge, the boundary of the Earl of Rathie's estate. Jumping down again, he leaned awhile over both sides of the bridge, taking a good look of the river about which he had been dreaming by night and by day. And truly delighted he was with his first glimpse of the Rhymen.

Having reached the borders of the Rathie policies, Graham, on remounting, asked the driver to allow the horse to walk slowly. They were in fairyland. If not, why did our hero's heart beat with such tender romantic feelings at the next scene? Looking through the trees—thanks to the high seat—a pretty blue lake peeped out having a tiny boat on it. How refreshingly cool the picture that warm July afternoon! It was the swan pond. The boat was being pulled about by gaily dressed children on the shore, and the swans seemed to be chasing it.

"Is that Lady Helen with them, I wonder?" asked Graham. John could not say—she was too far off.

They started again (almost unconsciously they had come to a dead stop opposite the lake); no words were spoken while the horse walked slowly up the brae. They had not gone far when another carriage was seen coming towards them as slowly.

"That's the minister's pairty," whispered John, kindly giving Graham a warning to look out. "He'll hae his sweetie alang wi' him, nae doot."

There was a sensation! Graham's heart palpitated wildly, not knowing what might follow from a glance at Miss Wilson!

The minister's carriage stopped. "Grand day, John," said he cheerily, adding, "One of our party went down to the bridge to make a sketch: did you happen to see him?"

"No, sir," answered John; then, turning to Graham, he said, "You lookit ower the brig at baith sides; did you see the gentleman?"

Graham also gave a negative answer. He had cast eyes on no one near the bridge; but now, while addressing the minister, he used them well in observing the young lady beside him, whom he

took to be Miss Wilson—there being in her a strong resemblance to Miss Effie, whom he saw yesterday. He was satisfied Miss Wilson was not his Miss W.: had he been mistaken, it was not likely that the lady, with such a good chance of noticing him, would also be mistaken. But beyond a courteous smile, given along with the minister's "thank you," no signs whatever that she recognized him.

Well, at anyrate there was a deep satisfaction in discovering that an engaged lady was not the one he was in search of in the fond hope that she would be free—free in every way to entertain matrimonial proposals from none other but himself.

So his Miss W. was still shrouded in mystery. What he had just seen, however, somehow persuaded him that he was drawing nearer and nearer the object of his romantic quest.

As they approached the South Lodge of Rathie Castle, a lady and gentleman were crossing the road, as if to enter the gate. John lifted his hat, and the salute was gracefully returned by the gentleman.

"That's the Earl and Leddy Helen," whispered John.

The mention of Lady Helen—an Earl's daughter!—set Graham's heart in a flutter—especially when he saw how distinguished-looking was her ladyship, and remembered that he would probably meet her at his grandfather's.

Lady Helen for the time eclipsed every other lady. He sighed for something romantic; was he not getting a taste of it now?

"The beautiful, charming Lady Helen!" he mused to himself. "At what witching hour would she leave her 'rich and purple chambers' in the Castle and be wending her way, oh, so gracefully! through the shady avenues to feed her milk-white swans? Happy creatures! to be gilded by the light of her stately eyes, and to take their food from her lily fingers. And may not Lady Helen be another Genevieve, ever ready to hear the tale of woe? and when sinking low the wan sufferer beholds no hand outstretched to save.

> Fair as the bosom of the swan
> That rises graceful o'er the wave—

her breast heaves with angelic pity, and the poor sufferer could worship her very shadow."

The clachan, or Kirkton of Rathie, being reached, our travellers turned into a farm road on the left, up which the horse was allowed to take his own pace; Woodbank being only a quarter of a mile or so up the brae.

Why did John Ruskin come into Graham's head at this pretty spot? Because he was considering what fee he should give the driver, recalling an incident in Ruskin's Autobiography. It was this: "One sunny afternoon at Pisa, when just as we were driving

past my pet La Spina Chapel, my father, waking out of a reverie, asked me suddenly, 'John, what shall I give the coachman?' Whereupon I, instead of telling him what he asked me, as I ought to have done, with much complacency at being referred to in the matter, took upon me with impatience to reprove and lament over my father's hardness of heart in thinking at that moment of sublunary affairs." Graham had only himself to consult, and he had no difficulty in coming to a decision. His coachman had spoken gratefully about the half-crown which Jonathan Weathercock had given him for the same drive. Why might he not emulate Jonathan? He had a larger income: might not his tip for once exceed Jonathan's? The driver was a decent married man, who seemed to make a good use of his earnings. Yes, he would just hand John half a sovereign, which would leave to himself a respectable balance — rather more than the half-crown — after paying the hire to the landlord of the Rathie Arms. And, in addition, he was sure his grandfather would give John "a gless o' the best o't" to cheer him on his solitary journey homewards.

So Graham and his coachman parted on the most friendly terms imaginable.

CHAPTER XII.

"How blest is he who crowns, in shades like these,
A life of labour with an age of ease."—*Goldsmith.*

Adam Brownlea, our hero's grandfather, was well pleased with his present abode and manner of living. Though a retired farmer, he was by no means idle; he had been too industrious a man all his days to be quite contented sitting always on the rustic seat in the garden before the door smoking his pipe or reading the newspapers. Still hale and hearty, his energies must find a congenial outlet. This he found in his garden—a never-failing source of delight to him; and late and early he might be seen working in it, of course in the leisurely fashion of old age. Even when at The Haws he enjoyed the reputation of keeping his garden in better trim than the other farmers round about; and he had often the pleasure of asking a neighbour, whose garden might not be so fruitful as his own, to come in and have a few berries or apples.

Woodbank as yet had little to boast of in the way of fruit, and Mr. Brownlea could not therefore cater to the stomach of his friends as formerly. But such of them as cared to take a look at his flowers, and in particular his rare collection of pansies, were made exceedingly welcome. Ah! he was a proud man that day, Adam Brownlea, when the Countess of Rathie and her daughter, Lady Helen, hearing of his skill as a florist, paused at the garden gate and begged to be shown the wonderful pansies. And how very easy and pleasant to show the rarest of these pansies, growing

under the shade of a weeping elm in the front plot, a yard or two from the road. Indeed, the Countess and her daughter had been at Woodbank on the very day of Graham's arrival, and were having a talk about the forthcoming Flower Show, in connection with which Mr. Brownlea was taking an active part.

Old Sally was quite sorry that David had not come earlier so as to meet these big people, and that her favourite might be introduced to Lady Helen: for such was Sally's extraordinary admiration for her master's grandson that even an Earl's daughter was not too great a match for him.

No wonder, therefore, that Graham laughed outright when Sally hinted this after she had been referring to the visit of the titled ladies, and expressing her regret that he had not been present.

"Ah, Sally, you are always very flattering, but I am sure that Lady Helen would not so much as allow her eyes to light upon a poor fellow like me."

"Indeed, and what for no, Master David? I'm sure she micht be prood to hae a braw lad like you for a man."

"But think of her rank, Sally—her wealth!"

"A snuff for her rank! and what money has she to boast aboot? My certie, she's but a penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree."

"And that's just the kind of lass, Sally, that needs to marry a man wi' a lang purse. It's all very well to read in ballads about love levelling all ranks, and laying the shepherd's crook beside the sceptre, but that sort of thing doesn't happen every day. How would the ell-wand look beside Lady Helen's gold-mounted parasol?"

"Indeed, it wad look verra weel if it was an honest elvan, an' no' a short elvan, like some folks' we ken."

"Take care what you say, Sally! Remember there's a malicious proverb that a draper's ell-wand is one of those things that won't stretch; and, you know, I must defend my own trade."

"Weel, weel; sae let it be yer ain wey. Ye ken I'm nae hand at arguefeein'."

"Thank you, Sally. You always let me have my own way—too often, I fear. Speaking about the ell-wand again, grandfather would tell you that Allan Marchmont got married to a rich draper's daughter. Do you think that Mr. Dallas made his twenty thousand pounds by using a short elvan?"

"Twenty thoosand! dear be here! and does Allan's wife get a' that money?"

"Not likely; not even the half of it. She gets only some six thousand or so."

"Sax thoosand! mercy me!—what a mint o' money! Sax thoosand!—'od I suppose Allan rides in his kerridge noo?"

"Well, he does go to business in a carriage, and a first-class carriage it is."

Grandfather smiled, adding, "An' sic a wonderfu' horse draws the kerridge: sic an iron constitution he has."

"And such extraordinary speed! If he gets plenty of water fifty or sixty miles an hour is easy to him," continued Graham, trying hard to maintain his gravity, as he observed that Sally was seeing through the joke.

"I ken fine what ye're ettlin' at: ay, you wis aye a great lad for makin' fun. But it's high time to gie up your jokin' and bring hame that wife wi' the three thoosand. I'll be content if ye get that: it's only hauf of what Allan's wife brocht to him. Has she got ony sisters?"

"Only one."

"An' hoo mony mair wad ye hae?"

"He'd mebbe like to be a patriarch," said grandfather waggishly: "he'd mebbe like half-a-dizzen wives!"

"Na, na; ae wife is aneuch. An' are ye no' gaun to tak' the sister?"

"Ye'd better speer first whether the lassie 'll tak' *him*."

"Right there, grandfather. Funny that Sally thinks I have nothing more to do than lift my little finger, and any lass I want will rush into my arms."

'Weel, at onyrate I aye thocht ye as gude—and mebbe a better man than Allan Marchmont; and his wife's sister micht be happy to get ye—I dinna care hoo rich or bonnie she is."

"I've no chance, Sally—not the ghost of a chance. The fact is, there's a braw young minister after her, and he's been in the field long before me. No, no; I've no chance against the cloth: women folk, ye ken, are a' daft about ministers. But look here, Sally, is there no some fine lass in the glen here you could recommend to me? I've lots o' time noo for coortin'. You mind, grandmother, when you used to tell me not to mind the lasses till my beard grew"—smiles, and strokes his ample growth. "You'll surely admit I've some title now to speak to them."

"I am glad you've a better richt than that, Davy, to look out for a wife: I believe you could keep a wife comfortably now, and the sooner you settle down the better."

"Man, Davy, if ye had married as early as Rob" (his brother), "you would hae had a big laddie at the schule by this time."

"Ha! ha! Hear, hear! Sally says that I'm a wag, but I cannot hold the candle to you, grandfather. Really, however, instead of making game of a poor fellow in that way, can you not do something for me? I'm quite ready to marry if you'll only help me. Sally, do you no ken ony braw lass that would suit me—never mind though she hasna three thousand."

"'Deed, Master David, I've nae mind o' ony lass i' the noo; my memory's a' clean jumbled; but the morn's Sawbath, and we'll be

seein' plenty gaein' by to the kirk, an' then I'll mebbe be able to tell you."

"Ay, and what's better, mebbe," said grandfather, "we're to hae preachin' i' th' smiddy th' morn's nicht. Mr. Reid aye preaches ance i' th' month i' th' smiddy in summer; so ye'll hae a double opportunity of walin' out a lass."

"Weesht, Adam! I wonder to hear ye! I hope, Davy, ye'll hae something better than lasses to think about when ye gae to the kirk—or even to the smiddy, when ye're to worship there."

"Gudewife, hae ye no mind that marriages are made in heaven? For my pairt, I see nae hairm in a young callant fa'in' in love i' th' kirk, if he disna disturb ither fowk wi't. Isna a happy marriage a paradise on earth? Nae doot. Noo here's this lawthie ramblin' aboot yet in ooter darkness. Would it no be better than the best discoorse ever he heard if some dainty lass—say i' th' smiddy th' morn's nicht—should kindle a flame that wouldna let him rest till he married her?"

"Ay, but he winna see Leddy Helen i' th' smiddy—no, nor ane wi' a tocher worth lookin' at. Just hae ye patience, Master David. Nae fear but ye'll get a braw lass to please ye by-and-bye."

"I've waited longer than my father did, and a good deal longer than Robert has done, Sally; and I mean to take your advice, and have patience. You know I'm rather particular, but I must say I'm not so anxious to get a lass with a big tocher as you would like me. However, we'll see what luck I'm to have in the glen. Try and mind a' th' nice marriageable lasses here about—ye maun ken a lot of them, Sally—and then we'll lay our plans for getting a hold of one of them. Meantime I'm keen to be out again to breathe the fine caller air."

"By-the-bye, grandfather, I've brought you a copy of yesterday's, or rather Thursday's, *Daily Telegraph*"—taking it out of his pocket, having just remembered it was there.

"Thank you, Davy lad; and I'm much obleeged t'ye for a' the papers ye send me. This is the first time I've seen the *Telegraph* i' th' glen. Is there onything important in't?"

"You'll see a report of a grand garden-party at Holland House the other day. I knew you were a great admirer of Lord Holland, as well as of his celebrated uncle, Charlie Fox; and besides, as your Flower Show is coming off soon, I thought that you might like to read about a garden-party at such a famous historical house."

"Man, Davy, ye're very considerate. Noo I'll hae something to say to the Coontess th' next time she comes roond."

Leaving the genial old farmer settling down in his easy chair, and adjusting his spectacles to have a feast of news, Graham stept to the door, and sat down on the garden seat for a few minutes.

His sensations were very agreeable indeed. The genius of change was operating like magic on his feelings. What a contrast to his

life in the city! How welcome the bright and cheery faces of his grandparents and Sally, after his poor landlady's anxious and care-worn countenance; and how delightful their playful remarks after her serious talk! Was it the pure sweet air, or the joyous company, or both combined? that caused him to feel at this moment, after a festive tea, as if he had been eating ambrosial food, so richly was the blood stirring his heart. Even in coming so easily to the door, instead of down a flight of stairs—what a luxury!—all the doors were open, and one could glide into the garden without a sound and without fatigue.

Where was his old friend Ben Katelow now? Did he behold his twin tops? He did. But how changed in aspect from that point of view. The noble Ben seemed to have lain down and stretched out his limbs, like a mighty giant, to rest; and yet it was early to slumber, for his head and shoulders were still radiant with the purple beams of the setting sun.

How Graham envied his grandparents their rustic chair at the door. His soul swelled with joy at the magnificent sweep of open country before him. What a glorious natural horizon! so different from the broken sky lines and murky atmosphere to which he was daily accustomed. Looking towards the south-east, a round dozen of miles off, he saw Lochdale shining in the sun, although the steeple was not so bright as he had seen it on many a summer afternoon from The Haws, when it 'gleamed like an alabaster pillar lighted within.' Down the slope to the left about half-a-mile, the towers of Rathie Castle rose above the trees, and a little nearer stood the clachan of Rathie, with its church, post-office, 'smiddy,' and inn.

How long he would have mused in the garden if left to his own free-will, his grandmother and Sally could not tell; for they had several times reminded him that it was not good to be so long out in the night air, and that he really ought to come in. He assured them he was used to the night air, and the air of Rathie was so delicious, he could not breathe enough of it; he would, however, be in immediately. Pray do not imagine that Graham persisted in remaining outside while his friends were sitting in the house fidgetting and fretting about him. O dear no! They were all in the garden together. Grandfather had laid aside the *Telegraph*, having read all that he wished, and joined David half-an-hour ago; while grandmother and Sally shortly after, finding it too dark for going on with their knitting, had followed suit. But the women folks had not been long in the garden before they suggested to David the prudence of adjourning to the house, albeit all the while they listened to him as to an oracle, rejoicing to be in his company. Sally however soon carried the point when she said, "It's no ilka nicht, Master David, that ye've a chance to get a sang frae grand-

father. Dinna ye think we had better gae in noo, and hae the lamp lichted an' the toddy brewed?"

"Capital, Sally!" exclaimed Graham; "the very thing to suit me!"

Whereupon Sally darted into the house, and very soon had it nicely lighted up, and the table spread for supper, including the indispensable steaming brass kettle and accompaniments.

"Weel, billies, what sang is it to be?" cried grandfather gaily, after his first glass.

"Oh, give us 'Blythe, blythe around the nappie' to begin with," exclaimed David, who was, properly speaking, the only billie of the company.

After clearing his throat with another drink of warm toddy, the genial old minstrel trolled out with infinite glee the much relished convivial song. Nor did he stop (except to take a drink) until he had sung half-a-dozen or more of his favourite ballads—some of them pretty long, too.

What an interesting group that was about the table during the ballad-singing. Grandfather's face, flushed with joyous exertion, looked more than ten years younger; the plump countenance of his happy spouse glowed with pleasure; while Sally's wrinkles were all smoothed away, and her kindly eyes were either beaming with quiet enjoyment or over-running with laughter. Both grandmother and she seemed to derive more delight this evening from watching the magical effect of grandfather's ballad-singing upon David, than from hearing the ballads themselves. These they were familiar with, but it was not everyone who so heartily enjoyed the singing of them as David did, or whose manifestation of the pleasure afforded was such a treat to behold.

Grandfather was not easily tired singing when once fairly begun, and had it not been Saturday night the small hours of the morning could not have exhausted his energies or his stock of ballads. However, David was very glad to have heard a few of the best of them; and when Sally, at a quarter to twelve, handed him a candle to light him to bed, he went upstairs very much pleased with the night's entertainment.

CHAPTER XIII.

How sweet the morning of the hallowed day!
Hushed is the voice of rural labour,
The ploughboy's whistle and the milkmaid's song.
The scythe lies glittering in the dewy wreath
Of tedded grass, mingled with fading flowers,
Which yestermorn bloomed waving in the breeze.
—*James Graham.*

Moving slowly up a narrow wooden staircase to his attic chamber, carrying in his hand a lighted candle, was a new and rather

pleasing sensation to David Graham, who had been lodging for the last ten years in a 'land of flats,' and who never rose to a higher level when going to his bedroom; and the novel sensation was rendered still more pleasing when he entered the chamber and breathed the sweet caller air coming in at the open casement, a delicate odour of thyme making it more delicious. Change, that wonderful genius, was charming him at every step.

In the morning he awoke about eight with an exhilarating feeling of freshness, and lost no time in getting out of bed to enjoy the sunshine streaming into the room. While dressing he could not help noticing a few ornaments and curiosities on the mantelpiece belonging to Sally; and in the centre of them, in a wooden case, was Sally's silver watch—the great historical watch!—gazing at him with its calm, white face, as it used to do twenty years ago. He started as he repeated aloud, "Twenty years ago!" Ay, it was twenty years ago—and more, since that memorable Sunday when he donned his first pair of trousers and vest, and Sally handseled them by giving him the loan of her watch to go to church with. What a proud boy he was that day, and what a debt of gratitude he was under to Sally for trusting and honouring him so highly!

Furling the blind and opening the lattice wide, he rested his arms on the sill to inhale the fresh air and survey the landscape. No wonder that the scented zephyrs and the vast extent of open, fertile country, smiling in all the beauty of a sunny morning in July, moved him to quiet rapture.

Casting his glance nearer hand—just down into the garden—he saw the weeping elm shading the much admired flowers; wonderful flowers, gilded sometimes by the bright eyes of a Countess, as well as by the brighter eyes of her daughter—lovelier than her beautiful mother. Of course the attentive reader knows what these flowers were: not

> Violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
> Or Cytherea's breath.

No: they were rich and glowing pansies that dazzled the beholder like the dark eye of woman.

Oh, what a luxury it was for Graham on this glad summer morning thus to enjoy its sweet influences! How finely all nature harmonized with his joyous heart! The sparrows were chirping merrily in the eaves beside him, while

> Far up in heaven, near the white sunny cloud,
> The song of the lark was melodious and loud.

He could hardly realize that all this enjoyment was got simply by looking out of his bedroom window.

Hushed was the voice of rural labour; the ploughboy would not dare to whistle in Rhymen Glen on Sabbath within hearing of the

kirk, and the milkmaid's song must be a sacred one if she ventures to sing above her breath. The other occupants of the farm steadings, however, did not restrain their vocal powers on the day of rest. Chanticleer, in the back garden, was blowing his horn with stentorian lungs, and his neighbour over the way responded to his morning salutation with equal force and vigour. It did one good to hear these lusty fellows enjoying their antiphonal concert.

Having dressed, Graham went downstairs and out into the garden a short time until breakfast was ready. Every mouthful of the sweet highland air was a capital appetizer And what a feast to the eye were the 'morning roses tipped with balmy dew,' and the bonnie modest pansies half-hid among the embowering green! Any one could see that he was not among growing flowers every day, so fondly did he linger over and admire those "bright children of the earth and sun."

During breakfast he made some further enquiries about the church and the minister, the hours of worship, and when they required to leave to be in time for the service, He was delighted on being reminded that Mr. Reid was to preach in the Smiddy in the evening. Always thirsting after the romantic he immediatcly resolved he would go to the Smiddy; it would be such a novelty to hear a sermon there. Indeed, apart from the novelty, the Smiddy itself possessed a peculiar charm for him: being entwined with many happy memories of boyhood, when he used to see grandfather's horses shod at the Smiddy near The Haws. On many a Saturday had he and Marchmont looked in at the open door and seen the sparks flying from the anvil.

Few in number, the meeting in the Smiddy would be almost like an assembly for family worship. Would any of the ladies and gentlemen from the castle honour the congregation with their presence? Not at all likely. No matter; Evangeline, the rich farmer's daughter, may be there, and Gabriel, too, the blacksmith's son—the only one of all the youths welcomed by Evangeline; and he will fix his eyes on her as the saint of his deepest devotion!

A happy arrangement for Graham that evening service. For weeks, ay for months, he had looked forward to spending a quiet Sabbath under the greenwood tree. If wet, he would have gone with his friends to church; the day, however, was one of the most enjoyable kind for a ramble in the wood; such another golden Sunday might not again occur during his holidays.

Putting a Bible into his pocket he went up the back garden and into the fir-wood—there, in silence and alone, to commune with the Creator of heaven and earth.

He threw himself down at the root of a noble fir, on a bed of moss and blaeberry bushes, flanked by tufts of heather. What a luxurious couch! so fragrant and soft, and yielding so gratefully to his movements, like an air mattress. How like a Cathedral! looking

along the aisles, formed by the tall bronzed fir stems, and up at the carved and pointed branches overhead, with their deep shadows, resembling fretted vaults. But he heard no organ pealing the morning anthem: all was hushed, not even the chirping of a bird, or the hum of a bee, broke the Sabbatic stillness. Nothing like the silence of a fir-wood. After the roar and din of the city, the soothing quietness was most welcome and refreshing. The aroma exhaling around him was like incense rising to heaven.

Properly speaking, this was his first and only genuine lounge in a wood all by himself. On other occasions he had been along with a merry company, and his sensations then were altogether different: moreover, as the journey thither had always been more or less fatiguing, he had not the dewy freshness of mind and body such as he enjoyed this Sunday morning under the greenwood tree.

Besides a Bible he had with him a Sabbath School Magazine, with the view of studying the lesson for the night; for although he could not be in Glasgow to teach his class as usual, he liked all the same to be prepared for it. Luckily, the lesson was an exceptionally interesting one—Abraham swearing his servant, Eliezer, and sending him away to his own kindred to take a wife unto his son Isaac. The story was indeed very charming; and in going over the chapter slowly, verse by verse, meditating upon it, all the while breathing the life-giving air of the wood, he felt that the pages of fiction had never yielded him a richer enjoyment. It did his heart good to read about the faithful Eliezer, Abraham's oldest servant—"for all the goods of his master were in his hand." What a beautiful and suggestive lesson! However, as he had no class this evening, it was not imperative to exhaust the theme; it would be very pleasant to take it up again on the morrow by the river side.

"One o'clock! astonishing," was his exclamation as he looked his watch—"Ah, how softly falls the foot of Time that only treads on the moss of the forest! What a joyous privilege to worship here as the spirit moves one!"

He almost wished he had not to go down to dinner at two o'clock; when leaving he might have said—"Don't wait for me, please—I'm oft to feed on fancy and perfumed air." Well for him he left no such message: for he now began to feel that dinner would be gladly welcomed.

So he rose and sauntered homewards. Hark! what solitary bird is that singing? It is the shilfa. Why is the song of this lonely chorister so sweet and touching to Graham at this moment? Partly because it is the only bird that has favoured him with a lilt in the wood to-day, but chiefly because the shilfa's song reminds him of happy days twenty years ago—for then the herd laddie at The Haws told him the words of that birdie's song—"Gie me milk and bread, and I'll herd the kye t'ye." So he listened again and again with delight, and sure enough the notes of the brief lyric corre-

sponded exactly with the number of syllables given by the herd-boy.

When he reached the fence dividing the wood from the garden he leaned his arms on the top rail and cast his eyes to the south-east; for grandfather had told him that, standing there, the sea at Montrose could be seen on a clear day. But no; to his vision, neither the sea nor the town presented itself. Nevertheless, what a thrilling memory started up at the mention of Montrose! Was not the young lady, Miss W., on that ever-memorable Hogmanay bound for Montrose?

As expected, he found that grandfather had brought home a friend to dinner—Mr. Summer by name—a farmer to whom he was sometimes indebted for a drive to Redmuir. Nothing occurred during the meal worth special record; but grandfather and Graham conveyed the guest home rather more than a mile, and when parting he bade Graham to be sure and give him a "cry in"—he might not be at hand himself, but he had a big gilpie of a dochter who would be glad to see him, and give him a drink of milk. Graham thanked him, and said he would be delighted to look in when up his way.

Now the event of the evening is to come off—worship in the Smiddy. Tea being over, Graham and his grandfather stepped slowly down the road to the extemporised meeting-house, leaving grandmother and Sally at home—neither being inclined for evening service.

The Smiddy, as a place of devotion, had one great defect—namely, the rude and primitive method of ventilation. Happening to sit down at a window, Graham felt a draught coming through the broken panes enough to blow the Smiddy fire, so they moved a little farther down to be out of the current. The draught, however, did not seem to disturb the equanimity of a sturdy rustic who filled the vacancy.

At the far end of the Smiddy stood the minister's desk, and before it a chair on which an elderly man was sitting. From his position any one would at first naturally suppose him to be the precentor, albeit he had certainly none of the airs of that important functionary; for he sat quietly with bowed head, like one waiting to receive the delicate attentions of the knight of the scissors. It turned out that the poor man was exceedingly deaf, and it was only in the Smiddy he could hear any part of the minister's sermon.

Our hero's interest in the flock was much increased when a certain tall and graceful young lady walked forward and took a seat at the opposite wall, a little to the left of him, and in full view of each other, there being no seat intervening. He knew nothing about the lady, and yet she caused his heart to beat rapidly. No

doubt this was owing partly to her being the only lady-like person present, but chiefly because she very much resembled the ideal lady he had long been cherishing in his breast! "Could she be a lady from the castle? Not very likely. She might be the minister's daughter. Oh, no; there's not the least resemblance—his hair is a flaming red, and hers is dark. Happy thought! Then she must be Evangeline, the rich farmer's daughter. Well, whoever she is, for beauty and style she is unrivalled in this small flock." So he mused. And then the lady sang so sweetly in a rich contralto voice, and altogether looked so winsome and attractive.

During the sermon (the truth must be told) Graham's attention was divided between the lady and the preacher. His text was, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." In the course of the sermon the words "Look unto me" were recurring at intervals; and while our hero bestowed due outward attention upon the earnest appeal of the minister, how much more eloquently to his heart did the pleading face of the handsome lady exclaim, "Look unto me!"

Had his companion been a young fellow, Graham would have learned in a twinkling whether he knew the lady or not without arresting her attention; but it was quite another matter to try to get the desired information from grandfather, considering that neither his hearing nor his sight was so good now. He must have a little patience.

At the close of the service the minister shook hands with one or two who were nearest him, said a word, and passed on. When he came to the young lady in question, however, he spoke with her a short time. From his manner it was evident the lady was not his daughter. This was so far satisfactory.

At the Smiddy door Mr. Brownlea stood with a friend for a few minutes, as their roads lay in opposite directions, and they had got the usual enquiries to make of each other. While standing there, Graham saw the lady come out, turn to the right, and stop at the trellised porch before the door of the smith's house, which adjoined the Smiddy. Mrs. Ferrier, the smith's wife, came out and shook the lady cordially by the hand, and, still holding it, beckoned to her, and looked as if she would fain draw her into the house. Graham was not more than half-a-dozen yards off, and could see all this quite well. After some parley the lady did go in—but not till her face had become bewitchingly animated, and, while glowing with a lovely smile! she glanced towards the group containing our hero, and then went in.

What need for this lady to pause at the door-porch? And was her radiant smile too good to lavish upon one of her own sex?—and so she must give that handsome gentleman beside Mr. Brownlea, whom she knows well, the benefit of it, if he should happen to be looking her way. Assuredly the smile was not lost upon him,

nor was the opportunity she had given him, intentionally or not, to observe her splendid figure.

"How tantalizing!" thought Graham. "I see it all quite clearly: in this highland parish poetical history is repeating itself—yon lady is Evangeline! No wonder that Basil's mother gives such a hearty welcome to her charming future daughter-in-law."

"What young lady was that standing at the smith's door speaking to his wife?" asked Graham of his grandfather on their way home.

"I'm sorry I canna tell ye—I didna notice her."

"She was sitting nearly opposite us in the Smiddy—you could not but see her:" uttered in a tone of disappointment.

"Man, Davy, why didna ye gie me a nudge, an' I would hae lookit at her through my glesses. Never mind; she's awa' into the smith's house. I ken Mrs. Ferrier fine; let's gae back this minnit, an' I'll sune satisfee yer curiosity."

"Oh, dear no. That would be rather cool, to say the least of it. We can go there to-morrow—or some other day."

"Heigho!" sighed Graham; "my usual luck. Ah, well; ae door is sure to be opened as sune as anither is steekit, according to the old song; there's that big gilpie of a dochter I've yet to see. Let me appease the hunger of my heart by visiting her. 'Summer's a pleasant time,' sang a certain love-sick maid; let me hope that Miss Summer is as pleasant as the season she is happily named after. She is a big gilpie—quantity, if not quality. There's consolation for you, Master Graham."

So he said to himself. All the same, the image of the young lady who had just vanished from his sight was deeply impressed on his mind, and he vowed he would certainly give himself no rest until he had found out who she was, and all about her.

(To be continued).

A LOVE STORY OF TO-DAY.

BY JAMES STURROCK,

Author of "Sketch of Dr. Norman Macleod," "Sermons on Scottish Song," "The Prince's Charm," &c.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I in these flowery meads would be,
Their crystal streams should solace me,
To whose harmonious bubbling noise,
I with my angle would rejoice."—*Izaak Walton.*

NEXT morning, Monday, 15th July, David Graham had perhaps a deeper and livelier sense of freedom than he had yet experienced since he came to Glen Rhymen; for at least fifty Monday mornings out of the year, he, like the majority of mortals who toil for their living, awoke with a certain depression of spirits,—but this morning, however, the unparalleled vision of a three weeks' holiday caused him to feel thoroughly off the chain.

He had decided to try the fishing this forenoon—not that he was very fond of that pastime now-a-days, but his friends would think it strange to be located on the banks of a river noted for its fine trout without trying his luck.

So he equipped himself with his grandfather's rod and basket, and set off straight down the fields the nearest way to the Rhymen.

Sally shouted after him—"Come back in gude time, Master David, wi' yer troot, an' I'll fry them tae yer denner."

Had he been going to the loch at the west end of his native town; or, better still, to a private loch three miles to the east o

it, there might have been some chance of filling the frying-pan; but his limited experience of river fishing was such that he could not promise Sally a fish dinner. Indeed he looked upon this angling expedition as a good deal of a sham. Fancy his astonishment, therefore, after three or four casts, when he actually hooked and landed a most beautiful trout.

This was a good beginning. At the same rate he would soon fill his basket. He had evidently got the proper fly, which was very cheering and satisfactory, The Rhymen would sustain its repute as a capital fishing stream. He had now some faith in the river and in his own skill.

So he persevered for a good while, but, alas, without receiving even another offer.

His faith was again down at zero. He must take a rest—it was a waste of time this sort of thing.

He sat down on the bank and peeped into his basket. "Ay a bonnie fish—a very bonnie fish—but what is it among three?"

At this moment another angler was drawing near, and Graham cried, "Are you getting anything?"

"Not a fin: the stupid critturs winna rise to their vittles th' day ava! What hae ye got yersel?" coming in by to see the contents of the basket.

"Man, that's a beauty—a verra braw spotty! I'll wager my whittle ye've catched a leddie Helen!"

"A leddie Helen!" echoed Graham in amazement: "kindly explain what you mean."

"Oh, I jist mean that ye've catched a leddie Helen—ane o' th' troot that Lord Rathie's dochter put into the watter sometime syne."

On farther enquiry, Graham learned that Lady Rathie had taken a notion to bring a supply of live trout from England to remind her of home as well as to enrich the Rhymen; and when introducing the new specimens—two kinds—they were christened, "Lady Rathie" and "Lady Helen," respectively.

It was some consolation to be told by an experienced angler that th' 'trout were na takin' th' day.' Graham would not bother any more with the fishing, and forthwith rolled in his line and flung down his rod.

"What will Sally say about my Lady Helen? that it would be but arles to what I would catch yet; and that as I had been lucky

enough to hook her namesake, I would now be sure to capture Lady Helen herself. Dear, deluding Sally!"

Reclining on the bank he soon forgot all about fishing, so absorbed was he in reading once more the *Vicar of Wakefield*. What a delicious book by the river-side was the evergreen Vicar. "Matrimony was always one of my favourite topics, and I wrote several sermons to prove its happiness." How delightful—especially taken in connection with another sentence further on: "The hours between breakfast and dinner the ladies devoted to dress and study: they usually read a page, and then gazed at themselves in the glass which even philosophers might own often presented the page of greatest beauty."

Graham impulsively rose up and looked around to see if there were a hayfield near, with Olivia and Sophia working in it; that he might, like Mr. Burchell, go and help them to turn the swath to the wind, and try, if possible, to enter into a close conversation with Sophia. He saw a hayfield, but no reapers in it.

He sat down again, and for the first time observed what appeared to be a bower on the high bank opposite. "Hallo! what bower is that?

"Bessie Bell and Mary Gray,
They were twa bonnie lasses,
They biggit a bower on yon burn brae,
And theekit it o'er wi' rashes."

No; it is not the bower of these ill-fated beauties. Nor can it be Fair Rosamund's Bower, which the good Mr. Burchell had in his eye when singing ballads to the Vicar's children. But it may be the seat overshaded by a hedge of hawthorn and honeysuckle, where, when the weather was fine and their labour finished, they usually sat together—that loving family—to enjoy an extensive landscape in the calm of the evening, and, moreover, drink their tea, read and talk, and sometimes, to give a variety to their amusements, the girls sang to the guitar."

"Ah me!" sighed Graham daintily: "if we cannot have this Arcadian life it is sweet to read about it."

While thus musing he heard a footstep; on looking up he saw a sturdy farmer-like man approaching. Onward he came with slow and heavy strides, seemingly prepared for either defence or aggression. Wishing to conciliate his favour in case he might be trespassing, Graham saluted him cheerily.

"Fine day, Sir."

"It's nae sae bad. Hae ye gien up the fishin' and taen tae yer book?"

"Oh yes. They're not taking to-day it seems; so I'm taking a spell at an old friend of mine—the *Vicar of Wakefield*."

"I'm glad you like the Vicar; I'm very fond o't mysel'. What a noble fellow Dr. Primrose is; a minister of the right kind—a man that practeeses what he preaches."

"I agree with you heartily; a first-rate all round Christian. But some folks would consider him rather broad church; you know the Doctor was rather partial to gooseberry wine and a twopenny hit at backgammon, and could see no harm in his children dancing. Few ministers at this end of the island are bold enough to confess a weakness for wine, gaming, and dancing."

"That may be; I winna arguefy the matter i' th' noo. But I must say I never could find ony faut wi' Doctor Primrose. Man, he was a grand character! I never kent the like o' him. I never saw ony o' yer gentry ministers yet, wha had a fortune o' their ain wha gied a their steepin' awa' in charity like the Vicar o' Wakefield; na, they were aye cryin' oot for mair—for an augmentation as they ca't. An' if the Doctor did like the gooseberry wine, for which his gudewife was famous, I dinna suppose it did him muckle hairm—an' at onyrate he was aye a very temperate man."

Here the farmer looking round saw a stile down, and went forward a few steps and put it up.

Are you bothered much with trespassers here? I thought at first you were coming to challenge me."

"Loons are aye fear'd," he said with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"You smile at me. Well, the fact is, I see so many boards up through the country that I never feel quite safe anywhere; and expect some gamekeeper at any moment to pounce upon me, and ask me sternly, 'Did ye no see the brod?' However, I understand Lord Rathie prevents no one from fishing here; a great boon certainly and his Lordship deserves praise for it."

The farmer's eyes dilated and flashed fire.

"Praise for't! I dinna agree wi' ye there, sir. Nae doot its a privilege—or a boon as ye ca't; but I deny that his Lordship is entitled to ony praise for't, he's juist doin' his bounden duty to his fellow-creatures. The public, I maintain, have a perfect right to the rivers. Wouldna it be a great hardship, sir, when our fore-

fathers foucht an' bled for their country, that we—their sons, poor men though we be—couldna enjoy a bit dander alang the water side."

"I'm glad to hear you speak that way. But I've just been thinking that you farmers will suffer sometimes from rascals who abuse the privilege."

"Weel, sir, I canna say, speaking for mysel', that the fisher folks meddle wi' my things, or do ony hairm to me. I'm aye very ceevil to them, for I really like to see thae pale-faced weaver chields frae Redmuir enjoying a day's fishin'."

"That's a capital spirit!" exclaimed Graham with emphasis, nothing is lost by civility, and it is certainly the wisest policy, as you know from experience."

"Of coorse there's aye some idle rogues prowling aboot to see what they can lay their hands on, an' ane or twa o' th' farmers complain about getting their berries stealt, or that some sma bit things gae amissin'; mebbe I could mysel' say something similar. But for a that I wouldna like to see decent chaps prevented frae fishin'."

"Very good—capital! I admire your sentiments. Why, you remind me very much of the Vicar."

"Here's a character," thought Graham, "yes, a noble peasant every inch of him. What a treat to have one's blood stirred in this way."

Turning up the book in his hand he read aloud—"My orchard was often robbed by school boys, and my wife's custards plundered by the cat or the children," and so on. "But," he continued, "we soon got over the uneasiness caused by such accidents, and usually in three or four days began to wonder how they vexed us."

"Weel spoken, Doctor," cried the farmer. "As to the wife's custards bein' plundered, I'm sure she ill deserved it. Nae doot she was sometimes foolish, scheemin' to get her dochters merriet; and vain eneuch too, poor wumman, in tryin' to be genteel an' haudin' up their heid amon' th' neibors after the loss o' their fortin, but for a that she was a gude, kind-hearted wumman; an' I do like the body weel for entertainin' a' her puir freends; and because they were a' the same flesh and blude, insisted on them sittin' doon wi' the family at the same table. Man, thae's grand features in her character. But I'm thinkin' I maun be aff," looking his watch, "my folks'll be waitin' me for denner—ten minnits after

twal—am I richt? you'll hae the correct time, comin' frae the toun."

Graham took out his watch, a gold hunting one (at sight of which the farmer's eyes gleamed with admiration), and examined it carefully to make sure of the time: possibly he may have had some vanity in prolonging the inspection.

"It's a quarter past twelve with me, but I think you're likely to be right, for I've noticed my watch vary a little when knocking about during my holidays."

"Thank you. We're gey near the time atween us. Will ye no come alang to the house an' get a drink o' milk, or tak a bite o' denner wi' us? If ye'll tak pot luck, yer hearty welcome, sir."

"Thank you very much. I should be very glad indeed to enjoy your hospitality, but my friends are expecting me home at one o'clock."

"Weel, when yer back this way ye'll gies a cry in, I hope."

"Certainly. I shall be delighted."

While the farmer strode away Graham could not help turning his face and gazing after him—"A most remarkable man that, such a leonine countenance! and his eye—honest and kindly, and yet how shrewd, keen, and penetrating. Won't it be a pleasure to spend a night with him?"

Graham conjectured all sorts of things about this notable farmer; wondering very much, you may be sure, whether he had any such commodities as Olivia and Sophia, and hoping grandfather would be able to satisfy his curiosity.

Feeling somewhat hungry now, he gathered up his rod and basket and gravitated towards Woodbank, his newly kindled curiosity adding not a little pleasure to the homeward journey.

Sally was at the garden gate: "Hallo! Sally. Such a tack I've brought for you! a rare tack, Sally. But don't judge it by the quantity, mind you: it's the quality, Sally, the quality, mind you!"

"Weel, weel, Master David, lat's see yer quality."

"There you are!" holding up the trout with affected glee. "Isn't she a beauty, my Lady Helen?"

"Yer Leddie Helen! yer surely haverin' noo."

"Not at all, Sally; an auld fisher said this was a Lady Helen: ane of the trout, ye ken, that Lady Rathie flung into the river and christened it 'Lady Helen?'"

"Ou ay! An' fat are ye to dae wi' Leddie Helen?"

"I couldn't think of eating her, Sally, let's have her embalmed."

"Very weel. I'll imbaum 'er wi' saut an' pepper, and hing her up by the tail to dry. I houp ye'll hook her leddyship hersel' the neist time; she'd be worth preservin—sic a braw stoot hizzie she is!"

"Come awa', Davy lad," said his grandmother, on entering the house, "come awa' to yer denner; we've just been waiting for you. What has been been keepin' you a' this time?"

"I was talking to a farmer down at the water-side, quite a character; who is he? What is his name?"

"What like was he?" asked grandmother.

"What did he say?" asked grandfather, both in the same breath.

Davy described his person, and indicated the nature of his remarks.

"Oh! that's John Webster," said grandfather, decisively: "a very worthy man, John."

"It maun juist be John," chimed in grandmother; "for there's only ae farm at the water-side where ye was. Had he on a brown straw hat?"

"He had. And I couldn't help wishing I had one too; it seemed such a nice cool thing for this weather."

"Ye'd better no ask John Webster for a len' o' his hat, Davy, for I wager it would gang ower yer lugs, an' ye hinna a very sma head either. Him an' Napier o' Shawfield, an' Mr. Reid the minister, hae th' three biggest heads i' th' parish, but John cows them a'."

"And yet he's only a small farmer, and not so important a man perhaps as yourself, grandfather."

"That's no' his blame. Had John Webster got eddication, I dinna ken what he would hae come to;—he's a real natural born genius, John; naething comes amiss to him—sae handy he is—he can mak' onything frae a tattie-creel to a thrawcrook. He can sing too, an' play on the flute; an' as for telling a story there's no' his marrow in a' th' glen."

"I am certainly much interested in what you say about John Webster; I thought there was something remarkable about him."

"Were ye no' into th' hoose?" enquired grandmother. "Miss Helen is home to her holidays i' th' noo."

"Miss Helen! Is she a daughter?"

"Ay, she's a dochter. An' what a work her father has wi' her; an' nae wonder, for she's a fine, affable lass."

"What does she do?"

"She's a teacher awa' aboot Aberdeen—Loudonpark, I think, she ca's the place."

David emitted a low whistle of delighted surprise. "Miss Helen," he said to himself; "can that be her father's motive for asking me to the house? well, it's quite natural to wish to show his daughter off; but more likely it is a habit of his to invite a decent-looking stranger—country people are often very hospitable. A teacher! perhaps a blue stocking,—the daughter, too, of such a father. Eh? rather a good prospect in this quiet glen."

"Tak yer denner, Davy; ye maun be hungry by this time; tak a hearty meal, and think afterwards," said grandmother coaxingly.

Recalling his mind from its pleasant wool-gathering, he betook himself with a will to the duty which lay nearest him, and forthwith sundry slices of the sweetest highland mutton disappeared from his plate.

"Have they any family at home besides Helen?"

"There's young Andrew," replied grandfather, "and a clever lad he is. The mither is as daft about Andrew, as the father aboot Mary; mony a time I think they mak' perfect idols o' them. They've made a capital teacher of Mary; an' naething will satisfee the mither noo but the prospect o' seein' Andrew waggin' his heid owre the poopit."

"Ay, ay; quite so. But, by the by, is the daughter's name Helen or Mary? You called her Helen, didn't you? grandmother."

"Well, you see, the lassie was named after Leddie Helen as a mark of respect for the Countess. Ye mebbe dinna ken that Mrs. Webster (then only Mary Lockhart) came to Rathie Castle frae England wi' th' Countess when she got mairriet to the Earl. She was leddiesmaid to her when she was mairriet to John Webster. An' so as she had a great liking for her leddyship she named her first bairn after Leddie Helen, who was only some months auld at the time."

"Ay, but Mary's the first pairt o' her name," said grandfather, "John Webster's no' the man to honour the gentry, or to flatter them by ca'in his bairns after theirs. He likes Mary because it was her mither's name as well as a favourite name in the Bible. So John aye calls her Mary; but the mither, ye see, who is prood o' th' Countess's patronage, never fails to ca' the lassie Helen, bein' her second name."

"Sally! what have you been thinking about?" cried Graham playfully; why, let me see—this is my third day in the glen and you have never so much as named this braw lass to me. Why didn't you tell me about Miss Webster?"

"Indeed, Master David, I had nae mind o' her; and besides, though I had, I wadna mebbe thocht her a gude eneuch match for you—for you! comin' frae Glesca far there's sae mony rich leddies."

"Toots, toots, Sally; I'm sure I told you to let me know of any nice lass in the glen, even though she hadn't three thousand. But now that I have heard of this fair Helen of the Glen—what do you call the farm where she lives? grandfather. Strange that I should not have asked it before."

"Had ye been near eneuch to the hoose, Davy, or lookit doon upon it frae the tap o' th' braes, I'm certain ye wad hae been geyan curious to ken the name o' th' farm. Man, I dinna believe though ye was to wander owre the hale o' braid Scotland ye would see a bonnier spot than Linnburn Farm!"

"Linnburn Farm! I've surely heard that sweet name before."

"Whereabout did you meet John?" continued grandfather.

"Down at the water side—just opposite the bower—you know the bower, I suppose?"

"Fine that. I've kent it for fifty year an' mair. Oh, but ye've nae view o' Linnburn from where ye was. Neist time gang ye alang the high road to Rhymen kirk till ye come to th' end o' th' wood; then haud doon the cairt road till ance ye come to th' stile at the tap o' the Linnburn braes; man, ye'll then see a picter to remember!"

"I'll be delighted to follow your directions," said David, warmly, for he was feeling deeply interested in Linnburn.

"Ah! but you'll no' see a' th' beauty o' th' place till ance yer in by at the hoose," said Mrs. Brownlea.

"Ay, an' no' till ye've been inside, Master David, will ye ken hoo bonnie it is; for, my certie, the room I was in is just like a palace!"

"You surprise me, Sally. And yet you don't think Miss Webster a match for a poor fellow like me."

"Weel, ye ken, for a' the grandeur o' their hoose an' gairden they canna hae muckle siller after bringin' up their family the wey they're doin'. An' they say that Leddie Rathie helped to furnish th' hoose to them; because, ye see, her leddyship has a fancy to

tak' some o' her English freens doon to Linnburn to get their tea there—it's sic a bonnie place."

"Ay, ay sirs! This is most extraordinary. Has Miss Webster got a lad do you think, Sally?"

"Weel, they say, young Salmon o' Braehead is often in aboot Linnburn i' th' noo, an' they're jaloosin' that he's coortin' her; for, ye see, his faither deed a twalmonth come Martimas, an' he's got a' the farm in his ain hand noo."

"I'm thinkin', Sally, that Philip Salmon is ower keen on th' money to fash his heid wi' Mary Webster. Na, na; th' tocher's th' jewel for him. What say you, gudewife?"

"'Deed I'm no' sure whether Helen would look at Philip Salmon after a' th' eddication she's had. I raither think when Helen marries it'll be to a minister; for I ken that baith her father and mither hae a great conceit o' th' cloth."

"Ye're mebbe no' far wrang, gudewife. John Webster is an elder o' th' kirk, an' a real pious man into th' bargain; an' that's no what can be said o' Philip Salmon. But, of coorse, for a' that Philip's a sensible, braw, weel faur'd chield, an' the lassie may hae a notion o' him for a' that I ken. They've been neibors a' their days, an' should ken ane anither weel by this time. But sall, Davy, atween oursels, noo when I think on't, Mary is a by-ordinar fine lass, an' I opine ye micht dae waur than gang an' speir her price yersel',"

"I'm afraid it's too late. What chance could I have with such a braw, well-educated lass? patronised, too, by a live Countess."

So very interesting and suggestive was the information Graham had just been receiving that he took an early opportunity to saunter into the wood to digest it.

"A fine affable lass! a by-ordinar' fine lass! named after an Earl's daughter, too, (with permission, of course) well trained, highly educated and self-supporting; reared in one of the loveliest glens in this beautiful country; the daughter of a sire so remarkable as John Webster, and of a mother so refined and intelligent that a Countess delights to cultivate her society; surely all these eloquent facts are sufficient to satisfy the heart of the most romantic in search of a wife. Hurrah! I have caught one Lady Helen already and though I would not for a moment dream of hooking the proud namesake of my puny captive—what about Lady Helen number three? Ay, there's the rub—what dreams may come!"

"Ah, what a fine bit of news I shall have to send Leadbetter: he wished me to spy out the beauties of the glen and report to him. Won't I astonish Joshua? I wonder what like a fellow Philip Salmon is. He certainly has had the tremendous advantage of being on the spot a generation before me. But why should I be jealous? Why worry myself about a girl I have never seen? I wonder if she cares to hook this Salmon? That reminds me of my Lady Helen—what the deuce will Sally have done with my beauty?"

When supper time arrived he soon found what Sally had done with his beauty. All her culinary skill had been exerted to make the beautiful trout a dish for a king; and as she placed it before Master David there was a glad smile of triumph in her eyes, as if she were thoroughly satisfied with her cooking achievement, and fully expected that the dish would meet with her favourite's delighted approval.

"Oh, Sally! Sally! What is this you have done with Lady Helen. My conscience! do you think that I'm a cannibal? Have you got no sentiment left at all, Sally?"

"Indeed, Master David, ye bade me imbawm 'er, an' I've dune my best."

"But I wished you to embalm her to last three thousand years."

"Mercy me! I couldna do that though ye gied me three thoosand pounds, but if ye get a lass wi' as muckle siller's that—an' nae doot ye'll get ane if ye like—ye'll no fash yer heid aboot imbawmin."

Looking at his plate David exclaimed with mock admiration:

"She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight.

Never mind, Sally, I forgive you this time. When I bring home my next Lady Helen (not from the Rhymen, though) you will treat her in quite a different fashion. As for this spotted beauty, I am glad to see that she is

A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food!

Still I feel it is selfish of me to have the whole of her ladyship."

"Eat her up man, Davy, an' no haiver," said grandfather with a good humoured smile; "ye've the best richt to the troot, snack her up, man, an' she'll become bone o' your bone an' flesh o' your flesh, as the quaker lover said. What mair could ye wish o' yer Leddie Helen?" lifting his glass, "here's better luck to ye neist time, Davy, an' I houp that the next Helen that ye catch'll be worth th' keepin'."

David was greatly delighted with his grandfather's toast and sincerely wished that his hope might be realized.

When he went to bed he lay a long time awake wondering what like a lady Miss Mary Helen Webster might be; nor did he cease thinking about her until he finally dropped into the soothing arms of Morpheus.

CHAPTER XV.

"Cats like milk,
And dogs like broe,
Lads like lasses,
And lasses lads too.
And we're a' noddin',
Nid, nid noddin',
And we're a' noddin'
In our ain house at hame."—*Old Song.*

On the Monday forenoon, when David Graham was talking with John Webster by the river side, he had no idea that any one was looking at them. If he had thought for a moment that there might be a spectator and possibly a listener, he would have glanced towards the bower on the other side of the water; but so absorbed was he with the conversation that he could not tell whether any one was observing them or not. One lady, however, was watching them for a short time from a distance, and Graham would have had a very powerful vision indeed to have seen that lady in her observatory—which was not the bower referred to.

The observer was no less than Miss Mary Helen Webster. Her eyesight was perhaps not keener than Graham's, but standing at one of the windows of Linnburn with a field glass in her hand she had no difficulty in recognizing her father; and that the stranger with whom he was speaking was a tall, well-dressed young gentleman, although she could not clearly distinguish his features.

Miss Webster was not using the field glass out of mere idle curiosity—she had a laudable motive. Being a few minutes past noon, she was desirous to discover her father and signal him to dinner. Not seeing him about the steading she returned to the house, and looking out of the window to the south, she saw two figures at the farthest end of the meadow. And there being a field glass always lying on a corner bracket between the windows of the east room, frequently used to see if the sheep and cattle were all

right when afar off upon the braes, it was quite natural that she should lift the glass to make doubly sure that one of the figures was her father.

She was particularly anxious that he should come in and get his dinner in good time this day; she had been priding herself upon its preparation with her own fair hands, and she wished him to enjoy it while in season. She knew right well, as the chief dish was a favourite of his, that, like young Jenny's sweetheart in the Cottar's Saturday Night, he would relish the delicacy "an' aft wad ca' it gude." Moreover, when she saw what appeared to be a tall young gentleman with him her heart began to beat abnormally, for she would not be the least surprised to see them both coming along to the house—it being a very common thing for her father to invite a decent stranger to come in and take pot luck; and as the pot luck to-day was very presentable, she would be only too glad if some nice young fellow would drop in and share their dinner.

But no: it was not to be. She saw her father returning alone, and her countenance fell. Recovering her spirits in a trice she heaved a serio-comic sigh and exclaimed—

"He cometh not, she said,
The day is dreary,
And I am weary."

When John Webster entered the room his face reflected the joyous welcome expressed on his daughter's countenance.

"My dearest daddie! Here you are at last. Have you brought any one to-day?"

"Weel, I've brocht mysel', as young Moses said when he came back frae the market."

"Very good—exceedingly good indeed; for there's nae luck aboot the hoose when our gudeman's awa. And, mind you, I say our *gudeman* with emphasis."

"O lassie! lassie! beware o' flattery," said with a kindly smile, a tender admiration beaming in his eye and mantling over his features as he surveyed his comely, warm-hearted daughter, whom he dearly loved.

"But where is the stranger?" looking at her father with an expression in which a roguish smile and a mock gravity were contending for victory; and with her right hand uplifted in true apostolic fashion: "Use hospitality one towards another without grudging," she added with most persuasive tongue.

"Judge not that ye be not judged, Mary," he responded with a solemnity that sobered the young lady somewhat. "I did inveet him to th' hoose."

"Oh! I knew you would. And what did he say? did he decline?"

"Weel, he pu'd oot a gold huntin' watch, lookit th' time—thanked me heartily, but said he cudna come th' day as he had to be hame at ane o'clock."

"He couldn't come to-day. Are we to expect him some other day then?" she asked with unconcealed eagerness.

"He said he was to be hereaboot twa or three days, an' I've nae doot he'll look in. But my certie, Mary lass, hoo mony lads wad ye hae? There's Philip Salmon dancin' attendance upon ye every day i the noo; an' there's thae minister billies comin' on Thursday —I'm thinkin' ye'll hae lads aneuch for ae week—lat alane this braw stranger."

"The more the merrier, you know, father. And you must really give me some credit for inviting the young ministers; I wished them to come for your sake as well as my own. I know you like a good, stout, theological argument, and I can promise you that in Paul Stephen you will find a foeman worthy of your steel. He may be rather too modern in his way of thinking for you; but without some difference of creed, you know, there would be nothing to contend about."

"Ay, ay. I suppose Paul Stephen's ane o' th' broad kirk chields that wad ride to th' deevil on a cushion!"

"I think you'll like him," said Miss Webster to her father, after the dinner was fairly begun, and she had briefly indicated Mr. Stephen's career; "he is far too able a reasoner to shelter himself behind a great array of empty logical terms. At anyrate you'll give him a fair trial—and I should have said a cordial welcome to begin with. I am sure you will be interested. It is very seldom you get a visit from a minister, other than Mr. Reid, and, of course, it will be a great event for Andrew to come into contact for a little with a couple of young clergymen."

"Certainly, Helen, we shall be delighted to see them," said her mother warmly; "and we are much obliged to you for inviting them. Andrew, I'm sure, is old enough to profit by their visit; they will be able to give him some hints about his studies, besides telling him all about the College and the Professors."

When the dinner was well advanced, and her father in a most

genial mood, Miss Webster was eager to renew her enquiries about the stranger.

"I hope that young gentleman won't call on Thursday when I'm out, as I should like very much to see him. I have just been thinking, from what you said, that he must be the same gentleman I saw in the Smithy last night along with Mr. Brownlea. He had not the same suit on, to be sure, but something about his appearance caused me to fancy he might be the same gentleman. Had he a full, well-grown beard of a rich brown colour?"

"Ay, his face was geyan weel theekit, if I mind richt."

"And had he a large, soft dark eye?"

"Deed, lassie, ye needna speir sae mony parteeklers. I canna tell ye what was the colour o' his een; but this I will say, I thocht him a braw, frank, weel-fa'ard chield."

"Thank you. That's a capital picture of him."

"An' noo, when ye mak' me think aboot the stranger, I'm no sure but he's geyan like Adam Brownlea i' the face some wey: likely he's a nephew—ane o' the Grahams o' Lochdale, mebbe."

"Yes, yes, John," exclaimed Mrs. Webster, impulsively, "you mind when Sally was here, she spoke about the grandson of her master coming; indeed the poor old body seemed to be as much delighted at the coming of Master David (it was always Master David with her) as if he had been her own son."

"Oh, then, I suppose we may hold it as quite conclusive that Mr. David Graham is the gentleman in question." While Miss Webster spoke her face beamed with joyous satisfaction; further remarking, "Graham is a fine Scotch name. I like it."

After dinner Mr. and Mrs. Webster went out to attend to their several duties, while Mary retired to the drawing-room to rest, and to read a little; or, sweeter still, to meditate upon the young gentleman believed to be no less than David Graham—the hero of a Hogmanay for ever memorable to her.

The drawing-room at Linnburn was a place after Mary's own heart, and dearly she loved a lounge in it.

This was the room which Sally said was like a palace! Poor dear Sally, what could she know about palaces? Yet Sally's opinion might be taken as representing that of a large class accustomed to live in houses much more expensively furnished than Linnburn, but being unacquainted with a few simple rules of decorative art, no sooner enter an apartment like the Webster's drawing-

room than they open their eyes and lift their hands with astonishment. They cannot analyze the cause of the room being so bright and showy, so fresh and pleasing to the senses, and at once conclude that such a splendid effect could only be produced by a lavish expenditure.

This accounts for the idle rumour that Lady Rathie furnished the Linnburn drawing-room. She did nothing of the kind. True she persuaded the Earl to make some improvements—such as the substitution of a bay window for the common one facing the south, and a handsome mantelpiece of white marble for the old black one, as well as an ornamental tiled grate and hearth to match.

When furnishing and decorating, the Websters had kept well in view the fact that their house being in the bottom of a glen they enjoyed the direct rays of the sun for a shorter time than their favoured neighbours on the braes, and it was therefore most desirable to have light coloured woods, paper and hangings, so as to reflect all the sunlight that was going.

With a large bay window to the south, and a window to the east, the inlets for sunlight were ample. How to make a good use of it was the next thing. This was how it was done. The wall paper was a silver grey or pearly tint; the doors and shutters of light yellow wainscot, with bright cane chairs and covers in harmony. The carpet had a very pale blue ground with a small pattern in red and yellow flowers; and the window curtains were of white muslin and cream coloured repp. Thus the drawing-room was bright and cheering at all times, summer and winter.

Miss Webster sat down in a couch between the windows and took up a thin orange coloured magazine to read. But before beginning she rose again and went to the side table, opened a musical box, wound it up, and, reseating herself, she turned over the pages of her book to the sweet sound of music.

Little did David Graham know that Miss Webster, about whom he was thinking at that moment, was studying the same lesson as he had been doing on Sabbath forenoon in the woods. Like him she thought the subject an exceptionally interesting one; and as in all likelihood Paul Stephen and his cousin James Scrymgeour, when they came, would be starting a conversation on sheep farming, and would be sure to refer to the pastoral life of the Jews, it was desirable to be well posted up and have something fresh to say upon so attractive a theme.

It did not take long to read over the notes in the Teacher's Magazine on Eliezer's mission (the same magazine Graham was consulting); indeed the last tune of the musical box—"The girl I left behind me"—had scarcely died away when she laid down the book.

What was to be done next? She must have a ramble in the garden, and round the 'toun'—rehearsing as it were the pleasant task which would fall to her when the visitors arrived.

She paused in the porch at the front door, looking admiringly at the flower pots on the shelves, and then at the luxuriant fuchsias at the entrance of the central garden walk. Next she glanced at the rockery gracing each side of the porch, the most conspicuous flower being a tall purple fox-glove in the back ground of both rockeries standing proudly up like a couple of sentries guarding the door. The bower was at the southeast corner of the garden; thither she sauntered over the smooth reddish gravel, gazing fondly at the flowers and ripening berries as she moved along. 'There's room in't, dear lassie, believe me, for twa,' she said to herself, as she sat down in the bower. After sitting a few minutes she walked straight down the path to the hawthorn hedge bounding the river, and opening a wicket gate went down three steps, and turning to the right found a comfortable seat—most enjoyable, however, in the morning, for then it is in the shade. And what a luxury to be seated by the margin of a beautiful river!

The lady is on a tour of inspection, and does not rest long anywhere. She next calls a halt before the beehives—a spot redolent of mignonette and marjoram, thyme and rosemary, as well as many other sweet smelling flowers, among which the bees are revelling. They are buzzing about in all directions, but she knows they won't sting her, and is not the least afraid of them. She may have something new to tell her gentlemen visitors about the busy bee, not to be found in Dr. Watt's hymn.

Plucking a damask rose near the apiary and placing it in her breast she moved slowly along the path in front of the house, observing with renewed pleasure the neat privet hedge running parallel to it, contrasting so well with the large, bright-tongued laurel enclosing two sides of the garden.

She paused at the entrance gate to the house—the honeysuckle gate—to contemplate the spacious farm yard. How sweet and peaceful the scene! what dignity and repose the two noble plane

trees gave to it; and what delightful shelter from the sun to any one who might be in the hammock, presently swung between these umbrageous monarchs. What ample scope the poultry had there. No wonder they were all in such capital feather—those maltas and dorkings, and those silver speckled and gold speckled birds. It was indeed a beautiful courtyard; for owing to the farm being chiefly pastoral the traffic about the steading was comparatively light, so that the yard had all the appearance of a charming village green.

While thus gazing, the pet lamb came trotting in by to solicit the attention of its young mistress. What a lovely picture! A tall and graceful lady clad in grey homespun, with a damask rose in her breast, leaning over a green gate arched with honeysuckle, addressing playful words to a lamb at her feet. Anon Mysie, the collie, turned up and came running to her for a share of what was going. Whereupon the lady went outside and walked to the hammock, in which she sat down, while her two pets squatted on the grass beside her, as if to keep watch and ward over their loving friend.

While resting in the hammock she took her knitting out of her pocket, for Miss Webster could never be idle. Now her mind and fingers are busy. "What would these young gentlemen think of Linnburn after smoky Glasgow? Doubtless they would share in the universal admiration and be greatly charmed. What an unspeakable joy and privilege to have been reared in a home at once so comfortable and strikingly beautiful."

After musing a while in that vein she continued her tour. Quitting the hammock she stept to the avenue which led to the foot of the braes; there again the sight gladdened her; hawthorn and birch intermingled with wild roses in full bloom made a very gay approach to the house. Turning next towards the farm buildings, separated from the dwelling by a broad green, she came to a pile of branches and trunks of trees with a block of wood and a gleaming axe across it. Though strong she did not try the axe; instead she stood to admire the young kittens scampering wildly about, as if playing hide and seek among the firewood. Such bright-eyed glossy cats, and such a merry gipsy life those semi-barbarians appeared to lead. Passing on to the byre and stable—what pleasing memories the sight of these places—and even their odours—awakened; happy memories of early days that returned with

renewed freshness during the holidays. Thence she sauntered to the mossy well near the stepping stones at the ford. Some wild violets still bloomed there, though the middle of July; and the grass beside the water—Oh, so bright! the very hue of the grass in Paradise!

Sitting down by the well and looking around her, the glowing feelings of her heart found vent in an adaptation of Moore's passionate lines—

> Oh, there is not in the whole wide world a valley so sweet
> As the vale where the Rhymen and Linnburn meet.

The Linnburn was the gurgling rivulet at the bottom of the deep picturesque ravine running at right angles to the river, and terminating at the level meadow ground, underneath which the stream continued its course, and after feeding the mossy well flowed on and joined the Rhymen.

The soft green sward on which she sat down sloped to the river, and was embroidered with daisies and buttercups now basking in the mellow rays of the afternoon sun, which slanted across the shoulder of Ben Katelow and cast the shadows of the alders and hazels at her feet. Coyly these shadows were creeping nearer and nearer as if they would fain kiss the hem of her garment. Oh, what a luxury to sit by the dear old mossy well! How sweet its cooling draught. And how delicious and exhilarating the air, ever fresh and new with the current of the river.

Though near the ford, no one passed to disturb her maiden meditation. Few and far between, like angels' visits, were the pilgrims that crossed the ford: some days it would seem as if no one crossed at all, excepting Charlie Sampson, her father's shepherd and ploughman, whose pretty cottage was on the other side a little way down. Still, as the ford was a short cut to the south country, some one might turn up; perhaps Mr. Graham might approach Linnburn from the south and find her, like Rebekah, at the well. She would like that immensely.

The similitude brought her Sunday school lesson to mind. Abraham's servant, Eliezer, going to Mesopotamia for a wife to Isaac. Familiar with the narrative from childhood, this summer afternoon amid these sweet pastoral scenes, she allowed her thoughts to dwell fondly upon the story, and while she admired its beauty and simplicity more than ever, she was astonished afresh at the extraordinary manners and customs it exhibited. How strange

and unnatural some of these were to a Scotch girl. With her deep reverence for the Bible, she felt as if it were sacrilege to question for a moment the propriety of anything recorded in the sacred pages. She would hardly dare to express to her father what was passing through her mind at present. It might be very wrong of her to entertain such heretical thoughts, but they would persist in stealing in upon her consciousness, bringing with them a certain fearful pleasure.

"Why did Eliezer stand by and allow the beautiful Rebekah to water the whole of the ten camels—creatures, too, that drink such a quantity at a time—while he, the lazy, ungallant fellow! simply looked on and wondered? Perhaps she was somewhat to blame in addressing the servant as 'my lord,' causing him to maintain his new dignity."

Miss Webster greatly commended the girl's courtesy and energy, but was strongly of opinion that in a matter of such momentous importance as the choice of a husband, Rebekah ought certainly to have been consulted. "Her brother Laban, having always an eye after the main chance, no sooner beheld his sister bedecked with the massive gold bracelets and ear-ring—or nose jewel, as the case may be—and heard the servant's account of the great wealth of his master, in flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men servants and maid servants, than he points to Rebekah—'there she is—take her. This matter proceeded from the Lord, we cannot say thee good or bad.' So said Master Laban, and the mother tacitly consented. 'Ask mamma' or 'papa' was not a formula of Jewish maidens in those days, at any rate Rebekah had not the privilege of blushing and repeating it. With his fine speeches and costly gifts Eliezer achieved a complete success. But most astonishing of all was the alacrity shown by Rebekah to accompany this zealous ambassador. Why be in such a hurry to leave home? Was she eager to be rid of the drudgery of going to the well? Her folks wished her to stay a few days—a full year, or ten months as the commentators make it. But no, she would go at once—the very next day after the engagement! Her conduct was very strange indeed. Had she been a poor, plain, penniless girl, one could have understoood it; but the 'damsel was very fair to look upon' and well off; and the very first glimpse of her in his mother's tent caused Isaac to love her; a real genuine case of love at first sight. And if she was worth the winning, surely she was

worth the wooing. Alas for her there was no such luxury as courtship. But why not delay the journey even for a few days so as to enjoy the pleasure and importance of being an engaged young lady? especially when the match was such a splendid one; why not linger to receive the congratulations of all her friends and go a round of visits to bid them all good-bye? Why not wish to go to the well a few more times adorned with her sumptuous jewellery, and see how her old companions admired and envied her good luck? What a lesson for modern young ladies indulging in day dreams about their wedding trousseau, and the time it would take to prepare it. Here was a lady who had everything prepared, and was ready to march on the morrow. And, moreover, a lesson for gentlemen, too, eager for their beloved to name the wedding day that they may buy the ring. Buy the ring, forsooth. The gallant oriental supplied nearly everything, including a complete outfit of domestic utensils!"

Miss Webster's meditations were brought to a close by the sudden appearance, behind the trees on the other side of the ford, of Mrs. Gray (wife of Hector Gray, Lord Rathie's factor) along with one of her daughters. Accustomed to the stepping-stones, these ladies soon tripped across, and after shaking hands with Miss Webster and talking for a minute or two, they all went into the house.

CHAPTER XVI.

"When to myself I sit and smile,
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile,
By a brook side or wood sae green,
Unheard, unsought for or unseen,
A thousand pleasures doe me blesse,
And crowns my soul with happiness.
All my joys to this are follie,
None sae sweet as melancholy.

Anon.

In addition to knowing what has been narrated in the previous chapter, the reader has the advantage of David Graham in having a very good guess that Miss Mary Helen Webster was the young lady who charmed him in the Smithy. Having failed to learn anything about her from his grandfather, he resolved to make an errand to the Smithy with the special view of gratifying his curiosity. Yesterday being Monday—only one day after seeing

the lady, he did not think it prudent to go and make enquiry so soon—it would look too anxious. But to-day he was quite bent on finding out who she was; more especially after his interview with grandfather, whom he found in the garden shortly after eight o'clock, when he came down stairs to breakfast.

After responding to David's cheery good-morning, grandfather remarked chaffingly: "I wonder when you city chaps 'll learn to rise i' th' mornin'—man, div ye no' ken there's gowd i' th' mou' o' th' mornin'!"

"And so you've been up since six o'clock digging for it. Ah, I understand now why you were able to retire and live on your money."

"An' mair than that, Davy lad, I've got a nugget to spare this mornin'; at onyrate I'm thinkin' you'll consider what I've gotten for you in that licht."

"Come now! grandfather, don't tease me with this little joke of yours about finding gold—out with it at once, please—don't keep me in suspense."

"Weel! if you'd been wi' me at the Smiddy an hour syne ye would hae met John Webster."

"And thereby hangs a tale, I suppose. What had John got to say for himself?"

"John has aye plenty to say; but mebbe ye think I'm haverin', speakin' aboot findin' gowd in a Smiddy whaur there's naething but airn to be seen?"

"Not at all"—laughing. "Oh dear no! I believe you have found the philosopher's stone, and can transmute the basest metal into gold. Come away now, and let us see what you have been playing the alchemist with."

"Weel, Davy, to mak a lang story short: John says he's no' verra busy i' th' noo, and would be glad o' yer company doon by this efternoon; ye're to gang doon t'yer tea; an' he said th' mistress an' th' dochter'll mak ye richt welcome. Noo there's gowd for a young chield, isn't it? gowd frae the Smiddy, lad."

"Indeed, grandfather, a bit of the finest gold! It is very kind of you to think of me so early in the morning. I am certainly much obliged to you."

"Ye'r no' obleeged to me ava, min; ye hiv' yersel' to thank: for had John Webster no' formed a gude opeenion o' ye yesterday forenoon, ye mebbe wadna been bidden doon by,"

While at breakfast, David learned a few more particulars about the Webster family, which enhanced the value of the invitation and greatly deepened his interest in the young schoolmistress.

Mrs. Webster's father, when a young man—a native of Scotland—went to Kew Gardens to perfect himself as a gardener, and eventually became head gardener at Adon Hall, Surrey, the seat of Lord Winfred, the father of Lady Rathie. Mrs. Webster was born and brought up in England, and only left it on the marriage of Lady Rathie, whose maid she had been for sometime previously.

These facts accounted for the fine taste displayed in the house and garden at Linnburn; for although John Webster inherited the Scotch prejudice that it was not a good sign to see a farmer paying much attention to his garden, he held his peace when he saw with what untiring industry and skill his wife toiled in it—joyously, too—and yet the household affairs were none the less ably administered.

Graham enjoyed lingering at the breakfast table in the sunshine, listening to the gossip of his grandparents and Sally about the Linnburn folks, and the more he heard of them the more he wished to hear. He wondered whether the lady, the belle of the Smithy, was likely to belong to people in everyway so worthy and amiable as the Websters. He hoped to learn before the day was very much older.

This pleasant breakfast party lasted till near ten o'clock; at which hour it was Mr. Brownlea's custom of a morning to go to the Post Office for his newspaper and letters. The postman was rarely later than ten o'clock, and his arrival was now the most important event of the day to grandfather. David reminded him of the time, and immediately the old gentleman set off for the post, leaving him to do as he pleased, exactly what he wished.

He would not try the fishing to-day, even although there had been a heavy shower during the night, and the water was thus in better trim. He would just go down the fields and have another look at the Rhymen. He loved the river, and he would be nearer Linnburn!

Flinging himself down on the shelving banks of the Rhymen he took a spell at the "Gentle Shepherd." Like Roger and Patie he lay among the gowans beneath the southside of a craigy bield and the flowery holm to the north, why it would do for

Habbie's How,
Where all the sweets of spring and summer grow.

But where were Peggy and Jenny bleaching their linen to make it 'like a lily wet wi dew'? Nowhere to be seen. Nor had a single angler come in sight yet. The critic who extolled Goldsmith's poetry because it "freed the landscape from the burden of human emotion," would be pleased with Rhymen glen, unless, like Cowper, he longed for a friend to whom he might whisper solitude is sweet. At any rate our hero was of the same mind as the Bard of Olney, and would have much preferred that the friend should be of the feminine gender.

After reading and musing awhile he started for the Smithy.

At Rathie clachan all was quiet. Even the thatched covered Inn showed no signs of anything doing; although there was an unyoked dogcart before the door as if to tempt some idle fellow, like himself, to take a drive. A little farther on, a pleasant murmur of voices came from the school; but nothing worth while seemed likely to break the monotony until he had reached his destination—the Smithy.

He had not been long there when he saw the sturdy smiths hammering at a hoop for a cart-wheel. By and by the boys from the school, let out for "their minnits," came trooping to the Smithy when they saw what was in progress. With keen interest they, along with Graham, watched the smiths lifting the red hot rim with pincers, running from the fire with it to the wheel outside, and speedily adjusting it; then followed the quick, energetic hammering by one man, while another was moving quickly round with a pan, pouring cold water on the burning rim, causing such a fizzing and steaming!

The cart-wheel being duly tired, the boys scampered off; and work being resumed inside the Smithy, Graham went in as a preliminary step, previous to interviewing the Smith's wife. It was a treat to watch the cunning artificer in iron. While doing so, Graham was also considering what would be the best excuse for calling at the Smith's dwelling-house next door. Before entering the Smithy, as he did not smoke and could not ask for a light, he thought a drink of water would be a plausible thing to ask for on a warm day; but when he saw a jug of water in the Smithy he had to think of something else. True, a gentleman, with every respect for the swarthy sons of Vulcan, could hardly be expected

to drink from the same vessel which they were lifting to their smutty faces: still, he did not wish to put them to the test, and sought for another pretext. Eureka! Call and see if grandfather is there (he goes in often) and enquire if he is done with the newspaper; or something of that sort.

Luckily, Graham was spared the necessity of knocking at the door, as the Smith's wife was standing at the porch.

"Good morning. Mrs. Ferrier, I presume?"

"Yes, Sir;" regarding him for a moment enquiringly, "Maister Brownlea's grandson, I think; at onyrate I saw ye wi' him on Sabbath nicht, stannin' ower there alang wi' anither man, and he was tellin' me this mornin' he was hae'n a veesit frae ye."

"You have guessed quite right, Mrs. Ferrier; my name is Graham. Am I anything like my grandfather?"

"Come in by—come into the hoose, Maister Graham, an' let's see you."

Seated by the Smith's bright kitchen fire, Graham felt very glad that his mission was offering to be successful.

"I wad hae kent ye in a meenit to be a freend of Adam Brownlea's; ye've got yer grandfather's very een—if onybody ever had."

"You are not the only person of that opinion. I feel rather pleased to be likened in anyway to my grandfather, and was quite proud to sit beside him in the Smiddy on Sabbath night."

"I'm sorry I wasna hearing Mr. Reid: I couldna win very weel."

"The nearer the kirk the farther from grace," said Graham playfully; "but I am sure you were well employed otherwise."

Mrs. Ferrier smiled at the pat allusion, and responded to it by asking abruptly—"D'ye like buttermilk, Maister Graham? I've jist been ca'in th' kirn, and I can tell ye yer grandfather's very fond of a drink o't."

"Then I must inherit his taste, Mrs. Ferrier, for I am partial to a drink of kirney, especially new ca'd;" uttering the northern dialect with an unctuous heartiness which delighted the good woman.

She handed him a jug of the precious liquid—the poor man's claret he called it—with small lumps of butter swimming on the surface, and he drank it off with evident relish.

"This minds me of the rare stuff I used to get at the Haws. The buttermilk we get in Glasgow is nothing to this; and as for butter being among it—well, it isn't visible to the naked eye."

Mrs. Ferrier rejoiced at his hearty appreciation of her buttermilk, and listened with much interest to his remarks about the importation of milk into Glasgow; the water supply and the milk being equally abundant; not implying, however, so far as his experience went, that the two were blended otherwise than by nature.

"That's a pretty flower porch, Mrs. Ferrier, you've got at your door; its a fine set off to the house."

"Ou ay, it is that. We've Leddie Rathie to thank for it: my man's sae busy i' th' Smiddy he widna hae thocht aboot sic a thing, had no' her Leddyship gien him nae rest till he put it up. An' she's jist the same wi' a' th' ither tenants."

"So I've heard. Well, I admire your porch very much, I assure you. I couldn't keep from looking at it on Sunday night. And, by-the-bye, when I mind, you were standing in front of it speaking to a young lady."

"Oh, yes. Yon was Helen Webster—raither I should say Miss Webster, though I jist ca' her Helen, for I've kent her a' her days. Ye'll no hae been doon by at Linnburn yet, I suppose?"

"No, not yet. But I am now to take a dander to the top of the braes to have a look at the farm. They tell me its a very pretty place."

"Ay, a very bonnie place; an' the Websters are real gude, kind folks, an' richt weel liket. Ay, an' the lass ye saw on Sabbath nicht, there's no a finer kimmer in a' th' glen."

Graham inwardly believed it; nay, to such an extent did the welcome news impress him, his breath was quite taken away. Fortunately, a knock at the door and the entrance of a neighbour ended the conversation; and as he had learned all he came for he was eager to get away.

Having indicated he would take a step along the high road to get a view of Linnburn, Mrs. Ferrier kindly came to the door to direct him. He did not require her assistance, but listened attentively and gratefully to her instructions. And, you may be sure, the access of joy that thrilled him, after the delightful revelation about Miss Webster, gave pith and unction to his thanks to the Smith's wife; causing her to remark to the neighbour when she returned to the house, that he was a "braw, sensible, wise-like lad, Maister Brownlea's grandson."

Perhaps his wish was father to the thought, for he had a dim

presentiment that the lady of the Smithy might turn out to be Miss Webster; but he was none the less agreeably surprised, and almost intoxicated with joy, to find he was right in his conjecture.

No more vague reverie now as to what like Linnburn's daughter would be: he had seen her once, and he had heard a good deal about her; and both the pearl and the shell were exceedingly good —indeed too good—he thought with a sigh: for it seemed highly improbable that such a lady could be without a sweetheart.

Turning round the gable end of the Smithy, under the shelter of the tall ash trees, and walking northwards for a short bit, he then struck to the left and joined the high road to Rhymen Kirk. On his left hand was the wood-covered hill behind his grandfather's cottage; and on the right another wood; the former, however, coming to an end when he had reached the farm of Hillside, at which point he was to turn down the brae along the cart road.

Hillside commanded a splendid view to the north-west. Looking in that direction far as the eye could reach, a tall peak lifts its head, like a monarch among mountains: yon, he knew, was dark Lochnagar; beneath whose shadows, on a beautiful green haugh clad with birks, stands Balmoral Castle; past which the Dee rolls so grandly with its organ-like music. High up on the other side of the Rhymen is another road leading to Rhymen Kirk; the white pathway winding along the purple moorland being very interesting and suggestive: it recalled the days when the Covenanters gathered from many a but and ben, and wandered over the hills to hear the Gospel

> By Cameron thundered, or by Renwick poured
> In gentle stream.

Half a mile or so from Hillside, deep down in the valley and still invisible, was the famous Linnburn. Part of the way consisted of a large sloping field of grass into which Graham went, carefully putting up the stile behind him. Though not on forbidden ground, yet knowing it was often hallowed by the footsteps of a certain fair lady, he felt a little nervous in case she might appear on the scene, preferring to meet her at the appointed time.

Near Linnburn gate (known hereafter as the Golden gate) the road took a graceful sweep between banks of broom and wild roses, truly a fitting approach to the beautiful glen, and yet the most of

its charm was purely natural, owing to the picturesque undulations of the ground. Graham instinctively paused at the Golden gate and looked around for a board prohibiting trespassers; but remembering that the public had a right of way through the farm, it being understood that care would be taken to shut all the gates, he lifted the latch and entered the bonnie, bonnie braes of Linnburn! No one was to be seen, and not wishing himself to be observed he stept a short distance from the pathway and sat down behind a juniper bush, over which he had a clear view of the Farm house and steading. And he was so charmed!

Ah, look! There is a lady coming from the river side, sauntering slowly with a collie and a pet lamb frisking beside her. She is bareheaded and dressed in grey. "That must be she—the incomparable she!" Graham said to himself, his heart wildly palpitating while crouching lower behind the bushy screen. Gracefully the lady moved along the courtyard and into the garden, leaving her pets outside. He breathed more freely when she turned and entered the garden gate—the Honeysuckle gate, as he himself afterwards named it. He was glad she did not look up the braes, for he had no wish to be seen reconnoitring.

So many strange and sweet pulsations had been thrilling in his heart all forenoon that the sense of hunger had been dulled and the hours had flown away on angel wings. He could parallel his case by that of another amorous swain, who—

> Pored upon the leaves and on the flowers,
> And then he heard a voice in all the winds,
> He thought of wood nymphs and immortal bowers,
> And how the goddesses came down to men.
> He missed the pathway, he forgot the hours,
> And when he looked upon his watch again,
> He found how much old Time had been a winner,
> He also found that he had lost his dinner.

It must be confessed, however, that our hero had lost his dinner intentionally, for he did not intend to dine that day. He knew from experience that with farmers tea meant a good square meal—not the mere lazy sipping of a pleasant beverage; and as he had been specially invited to a cup he resolved to please his entertainers, who were hospitable people, by eating heartily. To do this he must take only a moderate luncheon.

Being now half-past one, he rose and took the nearest way home

along a farm road at the head of the braes, skirting the western border of the wood; an interesting road as well as a near one, passing, as it did, the farm of Braehead, occupied by Philip Salmon, a known admirer and perhaps a lover of Miss Mary Helen Webster.

(To be continued).

A LOVE STORY OF TO-DAY.

BY JAMES STURROCK,

Author of "Sketch of Dr. Norman Macleod," "Sermons on Scottish Song," "The Prince's Charm," &c.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."—*Eccles. xi. 1.*

AVID GRAHAM always found it a great pleasure to visit a new family having at least one attractive young lady; and he—a handsome, engaging fellow—had not arrived at the mature age of twenty-nine without experiencing such a pleasure pretty often. But on no former occasion did the prospect of adding one more to the list of his desirable lady friends thrill him as he was thrilled this afternoon, of Tuesday, 16th July, on the eve of starting for Linnburn to see Miss Webster.

Before setting out on so important a journey it was natural that the gallant wooer's toilet should receive more than usual care. Well favoured by Nature, and admirably fitted with a holiday garb, selected by his own fine taste, it may be guessed that the vision of himself in the mirror was not displeasing. Not only was the picture in the glass very agreeable to the eye, but its scheme of colour promised to harmonize so richly with the complexion and dress of the object of his desire: her gown of home-spun grey would look well beside his tweed suit of russet yellow, brightened with a red scarf, and gold clasp; while in the buttonhole flourished a

couple of his grandfather's wonderful pansies, imparting a delicate grace and finish to the living picture. Better than all, his light-brown hair and rosy countenance, beside her raven locks and pale, but healthy face, presented a contrast which would rejoice the heart of a physiologist as well as the eye of a painter.

His toilet being carefully adjusted he took the road with the easy and assured air of a lover whose motto on such an expedition is *veni, vidi, vici.* Slowly he moved along towards Linnburn, as if dressing his mind for company, or revolving the probabilities of the impending drama.

On reaching the Golden gate he observed two ways down the braes—one, a footpath by the side of the ravine; the other, the grassy cartway winding along the natural terraces. He chose the cartway, being surest, and was soon at the gate leading into the avenue up to the house. At this gate stood a sheepfold, and he was glad to find John Webster there mending a spar of it.

"Always busy, I see, Mr. Webster."

"There's always something to do about a farm-town."

"So I've heard my grandfather often say. Long before he flitted to Rathie he was to give me a drive to see the other side of Ben Katelow, but somehow the convenient time never came. Work never seemed to come to a stop at The Haws."

"Ay, Sir, yer grandfather was a sair worker a' his days, an' he enjoys his reward noo. Whaur wad he been if he had ta'en three weeks' holidays every summer? Whaur wad ony farmer be, I wad like to ken?"

"Then perhaps you don't expect the like of me will come to much good loafing about in this way?"

"Weel, sir, idle dogs worry sheep, and idle men, they say, do waur. But come awa' to th' hoose, my folks hae been looking for ye this hour or twa."

The farmer's blunt but hearty welcome and the manly tones of his voice caused Graham's blood to circulate briskly, and opened his eyes afresh to the beauties around him. He could not walk along the grassy avenue, shaded by scented birks and wild roses, without expressing his delight; and when his eyes rested on the hammock swung between the trees, the honeysuckle gate, the laurel hedge, and many other signs of comfort and refined taste, he breathed a silent, heartfelt prayer to the Giver of every good and perfect gift for bringing him to Linnburn.

At the door porch Miss Webster, in the temporary absence of her mother, welcomed the stranger with natural, unaffected cordiality.

He was ushered into the drawing-room—the room which Sally had told him was furnished like a palace. How did it impress him? Why, his eyes were so gladdened that his countenance immediately kindled with joyous admiration, and he could not help impulsively exclaiming, "Our Sally wasn't far wrong when she likened Linnburn to a palace. You seem to have all the perfumes of Arabia here, Miss Webster!"

Mrs. Webster now made her appearance—a pleasant-spoken, nice, motherly woman. After some conversation she withdrew, on hospitable thoughts intent, remarking before leaving that she hoped Andrew (her only son) would be home in good time from school to join them at tea.

The sermon in the smithy was talked about, as well as the character and abilities of Mr. Reid, the minister; during which a fair opportunity was given for observing Miss Webster and of forming some idea of her conversational powers. And certainly Graham was not disenchanted.

He was charmed with her graceful self-possession, harmonious voice, and easy flow of expressive language. Though naturally pale, her cheeks were healthy and dimpled, her eyes fresh and bright, and at present a delicate russet tinge heightened the beauty of her fine face. Most of all was he charmed with her bewitching smile: when her full red lips parted, her countenance was illumined as if by a sunbeam!

"I wonder why Andrew hasn't come yet," said Mrs. Webster, as she re-entered the room, looking a little anxious, and advancing to the window commanding a view of the braes. "I told him not to linger by the way, as we expected a stranger to tea." Anon she cried, "Here he comes!" and off she hastened to the honeysuckle gate to meet her beloved boy.

"This is Andrew, Mr. Graham," said the mother, her face mantling with joy as she presented the lad, not even giving the young hopeful time to lay down his big strapful of books.

Graham rose and shook his hand heartily, making some playful remarks about his load of books, which put the boy at his ease.

They now all adjourned to the parlour, and took their seats in order round the tea-table; Graham being placed with his back to the light, facing Miss Webster—the very position he desired.

According to custom the host said "the Grace"—said it in a graceful way, too: indeed it was most refreshing to hear such grateful, heartfelt, reverential tones after the mumbling, inaudible, and seemingly thankless petitions so often perfunctorily presented before meals.

"We have a musical box, Mr. Graham," said Miss Webster, smiling, while her mother poured out tea; "if you are fond of music, as I am sure you are, I shall wind it up, and we can hear it from the other room with the door open."

"Thank you. I shall be delighted. I am very fond indeed of music."

"That is very pretty—"There's nae luck aboot the hoose," said Graham with a very pleased look, while he listened to that lively air.

"Yes, you're right, Mr. Graham: There's nae luck aboot the hoose when our gudeman's awa'—a sentiment you won't be troubled with, I suppose," said Mrs. Webster with a humorous twinkle in her eye.

"Well, no—not exactly. I have not the honour of being a gudeman; and yet my poor old landlady will miss me, I daresay—she says so, at anyrate, when I return after a week's absence. You see her other lodgers come and go, but I seem to remain for ever; so it happens that she looks upon me as a sort of guardian, or gudeman, and comes to me with her troubles and difficulties."

Here Mysie, the collie, placed her chops on Graham's knee, and gently pressed it to be taken notice of. "Poor Mysie! nobody is minding you," he said, giving her a bit oatcake, and patting her affectionately.

"Never heed her," said Mr. Webster; "she's just a plague to strangers. She kens fine no to beg frae me."

"Oh, she's no plague. I'm glad to see Mysie taking so kindly to me: indeed I feel flattered."

"'Deed, sir, ye needna consider it flattery; to speak plainly, I assure you Mysie maks as great ado wi' ony tinkler or beggar body that comes aboot th' toon. I saw her th' ither day jumpin' an' whinin' aboot a raggit gangrel, waggin' her tail an' carryin' on as if she wad gae daft wi' joy; an' the puir man, like you, was highly pleased: ''Od man,' he said, 'but you've got a fine doggie!'"

Graham felt slightly chilled by these plain-spoken remarks, but soon recovered his spirits when Miss Webster, who had observed his countenance to fall, begged to differ from her father.

"Mysie is certainly no respecter of persons, so far as dress is concerned, and I am quite sure that the tinkler whom Mysie made such a work with must have had some good, lovable qualities behind his tattered garb. I have seen people whom Mysie wouldn't take to at all."

This speech was very soothing to Graham. That the collie should take so kindly to him in presence of its young mistress, whose special favour he was eagerly desirous to gain, he considered a hopeful sign, particularly when carefully marked by the lady herself, who believed that dogs, like children, are most unerring judges of character.

John Webster, though rather prone to blurt out his first thoughts, was a most kind-hearted man, and he listened with fatherly pride while his daughter disputed the accuracy of his judgment about Mysie's conduct towards strangers; and it was evident from his kindling features and sparkling eye that a happy anecdote bearing upon the subject had occurred to him.

"Weel, weel, Mary, have it yer ain wey. Perhaps you'll mind, too, that Burns's dog was very fond o' his maister, an' went trottin' efter him wherever he gaed—whether to kirk or market; ay, an' the crittur actually one time went into a ballroom efter Robbie, an' ran aboot at his heels amon' th' dancers. He used to say that he wished the lasses were as fond of him as his dog. An' ye mind, ae fine day Robbie said this to Jean Armour, bleachin' claes on the village green, and sall Jean accepted the challenge."

"Your health and story," mentally ejaculated Graham, not being familiar enough yet with his host to cry it out boldly. After this story about the immortal bard his equanimity was thoroughly restored, and his face glowed with gratitude and joy. Would the lady across the table manifest the same readiness to love him as the affectionate Mysie? Would she accept the challenge if he put it? And his colour rose as he glanced at the lady while he asked himself these delicate questions.

Now he must speak a word to Andrew, sitting at his sister's right hand: and thus wisely fulfil the injunction—love me, love my dog, but my brother as well.

"You were somewhat late in coming home to-night, were you not, Andrew?"

"Yes, sir, we were longer in to-night; we had a counting competition."

"Oh, indeed. Did you get difficult questions?"

"Just compound addition."

"How did you compete?"

"The master cried out the figures, and we took them down on our slates. 'The coont' was three figures in the pounds column, and twelve figures deep. After we had it all down the master said that the first one who gave him a correct answer in half-a-minute would get a penny. So he stood with his watch in his hand."

"And did you manage it in half-a-minute?"

"Yes: I got the penny twice!"

"Well done you, Andrew. Though the race is not always to the swift, I am sure you have a splendid chance of getting on in the world."

What a delicious tea they had! Graham, owing to his light luncheon, did ample justice to the good things on the table, some of them no doubt placed there in complimental mood to him. The blaeberry jam, for one item, was specially down for the stranger—for Mrs. Webster, after enquiring how he liked it, and receiving a highly favourable reply, remarked that it was the last pot in the house, but that the berries would soon be ripe again, when she could make plenty more.

"It is a very happy thought, Mrs. Webster, to give your town visitors blaeberry jam: if they all enjoy it as heartily as I am doing, they will esteem it a rare treat. Blaeberries have a peculiar charm for me—so racy are they of the heather hills."

After the interminable loaves, loaves, loaves! of Glasgow, what a pleasure to Graham to have such nice oatcakes and flour-scones, with exquisite butter dyed with marigolds! and, for a change, strawberry jam, so newly made that the delicious blood of the berry was scarcely yet cold. And then the cheering beverage—the finest of tea—was laced with real cream: none of your frothy apologies for it. The cakes and scones were dainties to him, and he was not slow to speak in their praise, knowing that honest praise would be welcome. And in so doing he was delighted to learn afterwards that he had been unwittingly complimenting the daughter of the house, for it had not yet transpired that the cakes and scones were her handiwork. Of course it was very natural for the mother to let the young gentleman know something of the housewifely qualities of her daughter when she could prudently do so.

Graham knew that the Countess of Rathie sometimes came to

drink tea at Linnburn, and he shrewdly suspected that the elegant china before him had been handled by her fair fingers; even the very cup he was using may have pressed the ruby lips of the Countess. Enchanting thought! True, the keen air of the hills added something to the relish. But it must be confessed—what is already an open secret—that the great charm for him—the soft-hearted fellow!—that which gave the prime zest and flavour to his enjoyment of that tea, was the blythe, winsome lass across the table, whose handsome face, under the inspiring influences around her, warmed and bloomed into more and more bewitching loveliness.

He felt supremely happy. How could one of his temperament be otherwise? What a combination of sweets appealed to his senses. The sun was shining over the shoulder of Ben Katelow, and his mellow beams were lying soft and warm in the glen and in the corner of the room at the western window: in at the open front window, too, the Frenchman's darling (mignonette) breathed her delicate fragrance, while her fairer and more blooming sisters vied with her in wafting their choicest perfumes. And finely blending with the sweet odours came the pleasant tinkling of Scotch tunes from the musical box—not forgetting the dreamy, lulling cadence of the river, to which Graham's ear was keenly alive, though the others were quite unconscious of the sound—so accustomed were they to it. But the steady, sonorous music of the water was not so loud as to drown the hum of the sair-laden bees sailing towards the hives in the garden.

Anon a yellow butterfly came fluttering in at the open window, hovered for a few seconds near the ceiling above the tea table, to the delight and amusement of the party; but evidently not quite enjoying the foreign aspect of things, flew out again.

"Sensible creature!" said Mrs. Webster; "the butterfly does not care for staying in the house when the sun is shining." Then turning to her daughter, tea being over, "Perhaps Mr. Graham would like to see the garden before the sun is behind the Ben altogether;" glancing towards her guest for reply.

"Yes, very much. I think we cannot do better than imitate the butterfly," he responded gaily. Then looking towards the western window, his eye rested on a luxuriant myrtle bathed in sunlight.

"What a beautiful myrtle!" he exclaimed; and as he faced round again Miss Webster coloured slightly, as if, like himself, she were conscious of its language, and had divined his thoughts.

Though not asked to the garden with his sister and Mr. Graham, it was natural enough for Andrew, a lad of fourteen, to accompany them, being in the habit of going with other strangers to tell them, when required, the names of the plants and flowers. Graham would have preferred that the young brother had found something else to do; and yet, on second thoughts, he was pleased at the seeming absence of artifice on the mother's part in not arranging that her daughter should be alone with him—with him! such an eligible gentleman, according to old Sally.

They lingered for a time in the porch and about the rockeries, examining the flowers and the clusters of roses on the front of the house, and then moved towards the beehives.

"Here we have within easy reach an object lesson on the hymn, 'How doth the little busy bee improve each shining hour,'" said Miss Webster, smilingly.

At that moment a bee buzzed past Graham's ear, and he instinctively lifted his hand quickly to shield his neck.

"Oh, don't be afraid, Mr. Graham; they won't meddle with us if we don't meddle with them. You did a dangerous thing just now in lifting your hand suddenly—the bees are sure to sting if you buffet them."

"I shall remember that. Knowledge gives self-possession to a man."

"Yes, it goes a great way with a *man*. But suppose now that a woman were to come upon an ugly, venomous serpent lying coiled up in the grass—what good would it do *her* to know that the creature must first uncoil itself before it can spring?"

"I must leave every daughter of Eve to answer that question," said Graham, with a sly smile, the full meaning of which was instantly apprehended by his intelligent querist.

Though much to please the eye in Linnburn garden this afternoon, there was no ripe fruit to tempt one: the season in Rhymen glen being late. The present blush on the red currants and raspberries was receiving help from the setting sun. After such a hearty tea, however, fruit was of no consequence, and besides, the feast of beauty was enough. Truly Mrs. Webster deserved great praise for her garden, for she, it must be emphasized, was the ruling queen in it. Only her labour of love could produce such charming results: touched by her fair tendance, each flower gladlier grew and looked as if it really enjoyed the air it breathed.

See! how these lovely moss-roses stretch their necks and pout their lips to kiss the rosy sunbeams! And what a wealth of beauty in that laurel hedge—every leaf glimmering with light!

But to our hero the young lady was the reigning beauty in that garden fair. His fond gaze was turned on her oftener than on the flowers. Before coming out she had put on her hat—a white straw one—which seemed to add to her charms; and either the pretty hat, or the lady's graceful form, or it may be her still more captivating voice and manners in the open air, away from the eyes of her watchful parents—whatever was the cause or combination of causes, she had become intensely more interesting to him; and while her manner was growing more free and gay, his tended the very opposite. Evidently something now weighed on his mind: there was an undercurrent of pensive thought and feeling beneath his assumed gaiety when responding to his companion's cheerful remarks. While at tea he felt very much at home with the family; but there were certain tones and looks of the daughter which kindled memories and strongly impressed him with the belief that surely he must have met and spoken to her before; still, as she gave not the slightest hint on the subject, he was sadly puzzled. What could he do but just exercise a little patience and see what would happen. His frequent glimpses of the side of her face with her hat on added to his bewilderment, and confirmed his surmise that they had met, and even been very friendly somewhere before. And yet she chatted and laughed more gaily than ever. He did not quite like that. If really the veritable lady he was thinking of—and he was becoming more and more persuaded, from certain hints eventually thrown out by her, that she could be no other—how could he but feel somewhat vexed and disappointed to infer from her manner that their accidental and romantic meeting, after long years, was by no means so very interesting and momentous to her as to him?

"Perhaps she is now engaged," he thought, "and our meeting again is of little consequence to her. I'll better wait a wee."

Opening the wicket in the hedge, Miss Webster shewed him the seat by the river-side, remarking as she sat down, "I like this seat best in the morning: then the sun is behind you."

Taking a seat beside her, to which she invited him, he said, "You are indeed highly favoured, Miss Webster—all manner of sweets lie compacted here. I would take Linnburn to be the sort

of place Samuel Rogers had in his eye when immortalizing his poetic wish."

"Yes, we are certainly well off, though Linnburn doesn't contain all the elements of Mr. Roger's wish. For instance, we haven't a mill, which all poets dearly love; and the village church beneath the trees is a good way off—the more's the pity: for all that, Linnburn is certainly a pretty spot. I assure you, I do enjoy spending my holidays here."

After a pause, during which they gazed at the river and watched the trout jumping at the flies, she remarked that it would be worth while trying the fishing this evening, and made a playful allusion to the Lady Helen he had caught, which led on to some pleasant remarks about her namesake's romping manners when a girl, mainly the outcome of her superabundant vitality.

They could have sat by the river long enough, it being so delightful that warm afternoon to feel the cooling breeze off the water, but Miss Webster wished to shew him a few more Linnburn sights. So after a meditative interlude she said, "When you are tired of this seat, Mr. Graham, I have some more curiosities to shew you."

"Very good. I am ready. Let us pass on to the next caravan, as I heard them shouting at Glasgow Fair." And while speaking he remembered his interview with Patricia Hammond, causing him once more to gaze critically, yet modestly, at his companion's face.

She led the way back to the garden, walking slowly up to the bower overarched with rowans.

"Love thoughts lie rich when canopied with bowers," breathed Graham to himself, following his fair guide, scarcely heeding that Andrew was behind him as well as Mysie—that faithful and affectionate collie having joined them at the river-side.

"Will you sit down for a minute in the bower, Mr. Graham—just to say you have been in it?"

"Oh, yes; certainly—ladies first," with a polite bow, standing aside that she might enter.

Stepping into the bower with a gracious smile, she sat down, leaving ample room for him. The movement she made, with its accompanying smile, was such an exact counterpart of the historical Miss W.'s manner when kindly, though mutely, inviting him to a seat beside her in the railway carriage on Hogmanay, coupled with the fact that Miss Webster's name begins with W, together with other hints and signs not so easily indicated, and not forgetting

that the lady Miss W. was seen last summer at Redmuir by Miss Hammond, the showman's daughter: all seemed to point to the inference that Miss Webster must be the long-lost Miss W.!

The impatient reader will exclaim, "What was the use of Graham dilly-dallying that way with the girl? Could he not have said to her right off, 'I have an impression, Miss Webster, that I have met you before, years ago; if not you, certainly a lady very like you.' That would have settled the identity at once" Perhaps it would. But such a course of procedure would not have been characteristic of David Graham's style of playing the game of life. He would, however, soon throw down a trump card which would compel the lady to show her hand.

Mysie followed them into the bower and lay down at the feet of her young mistress, but Andrew lingered outside, his native modesty forbidding him to plant himself in such close proximity to his seniors, though desired by Mr. Graham. His sister, however, did not encourage him to take a seat.

"It is a pleasant bower this," she remarked, "although it hasn't the commanding view of yon one on the height—have you seen yon bower yet?" pointing to the one on the summit of the brae down the river a bit.

"Oh, yes; I saw it yesterday, but only from this side. I fancy this is a much pleasanter bower—all the more charming because it is lowly and secluded."

"I agree with you. None but friends can enter here, while up yonder one is at the mercy of every chance passer-by."

"Is that so? Well, I must say that with such a beautiful home as this I don't wonder that you enjoy your holidays here. How thankful one should be for holidays! it enables one to get a glimpse of many a fairy nook, and to carry back to the smoky city many a golden memory."

"Yes, we should be very thankful—especially a schoolmistress! We hear fathers and mothers say there were no holidays when they were young; surely it was a great hardship to toil from January till December without some breathing time."

"Well, for one thing," responded Graham, "they didn't work so hard in those days—in fact they couldn't for a whole year keep up the fever heat of modern life."

"Hullo!" cried Andrew suddenly, "there's that stirk across the water again. Mysie, hey!" and off they both scampered out of

the garden—Andrew and Mysie—to bring the stirk back to its own pasture.

"Certainly we are well off with our holidays," continued Graham, with rather more fervour after the brother's hasty departure. "It lets us get home to our friends. Sometimes I wish I had been a mechanic, or a tradesman of some sort, in order to have a week at the New Year."

"Or even a schoolmistress," said the lady archly.

"Better still, for then I should have holidays oftener and longer, besides the pleasure of the calling, which I greatly admire."

"Not so bad for a beginning, Mr. Graham," we say. "Now for your trump card!"

"I rarely go home at Christmas: the last time was some three years ago, when the New Year began on a Friday. I remember it well—very well indeed." Then he paused and lifted his eyes as if looking tenderly at the scene in memory's glass.

Miss Webster's face was glowing with interest, but she simply asked if he liked travelling at such a crowded time.

He answered eloquently, giving her an account of his trip home on the memorable Hogmanay along with Allan Marchmont, concluding with, "But when we came to Perth we had the society of a nice young lady all the way to Lochdale. She wasn't at all saucy—that lady, but, after a little coaxing to begin with, very kindly responded to our remarks. We were charmed with her frankness and rare intelligence—I was especially—and my chum somehow by-and-by left the lady all to myself to talk to."

Here Mysie came trotting up the garden-walk again, Andrew having let her in by the wicket at the riverside—he himself going somewhere else.

"Well, Mysie, you've got back again," said Miss Webster, with a richer music in her voice than Graham had ever yet noticed. Thus encouraged, the collie, a very pretty, winsome creature, resumed its former position at the feet of its young mistress.

"Did you not think the young lady rather forward in speaking with strange gentlemen?" she asked softly, leaning forward and caressing Mysie affectionately with both her hands.

"You wouldn't have thought so, I am sure, had you heard the conversation which led up to the first remark which I addressed to the lady."

Miss Webster did not look up, but continued petting the collie,

and that with a degree of warmth and industry somewhat surprising to Graham. He envied Mysie the sweet caresses, but was not at all jealous, for he felt sure the lady was much interested in what he said, and was only indulging in a little byplay essentially feminine.

He would be a candle-holder and look on—a candle-holder, forsooth! Ridiculous metaphor! Was not the blessed sun still gilding the top of Ben Katelow, and glorifying the rich and balmy eve with rose and amethyst? The purple beams were radiant on the lady's hands while caressing Mysie—naturally the focus of Graham's eyes. And oh, such beautiful hands! such a pearly texture, and so exquisitely shaped! Well might the lady thank her canine friend for being there so happily during these auspicious moments! Assuredly the mute eloquence of those caresses was not lost upon the favoured beholder: was he not Romeo worshipping the white wonder of Juliet's hand?

"Did you learn where the lady was going to?" was Miss Webster's next query after the petting interregnum, still regarding Mysie while pausing for a reply.

"She made no secret of that. She was going to Montrose, and I sincerely wished that I had been going there too, so as to prolong the pleasure of her company. Indeed, I told her as much!"

Miss Webster raised her head and turned a glowing countenance to the speaker. Was the heightened colour on her cheeks caused solely by the rosy sunlight? Surely it must, for there was nothing in the gentleman's remarks to cause her to blush so deeply.

"Your conversation must have been very interesting, Mr. Graham. Might I venture to ask what you talked about? some idea of it, I mean: it might be useful to me on a similar occasion:" said rather tremulously, and again addressing herself assiduously to Mysie.

"I'm sure you wouldn't require any prompting, Miss Webster. But I shall tell you with pleasure what delighted me most. The lady had travelled on the continent—very romantic I thought, and still think—and she told me a lot about the wonderful places she had visited. And she did it too in such a fascinating way."

While giving some details, he was again in fancy by the lady's side in the railway carriage—she was next his heart—just as he was seated at that moment, but sitting closer: again in fancy his eye was gladdened by the fine contour and beauty of the fair

stranger's cheek, and again he marvelled at her extremely handsome ear. And now his eye could not help resting on the cheek and ear of his present companion as she leaned forward toying with her pet. Why did the colour suddenly leave his cheeks, and his heart palpitate so wildly?

"Mr. Graham! before you say any more, I must beg your pardon," said Miss Webster with deep emotion, her hand uplifted beseechingly, and her face as red as the peony rose near the bower!

He took the proffered hand—trembling like his own—holding it with a warm, nervous grasp, and looking into her face quite overcome and speechless! Then he rose to his feet—still in an attitude of extreme surprise, mingled with joy. At length when he found utterance, "Well! well!" he exclaimed, slowly and roundly; "truth is indeed stranger than fiction. And so you are really and truly the veritable lady!"

Then followed a thrilling pause, during which they still held each other warmly by the hand.

He broke the silence. At first speaking was difficult—his voice being so husky he had to clear his throat again and again before he could articulate distinctly. When he had fairly recovered his speech and his self-possession, he looked at her tenderly with a winning smile, blended however with a degree of shamefacedness on remembering his flattering words, and said, "Why, I now feel like Juliet after praising Romeo in the dark! You have certainly had the advantage of me, have you not?"

"Yes; I must admit that, and that is why I feel ashamed for not betraying myself sooner—especially after my promise to you in the train. Do you remember asking me as a favour, that if I should meet you on the street—or anywhere—to stop and speak to you?"

"Ah! but you never did it."

"I never had the chance."

"I remember turning my face to you and begging you to take a good look, so that you might know me again."

"And you laughed so much that I could not see your face properly."

"I remember it well, and remarked that you would need a baby lens to take an instantaneous impression. But how did you come to know me? how did you find me out?"

"I had the advantage of you in knowing your name, and that

you belonged to Lochdale, where you went out. Your companion, whose name I did not hear—at least I have forgotten it—addressed you now and again as Mr. Graham."

"Just like Allan Marchmont. He has a bad habit of addressing people by name before strangers. In this case, however, it has turned out an exceptionally happy thing. Well, I knew you were going to Montrose—you told me so—and I learned accidentally that your name began with W." Here he explained about mistaking her portmanteau for his. "I could not forget Miss W., for shortly before that I had been reading the draft of a remarkable letter addressed to a 'My dear Miss W.' by a poetical clerk whom Marchmont knew, and who shewed me the letter; and it struck me as a strange coincidence that I should see only Miss W. on your portmanteau."

"I remember the incident. I purposely drew the strap across the address to keep curious people from staring at my name. But I am glad you caught the initial letter: it is a slight proof that I am not imposing on you."

"You may well smile, for I certainly never for a moment thought any such thing. Indeed the truth began to dawn upon me whenever I saw you with your hat on. I doubt whether I would have known you on the street, or perhaps in any other way than seated as we are just now—the same as in the train. Your smile helped me, just as the smile of young Tobias Smollett enabled his mother to recognize him after a long absence. Still, I was doubtful—your face not being so round as I thought it was."

"Unfortunately it has grown long—with age!" she responded with irresistible humour, intensified by the speaker's buoyant youthfulness. "Ah, well, I have some consolation if what Cleopatra says be true—that round faces are mostly stupid. But what about your companion—Mr. Marchmont, I think you called him?"

"Yes, Marchmont—Allan Marchmont. After the rather ungallant way Allan behaved I am sure you will be surprised to hear that he is married and is quite a family man now. He married a rich lady"—smiling significantly—"some say the rich lady married him. And by-the-by, you may be interested to know that she has a sister—a spinster, equally rich and eligible?"

The last remark was put interrogatively for a purpose. Graham watched the effect of it, and was not displeased to see a dark shadow flit across the lady's face. She quickly rallied, however, and with

more emphasis in her tone, as if a little forced, replied, "Oh, yes; I *am* interested. Of course, I naturally suppose you are a candidate for the hand of this very eligible lady: having two such powerful friends at Court as Mr. Marchmont and his wife, one would expect you to get—well, the first refusal."

"The first refusal! Ha! ha! Very neatly put. I fear that in this matter of a refusal your humble servant would come off second best. You have yet to learn that a clergyman, or rather a divinity student, young and good-looking, is said to be courting the sister, and being a well-disposed, pious young lady, what chance could there be for a poor layman? Against such heavy odds do you think it would be wise to contend?"

The lady's face flushed, and she replied with animation, "I see that like many others—too many—you share the opinion that when a minister casts his eyes favourably upon a lady she is charmed, helplessly charmed, as it were; and that in fact a proposal from a clergyman is like a Royal prerogative, where a wish or request means a command. Surely no woman of sense or spirit would be so foolish as to marry a minister chiefly for the sake of his office."

"I hope not. And yet the divinity that doth hedge a minister as well as a king——"

"Yes, yes"—laughing—"I admit it works wonders, if not miracles."

After a pause, a humorous smile playing about her lips while she stroked Mysie's head, "You won't object to Mr. Marchmont sometimes mentioning your name to his wife's sister, although you dislike him to do so before strange ladies? But sometimes even in the latter case it does no harm to mention a name—especially if it be a good one:" turning a modest gaze to view the effect of her remarks.

"I agree with you heartily. In the present case, my friend Allan's indiscretion, if I might so term it, has turned out a very lucky and romantic thing: I have no doubt it has had something to do with bringing me here. Is that not so, Miss Webster?"

"Well, without knowing your name I would have remained in the dark regarding the gentleman who shewed me so much courtesy. Such is woman's curiosity, you know, that you can easily imagine I had a pretty shrewd guess about the family you belonged to; and when Sally was telling me that you were coming, I had a strong

presentiment that you were the gentleman whom your companion addressed as Mr. Graham."

"Verily you are a witch for a guesser!"

"And, if you will excuse me? I must confess I was glad at the prospect of seeing you again; of course out of curiosity for one thing, but indeed I wished to make you welcome to our hospitality —such as it is—as some return for the kind attention you shewed me then:" blushing and smiling archly, at same time tenderly caressing Mysie: "and"—hesitatingly—"if for no other reason, was I not under promise to make myself known to you?"

Such a charming mixture of maiden modesty, frankness, and good nature, combined with admirable common-sense and high spirits, so heightening her exceptional beauty and fascination that Graham felt he could clasp her fervently to his arms and kiss her for very admiration and gratitude. He could not discreetly do that, however, and so his overflowing emotions had to find vent simply in words.

"So you were—so you were:" laughing heartily. "Thank you —thank you a hundred times! I appreciate your kindness very much indeed. But I am sure that any courtesy of mine was more than repaid by yours. The conversation you favoured me with in the train was such a charming illustration of the virtue of strangers being friendly—and following, as it did, so aptly upon the discussion between Marchmont and me—I could not feel otherwise than particularly pleased. How often—how very often—have I thought over that memorable journey!"

The lady listened graciously with the deepest interest, all the more bewitching from the fitful blushing kindled by the delicate praise, as well as by the evident homage of his words and manner.

"I little dreamed," he continued, "that after such a lapse of time —three years and a half—the courtesy you so kindly—too kindly —credit me with would be rewarded in this way. I never before experienced such a striking fulfilment of the Scriptural promise, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.'"

What more could they say to each other, these two comparative strangers? Much more! the sources of boundless speech had been opened: it is, as you know, only their second meeting, and yet, such is their strong natural affinity, they go on talking with the joy and fervour of old friends who have been hungering and thirst-

ing to meet each other again after being long years apart; as if the streams of their lives, though running separately and unseen, the one by the other, had still maintained a subtle, spiritual communion, causing them inevitably, if slowly, to converge; and now that they have once more coalesced there is joy in heaven and on earth!

"You haven't seen much of Linnburn, Mr. Graham; perhaps you would like to change the scene now?"

"Yes; after such a very unexpected turn of the drama, the scene might well be changed. What say you to a walk up the river a bit?"

"With pleasure:" rising from her seat. "Excuse me a minute: I'll go into the house for a scarf, in case it should get chilly by the riverside."

Such was Miss Webster's excuse for running into the house—a big, hardy girl like her, who had scarcely ever a cold. Her real reason, no doubt, was her burning impatience to tell her mother that she had guessed rightly in regard to Mr. Graham's identity.

"What a superb woman!" he said to himself, as he watched her tripping along the garden-walk. He was right. No matter from what point of view Miss Webster was observed, she displayed peculiar graces.

And now that Graham was alone, although only for a minute or two, what a throng of thoughts and sensations rushed upon him! How feebly—how inadequately have we depicted the denouement! What pen could do justice to it? How were it possible to paint the startled surprise of the one, and the mingled, agitated feelings of the other—the sudden, changing looks, and the abrupt, breathless enquiries, charged with so much curiosity of both of them? We have not attempted it, choosing rather to leave to the imagination of the reader all the pauses and breaks in the conversation—all the interjaculatory remarks and half-finished sentences; for all these are exceedingly dull on paper, however interesting they may be in the spoken drama.

Again he had occasion to reflect what a good friend Sally had always been to him. What a powerful advocate he had in her! The family at Linnburn would know all about him from her, and the information, he was sure, would be highly rose-coloured. Yes, it was very nice indeed to have such an agent in advance to smooth the way. But Sally could not tell him for certain whether Miss Webster had a sweetheart beyond the idle rumour that linked her

name with that of Philip Salmon. Fortunately he had made some observations of his own which ought to be worth far more than mere gossip.

Observations, indeed! Why in the case of a bright young man of keen sensibility and quick intuition place observations first? Was not his heart the only true prophet? He believed so. How were it possible, after two such interviews—two such life-giving, destiny-making interviews!—combined with the singularly beautiful and romantic way in which, after long years, the second so naturally and joyfully happened, to come to any other conclusion than that they were fore-ordained for each other? Still, as a practical business man, it was right and proper to corroborate his intuitions by the logic of external facts. What were these? Well, he noted carefully that the lady had no ring of any kind on her fingers—he had such splendid opportunities for observing her hands when caressing Mysie, which she did very often. The absence of an engagement ring was extremely comforting, for surely he was entitled to infer therefrom that her affections were free—free as the wind. But he made another observation—patent only to himself—of greater importance, he deemed, than the conventional sign of betrothal, or its absence, namely, the dark cloud which flitted across the lady's face when he spoke about Mr. Marchmont's very eligible sister. And as every dark cloud has a silver lining, so that one for him revealed on its silver edge the lamp of Hope! which must, in the meantime, be allowed to hold on to burn.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Which way, Amanda, shall we bend our course?
The choice perplexes. Wherefore should we choose?
All is the same with thee."
—*James Thomson.*

Young Andrew Webster did not come back to the garden, although at first he seemed to be shaping for it after returning the refractory stirk to its own pasture. Graham, who had been observing Andrew's movements, was well pleased to see him let in Mysie by the riverside wicket and betake himself somewhere else. Doubtless he was a very promising lad, Andrew, and Graham would have been glad at another time to have a talk with him, but at

this particular juncture he was more desirous to have the exclusive company of his sister—a feeling very probably shared by the lady herself.

Behold! there she is now standing in the porch, drawing on her gloves, almost ready for the ramble. What a lovely picture!

"Well, which way shall we go?" she asked with a smile, as she advanced to meet Mr. Graham.

"Any way you please. I shall be happy to go wherever you choose to guide me. You can shew me the lions of Linnburn."

"The lions! ha, ha!" she laughed merrily. "I'm sorry we've none but domestic animals here."

He opened the honeysuckle gate and stood aside with a graceful bow till the lady passed out. She smiled approvingly—even blushed at her companion's gallant and courtly manner.

"Let me see now," she said, pausing while Graham refastened the gate. "Shall we go round this side of the steading? Yes, I think we had better, and begin with lion number one."

"Go away, Mysie; you're not coming"—waving her hand backwards. "You'll be wanted to bring the sheep from the braes by-and-by, so you must stay hereabout."

The well-trained collie at once obeyed its young mistress.

"Pity Mysie couldn't come. 'Better is a living dog than a dead lion,' you know!" remarked Graham, chuckling over the aptness of the proverb.

"So said King Solomon, and every shepherd knows what a wise proverb it is. Let us, therefore, count Mysie as lion number one" —smiling while she spoke at her companion's ready wit.

"I thoroughly agree with you: Mysie is worth coming a long way to see."

On their way up the riverside, Graham said, "How highly favoured you have been, Miss Webster, in spending your early days here. Such a pleasure-ground you had! a princess might envy you. Guide-books make no mention of this paradise—too out-of-the-way for the tourist, and therein lies much of its charm."

"You make me feel prouder of my native glen than ever. During my first winter in Glasgow, especially in the foggy season, how I longed for a breath of this pure air! and when the din and bustle of the streets grated upon my ear, what would I not have given for a quiet Sabbath at Linnburn?"

"I appreciate what you say thoroughly."

"Still, I enjoyed myself very well in Glasgow. One evening—I remember it well—my home here was brought vividly before my mind's eye, and that at a time when I least expected it."

"Indeed, how was that?"

"I was in the theatre. Are you surprised?"

"Not at all: my views are liberal."

"Well, you needn't mention it in the house. My father has a strong prejudice against the theatre, and yet I question whether he has ever been in one—a first-rate one, I mean. I was anxious to hear Miss Helen Theodore, and gladly accepted an invitation to go with some friends. The play was *The Lady of Lyons*. Mark you, it was my first visit to a theatre. I was there against my father's wishes, so I had sundry qualms about it."

Graham was listening with the greatest interest, and allowed the narrative to proceed without a break.

"Fortunately I derived some comfort from having read in Isaac Watts's *Improvement of the Mind*—a book of my father's—that there might be no harm in going once—just only once—to the theatre. How I did enjoy that stolen pleasure! I was in fairy-land. But to come to the point: the part of the play when Home, sweet Home! rose up before me—truly a vision of delight!—was when Claud Melnotte tells Pauline about his palace by the Lake of Como. You know the lines, I'm sure:—

> A deep vale
> Shut in by Alpine hills from the rude world,
> Near a clear lake margined by fruits of gold.

And so on. Comparing small places with great, there is something of a parallel, is there not?"

"Certainly there is. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that the Alpine valley should recall your own."

"Of course it wasn't right my going to the theatre against the known wishes of my father, notwithstanding the permission—for once—of good old Isaac Watts. Yet I feel it is nevertheless true that somehow the experience of that evening for ever lends to my eyes a richer charm to my native glen."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Yes; and what is perhaps more important to me as a teacher, the lesson in elocution I obtained from Miss Theodore that evening was the best I ever got, or am ever likely to get. It was worth a bushel of cut and dried rules on the art. Claud spoke his lines

like a careful, well-trained student, but Pauline as only a woman of genius could do it. The contrast was a revelation to me, and most instructive as well as enjoyable:" pausing and smiling bewitchingly. "But as I said before, you needn't speak about it in my father's presence; for, although I told him of my visit, he is not at all reconciled to theatre-going, and it would only rouse his prejudices to no good purpose."

"I shall take care to avoid the subject, and am glad you have cautioned me."

Walking a bit farther along the riverside they came to a somewhat moist part, caused by the water flowing from a small ravine in the braes. A few yards from the river the water formed itself into a shallow stream, a yard or so broad, at the part requiring to be crossed. To get over dryshod was now the question. Accustomed to the path, Miss Webster had little hesitation in choosing her way —important to her with thin shoes. As for Graham, he could easily clear the brook at a jump. He waited, however, to see that his companion got safely over without wetting her feet. Watching her every movement with lover-like eagerness, he observed her daintily put one foot—her left—upon a stone in the middle, and with a light spring neatly planted the other foot on a smooth piece of moist sand on the opposite side, leaving a most beautiful foot-print.

Graham gazed for a moment at the marvel of neatness on the sand: "How bewitching she is — here is another item to the inventory of her charms."

Curiously enough at the same moment he remembered that Jonathan Weathercock's Miss W. had also a remarkably pretty foot, and he could not help wondering at this additional coincidence between the two ladies.

Well, if it can now be assumed that Miss Effie Wilson of Redmuir is the "My dear Miss W." of Mr. Weathercock—a very natural assumption, considering all the circumstances—the reader may very well ask: Has not all the mystery about the two Miss W.'s now been solved? Time alone can best answer the question.

Our friends continued walking along the rising, somewhat irregular path of the river-bank, walking indian-file for a short distance, the lady taking the lead. While doing so there was a pause in the conversation, during which Graham put to himself

the same question which we have supposed the attentive reader to ask; but he had also to wait for Time to clear up the mystery. It might reasonably be considered sufficient for him that he had discovered his Miss W.; still that natural curiosity of which he had inherited a considerable share from his mother would not let him rest altogether satisfied until he had found out whether Miss Effie Wilson were the Miss W. of Jonathan Weathercock. And it did seem to him wondrous strange that he should cross the path of the two ladies in question in so natural and unexpected a manner in the course of three days, while all the combined efforts of himself and his friends to make the great discovery had signally failed. May we not here say, with all reverence, truly—

> God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform!

By-and-by our friends took a seat on the braes. Shortly after sitting down the lady fetched some work out of her pocket, and began quietly knitting without intermitting the conversation.

"What! knitting here on the hillside? How industrious you are, Miss Webster! Why not devote your whole time to play during your well-earned holiday? Well, perhaps fancy work *is* play, although it sounds a little paradoxical."

"Oh, but you see I can work and talk. I have often seen ladies when talking out-of-doors keep digging away at the turf with the point of their parasol, or draw imaginary profiles with it. Just as well for me, isn't it, to dip the point of this needle in and out in this way?"

"Certainly, when you can talk away all the same."

"Mysie!" suddenly exclaimed Graham, looking along the braes, "in the name of wonder here comes Mysie!" And as the collie drew near wagging her tail with delight, "What wee bird of the air told you we were here?"

"Oh, she has just followed her nose—the best of all guides to Mysie," said Miss Webster, laughing.

Graham spoke very kindly to the affectionate collie, accompanying his words by a lavish amount of caressing. Mysie was frantic with joy: she danced about, emitting a peculiar effusive whine, and seemed terribly greedy of the fondling and the endearing phrases so fluently bestowed upon her.

"Mysie knows she is free whenever the cows are brought home,"

said Miss Webster, watching the gushing pantomime with much interest. "Oh, you cunning creature!" pointing and shaking her finger laughingly.

"What a fine creature Mysie is!" resumed Graham, still caressing her. "I don't think I ever encountered such an affectionate animal. No wonder the tinker said to your father, 'Od, man, but you've a fine doggie.'"

"Fickle creature!" said Miss Webster, playfully. "See! she's running to greet another friend, you may be sure. How quick and keen-eyed she is! Who can you be?" After a pause, during which the comer drew a little nearer, while Mysie was frisking round and round him, "Oh, it's Thomas Saughie Potter, pedlar and poet. I haven't seen Thomas for an age. Mysie knows him well. Look how she jumps and makes such an ado with him! We must have a talk with Thomas. He is a very honest, amiable man—quite a character."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,
And merrily hent the stile-a,
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a."—*A Winter's Tale.*

"Good evening, Thomas," said Miss Webster frankly, rising and shaking hands with him; "a friend of mine, Mr. Graham, from Glasgow."

"Good evening, sir. I am delighted to be introduced to a friend of Miss Webster's," said Thomas blandly, with a profound bow, which made Mysie start aside.

"How is the world using you, Thomas? I haven't seen you since last autumn."

"My friends are all very kind, thank you, Miss Helen."

Graham scanned Thomas Saughie Potter, pedlar, and poet, attentively while exchanging civilities and news with Miss Webster: taking a careful survey of the man he had just been told was a character. Thomas divined the keen but kindly gaze, and thus addressed his new acquaintance:—"You know, sir, I'm a living example of the proverb—a rolling stone gathers no moss. I am here to-day, and away to-morrow. All the gear I have got, or nearly all, I carry with me, like Simonides. I envy no man's

wealth or mode of life. Mine is a life of freedom and travel, with many privileges and rare opportunities for true enjoyment. Money could not procure for me the entertainment which my chosen vocation does. I could perhaps make more out of this small pack, if I chose, but I have no ambition to be rich in this world's goods. My great master, Socrates, only worked at his trade as a statuary as occasion required: the rest of his time was devoted to the improvement of his mind. I strive to emulate him."

"In fact, Thomas, you are a modern troubadour!"

"Yes, sir. By a cheerful song I help to make the wheels of life go smoothly. It was well said by one of our own poets the other day:—

> What martial music is to martial men,
> Is song unto humanity.

Some people may look upon me as an idle fellow—I know they do—but if I can stir my friends up to the right spirit and to the proper marching step I consider that I do my fair share of the world's work."

"Quite right, Thomas: you reason like a philosopher—I wish there were a lot more of your stamp in the world."

"Thank you, sir."

Here the collie began barking at a crow flying overhead.

"Mysie, lass!" said Thomas, with a humorous smile, "what ails you at the crow? 'I would rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear that he loves me.' I am sure, Miss Helen, you would not be so foolish as Beatrice as to say that."

"You forget, Thomas, that women are all dissemblers—every one of us! That bantering lady did not wish Benedict to believe what she said, although by her manner she seemed very much in earnest."

The poet-pedlar—listened admiringly. Sitting on a grey boulder at Graham's feet he gazed as if the picture before him touched his fancy. The shadow cast by the opposite brae had not yet reached the group, so that our friends sat in the sunshine with a sloping back-ground of birks and broom.

"There's no hurry, Thomas," said Miss Webster, as he rose to depart.

"Thank you, Miss Helen. But I've intruded too long upon you. I shall go down to the old folks now. Perhaps I shall see you again, Mr. Graham?"

"I hope so," he said, with kindly emphasis.

"We shall both see you when we come down by. I shall be home in good time to put the prophet's chamber in order for you."

"Thank you very much, Miss Helen. May heavens choicest blessings be showered upon you. I fondly hope the future partner of thy life may be worthy of thee. In the words of the burning Sappho:—

Blest as the immortal gods is he,
The youth who fondly sits by thee,
And soes and hears thee all the while,
Softly speak and sweetly smile.

Mysie, are you coming?" said Thomas, moving slowly away, and with his left hand beckoning the collie to follow him. The creature looked up into the face of its young mistress enquiringly:—"Yes, go with him," pointing towards the wanderer; and the signal was at once obeyed.

"One doesn't meet with a character like Thomas Saughie Potter every day," said Graham; "I was more than surprised at his polished manners and wonderfully fine accent."

"Ah! he's a smooth-tongued fellow. I am glad he has taken himself off," still blushing at the poet's flattery.

Anon Graham remarked that he had long desired to climb to the top of Ben Katelow; he had hoped to see the world from that coign of vantage many years ago according to a promise of his grandfather's. However, now that he was actually in the neighbourhood, he did not intend returning home before scaling the Ben.

Miss Webster's face beamed with interest. "You have come in good time; I am going up with a small party on Thursday—the day after to-morrow—and if you care to join us you will be very welcome."

Graham thanked her cordially; he would be delighted to go, but feared that being a stranger he would be an intruder.

"You may keep your mind easy on that score," she answered quickly; and then went on to explain that the party consisted of a young clergyman—Paul Stephen—who was coming to officiate for Mr. Reid during his absence on holiday; a divinity student, a friend, in fact a cousin of Stephen's, and any young lady she liked to bring with her as a companion.

Graham expressed himself as delighted with the arrangement, and would look forward with no small pleasure to the trip.

After some further incidental talk they rose and sauntered slowly along the riverside back to the house.

They found a young man in the parlour engaged in conversation with Mr. Webster and Thomas. He was a good-looking, cheery intelligent young fellow; facts which made Graham scan him with rather a jealous eye, especially when he discovered that he was no less than Philip Salmon, alleged by Sally and others to be a sweetheart, or at all events a great admirer, of Miss Webster's.

After supper Graham rose to take leave.

"What's a' th' hurry?" exclaimed the host; "rest ye awhile, Maister Graham; it's no late yet; bide awee and ye'll get Philip here to gae half-way hame wi' ye."

"Thank you. I shall be very glad of the convoy."

After half-an-hour further spent in conversation Philip this time made signs of moving, and the host offered no objections.

So Graham and Philip Salmon took the braes together. But before bidding good-bye Graham arranged to see Thomas Saughie Potter on the morrow at his grandfather's.

As the two young men wound their way up the braes they talked about the rare natural beauties of Linnburn. But infinitely more interesting still was the gossip our hero gleaned from Salmon regarding Miss Webster.

"Helen"—calling her familiarly by her Christian name—the name which her mother, and perhaps which she herself liked best—"Helen was always a very clever girl: the last year we were at school together she was dux of the whole school and carried off the first prize."

"You have known her a long time, I suppose?"

"About as far back as I can mind. Our farms you see join each other; and we were at the same school together for half-a-dozen years or so." After a pause. "Mrs. Webster was telling me this is your first visit to the glen, and that you are quite a stranger here. You'll not have seen Miss Webster before either, I suppose, Mr. Graham?" directing a keen glance at him.

This was a poser! To give him time to think, Graham stooped to pluck some wild thyme growing by the pathway, and began smelling it with evident enjoyment for a moment or two. "What a delicious smell this wild thyme has, Mr. Salmon. Have I seen Miss Webster before? you were asking"; he then said in a seemingly cold, matter-of-fact tone. "Well the fact is I meet a

great many ladies in Glasgow—and I may have seen her when she was living there without taking particular notice; but, indeed, until yesterday, I was not aware there was such a lady in the world. I envy you the friendship of Miss Webster; you and she seem to be quite familiar—a very natural thing in the circumstances."

It did not occur to the young farmer to cross-examine Graham after his diplomatic answer, as most people would have considered it, but innocently replied: "O yes, we know each other very well indeed: many a time I've kissed her in the school days."

"In the school days," echoed Graham to himself; "that is so far satisfactory"; then aloud—"happy man, you must be a very particular friend indeed, unless the kissing was done at social gatherings, and the like."

"Oh, well, perhaps the most of the kissing was done at harvest homes, or when playing 'Kiss in the ring.'"

They had now come to the road on the right leading to Braehead—Salmon's farm. When parting Graham was invited to look in any time when passing, but he made no definite promise, being in no humour whatever for cultivating the acquaintance of his rival.

Ten minutes more brought him to Woodbank. The old folks had been wondering at the length of time Davy had been away, and were accordingly very glad to see him home again.

"Ay, Davy lad! it's clear to me ye've been amon' th' lasses th' nicht!" said grandfather in his kindly, pawky way, after a scrutinizing glance: "I'm thinking ye've had something better than toddy an' ballants abune yer tea the nicht to keep ye sae lang awa'. Aweel, aweel! I wish ye a' success."

"Thank you," said Davy smiling: very grateful for the expression of sympathy after his perplexing doubts and fears relative to the lady whom he wished to regard as his newly found, long lost sweetheart.

CHAPTER XX.

He summed the actions of the day,
Each night before he slept.—*Chatterton.*

Graham could have had toddy if he wished, but as "Love proves dainty Bacchus dull of taste," he was more than satisfied with the

ambrosial nectar at Linnburn; and as for ballads, why the events of the day were enough to set a hundred of them simmering in his brain.

Not desiring to keep the old folks out of bed any longer, he lit a candle and went upstairs to his own chamber, reserving for the morrow some account of to-day's doings.

Placing the candle on the dressing table, he flung himself into an easy-chair, knowing well that sleep was out of the question for an hour or two. His sensations forcibly reminded him that the pain of a wound, or the full significance of a startling piece of news, is not properly realized at first, but dawns upon the consciousness only by degress. Happily the denouement of the day, though very startling, was at the same time very delightful.

"How well she looks—either with her hat or without it. I couldn't see her forehead properly in the carriage: her hat being worn far down on it. That helped to prevent me from knowing her again, for assuredly I would have marked carefully such a development. I greatly like the rising arch of parting which crowns her smooth brow with its delicate purple veins—a sure sign of goodness and moral elevation. Yes, a glance at her face reveals the secret of being dux at the school. Yet how gentle she is! how softened the intellectual lines by womanly sensibility! And how fresh her soft, bright eyes! With all her study and hard work how *can* she preserve her health so well? Such bewitching dimples and roundness of contour!

She seems to look upon me favourably; possibly her easy, unaffected manner may be the result of having 'made her market,' and her reception of me such as she would accord to any other friendly visitor. Perhaps so; but I shall take the liberty of thinking otherwise, so long as she doesn't wear an engagement ring. Salmon may be a formidable rival from the fact of his long intimacy; but such a refined girl might desire a husband with more culture—one living in a city where her elegant tastes could be gratified. She was very gracious and polite with Philip (ay, she called him Philip), but that may be only a woman's wiles to excite the affection of another whom she fancies.

Ah! but that young minister, Paul Stephen, is a more terrible rival—if he be a rival, of which I haven't the slightest doubt, if in search of a wife. Fortunately she has spoken a bit of her mind to me about girls marrying ministers; and I shall, therefore, take

comfort in knowing that the mere fact of Paul Stephen's profession won't throw a glamour over this sensible girl. I believe she will marry the man she likes best, and if this Paul Stephen is not an Adonis as well as a preacher, I shan't be afraid to enter the lists against him. Conceited fool!" he continued after a pause; "what do I know but that there may be a host of fellows after so attractive a girl."

Here he rose from his seat and leaned his arms on the sill of the open casement to look out on the summer twilight, and the moon in her first quarter. The soft, cooling zephyrs were very grateful to his fevered brow—for undoubtedly he was in a mild fever after the unusual excitements of the day—a very sufficient reason why he could not sleep. Like the hero of Locksley Hall, he, too, from the casement—though not an ivied one—before going to rest must see the great Orion sinking slowly in the west, the Pleiades, and all the starry host of heaven—Oh, ever so much brighter than when seen through the murky canopy at Glasgow.

Turning to the left, his eyes rested on Rathie Castle. "In one of yonder towers—not proud towers that brave the sky—but towers that peep coyly above the trees—sleeps Lady Helen; and on my right hand—yes, on my *right* hand—away down in yonder sleepy hollow, reposes another Lady Helen of humble parentage—but mine own—mine own! Ah, I wish I could say mine own! then, with all my heart and soul, I could echo Valentine's rupturous confession—

> And I as rich in having such a jewel,
> As twenty seas, if all their sand were pearl,
> The water nectar, and the rocks pure gold."

How very calm and peaceful it was; not a sound was heard—the "mute still air was music sleeping on its instrument"; how very pleasing compared with the unceasing noises that greeted his ear at the window of 45 Waverley Place, anytime he was curious enough to look out at midnight.

"Hark!" glancing down the road towards the clachan—"voices singing too! some midnight roysterers"; then the sharp whack of a stick on a paling; anon, a couple of rustic blades came swaggering along arm in arm. As they approached, Graham withdrew, not wishing to be seen. On they came shouting with more lung power than music—

> We are na' fou, we're no that fou,
> But just a wee drap in our e'e.

"I wonder what jolly dogs are these that rouse the night owl with a catch." As they reeled past Woodbank, one of them burst out with—

> And I will come again, my love,
> Tho' 'twere ten thousand mile.

And the other with equal pulmonary power and gesticulation roared—

> As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
> So deep in love am I.

At the moment of passing, Graham looked intently at the swaggerers, and started with surprise when he saw that Philip Salmon appeared to be one of the two gay revellers. He might be wrong, but it was certainly very like his figure and voice. Assuming he was right he smiled in triumph: for if Miss Webster is the lady he takes her to be, Philip's chance is uncommonly small.

Returning to the easy-chair he wound up his watch (a wonder he remembered it), and continued to muse: "Love and drink! how difficult to take them in moderation. 'Tho' 'twere ten thousand mile.' I believe him—more now than ever. Does not that great master in the knowledge of natural forces—Robert Stephenson—tell us that a woman's eye will draw a man from the other end of the world; and that poor clodhopper would plough the pathless main till he reached the object of his affections. Somehow I envy these fellows doing their courting together. What joyous talks they will have in secret, and what a fund of delight they have in common while their sweethearts form their darling theme by day, and their rosiest dreams by night: these lads, as Burns truly remarks, have nothing but their canny hour at e'en, while the rich may have a choice of pleasurable occupations. I wonder if there be a club at Rathie, like the one at Tarbolton, where every man proposed for a member of it must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex—one or more! mark you: for these amorous swains delight to go about from farm to farm—battering themselves into the affections of every likely damsel who will give them a hearing."

Finally, Graham composed himself to sleep; but it was not till after two o'clock in the morning that Nature's soft nurse visited him: so tardy and reluctant is she to wait upon an ardent lover. And it must be recorded she came only after the following incantation had been repeated times without number:—"O ye gay

poppies, adorning the wayside and the cornfields! come around me in clusters; ring thy scarlet bells and hush me to repose with thy sweet lullaby—out of thy charméd cups drop on my eyelids some of thy ethereal, drowsy balsam, and thus steep my senses in forgetfulness till the morning."

(To be continued).

A LOVE STORY OF TO-DAY.

BY JAMES STURROCK,

Author of "Sketch of Dr. Norman Macleod," "Sermons on Scottish Song," "The Prince's Charm," &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

"The pleasure of love is in loving, we are happier in the passion we feel than in that we excite.—*Rochefoucauld.*

WITH the morning came cool reflection, but, happily, not cold indifference. Graham had been in his sober senses all the while—there was no strange illusion to dispel, although quite conscious that his waking moments were not so rose coloured as they were the previous evening. He knew why his spirits were a little flat. Mother Nature is very accommodating, she readily lends her children a liberal supply of emotion, and in due course she appears as a stern creditor demanding repayment of her advances. After sufficient rest, his eyes, again anointed, would be gladdened with angelic visions.

Meantime as he lay awake just before getting up, he refreshed his memory with one or two facts. How did he happen to meet Miss Webster first of all? He remembered well in what spirit he and Marchmont went to the railway station on Hogmanay, and all that took place on the journey up till the very moment when he sat down beside the young lady before leaving Perth. After what had then and now happened, as well as what might yet happen, it looked as if they had been brought together by a special Providence;

for had Marchmont and he left by the earlier train, in accordance with his mother's anxious desire, then they would not have met. Many thanks, therefore, to the crotchety old lady who wished her Will signed before the year expired, for causing them to lose the train.

At length, having dressed, he went downstairs and stept outside for a breath of the morning air. Grandfather was sitting on the garden seat. The old man liked to bask a few minutes in the sunshine before breakfast. It gave him an appetite and a keen relish for the "halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food," in which he still delighted in his green old age.

Graham had not yet made any remarks about his great discovery of yesterday, wishing to reserve such a pleasant and all-important topic till he and the three old people were together in a genial mood at breakfast.

"You would be enjoyin' yersel fine last nicht, Master David," said Sally, "when ye didna come hame in time to get a ballant. But nae doot Miss Mary is a braw, affable lass, an' ye would be sweir to come awa'."

"An' no muckle wonder, Davy. Man, I've kent the day when I wadna gie a crack wi' a bonnie lass by a burnside for a' the ballants that ever wis sung. Is na that the case, gudewife?"

"Ye ken that best yersel', Adam. As for Davy here, puir lad! he's waited sae lang for a wife that when he gets a chance of a by ordinar fine lass, like Mary Webster, there'll be nae pairtin' o' them. Quite richt, Davy, ye've nae time to lose. I canna tell ye noo to gae to Jericho till yer beard is grown—my certie, no!"

"An' are ye gaen to mairry her then? Master David."

"Sally! I wonder at ye. Am I a king? or a pope? or am I a wizard? that you think I have nothing more to do than whistle or lift a finger, and any lady I choose will fly to my arms."

"But surely yer as gude as Mary Webster ony day," said Mrs. Brownlea, "even although she has seen a bit o' the warld, an' kens something aboot gentry life, she's but a schule mistress efter a'."

Graham took a mental note of his grandmother's hint about Miss Webster having travelled and seen some life, with a view to subsequent enquiries; but in the meantime replied:—

"So far as social position is concerned, mine, I daresay, is as good as hers; but it doesn't follow that Miss Webster would take

a chap like me for all that: girls like to aspire; and as she is very good-looking and clever, if not rich, she may have an eye after one of these young ministers who are coming to Linnburn on Thursday. Besides, there's Philip Salmon—he was there last night, too—a weel-faured chield, as you say, with a good farm. And just think, also, how many dominies may be after this by ordinar fine lass, and I heartily agree with you that she is really a by ordinar fine lass. Ah, Sally, it's easy saying—Are ye to marry her? What earthly chance have I against these college-bred gentlemen, with their smooth tongues and their fine speeches?"

"'Deed, I'm sure ye've naething to fear for their fine speeches; —Sall I'll wager onything ye're as glib tongued as the best o' them. Am no verra sure but that Mary tauld me as muckle hersel'."

"Mary told you as muckle herself," said Graham with much surprise; "what do you mean, Sally? have you seen Miss Webster this morning?"

"Na,—an' no for some mornin's. But when I was down by last I tauld her ye was comin'; an' she speer'd a lot o' questions aboot ye, an' what like a gentleman ye was; she was verra curious to ken a' aboot ye, because she thocht she'd mebbe met you afore—an' that if ye was the same gentleman, she wad like weel to hae anither crack wi' ye—for that ye kent fine hoo to use yer tongue."

"Weel dune! Sally; ye hae'm there," exclaimed grandmother; "an' were ye the man, Davy, she was thinkin' aboot?"

"Bide a wee, grandmother," stretching out his hand to betoken silence. "How the dickens, Sally, did you not tell me all this before?"

"So I should—so I should; but my memory's no worth a preen noo. I forgot a' aboot it till efter ye gaed awa' yesterday, when I minded o't a' at ance. Ye maun forgie me."

"Forgive you, of course, a thousand times. But you know all the same it would have been interesting to me—extremely interesting—if you had just hinted that perhaps I had seen Miss Webster before. However, there hasn't been much harm done—but the lady had certainly the advantage of me."

He then went on to explain in what respect Miss Webster had the advantage of him, and all about his meeting her in the train, and of talking with her nearly all the way from Perth to Lochdale.

Next he cross-examined Sally respecting her interview with Miss Webster at Linnburn, and, among other things, he elicited

the very important fact that the lady preserved in her album the sprig of holly which she took down after he left the carriage at Lochdale. It was, indeed, thrilling news to hear that Miss Webster still preserved the holly sprig—thus confirming the statement of Patricia Hammond, who saw her take it down—and kiss it!

After hearing about the sprig of holly, grandfather exclaimed: "Surely the hand o' Providence has brocht ye th' gether again. Man, Davy, its maist wonderfu' that tale o' yours. It wad mak a fine ballant; only ye maun mairry the lassie noo an' put a fine end till't. Man, Davy, if ye'll lat me I'll mak a bargain wi' her father. I'll mak it a' richt for ye."

"Na, na, gudeman; dinna ye meddle wi' them. Lat Davy alane; surely a Glesca merchant can mak a bargain for himsel'."

Graham concurred with his grandmother that it would be best for him to do his own wooing.

After finishing telling them regarding his first meeting with Miss Webster, one of his earliest questions was: How did she happen to be on the Continent? for although her people seemed to be in comfortable circumstances, the "grand tour" was scarcely the thing for a farmer's daughter. The information he received was not only satisfactory, but very interesting.

This was the substance of it. When it had been decided that Helen—Helen emphatically in this relation—should become a pupil-teacher, Lady Rathie suggested that before beginning her apprenticeship, it would, she thought, be a good thing for Helen if she accompanied her and the family to the Continent for a winter. She would be very glad to have her, and she could travel with them as a sort of governess and nursery maid;—the interregnum would be a pleasant change, and could not fail to be profitable to a girl of her intelligence, for her whole after life would receive a colour and a tone from seeing other countries. Such was Lady Rathie's generous counsel. The proposal was gladly accepted. So Miss Webster has to thank the Countess, for the reader knows well that the fact of our heroine having been on the Continent considerably enhanced the romantic interest which David Graham felt in her from the very first.

Breakfast over, David said he was going up to the wood; he would be back in an hour, but he might return sooner in case Thomas Potter should come earlier than he had mentioned. Grandfather knew that Thomas was coming, and told Davy not to

hasten down again if he were enjoying himself, as Thomas and he could easily have a long crack.

In the wood Graham had time for reflection. What was he to think of Miss Webster's preserving the sprig of holly? some one would answer: "Oh, attach no importance to it—sentimental and significant though it seems, girls have quite a mechanical habit of putting everything into their albums." Perhaps so. But he was much disposed to augur favourably from it. "Time and patience," says the Eastern proverb, "changes the mulberry leaf to satin," and he hoped the same marvellous agencies would change the holly leaves to orange blossoms! He was not without his fears, however, for although the lady had always been very polite, her refined manners might be nothing more than the natural expression of her inborn grace and courtesy, and such as she would readily show towards any gentleman worthy of the name. He must not, therefore, build his hopes too much upon her gracious demeanour. And what was he, to aspire to the hand of a lady whose style and culture would be an ornament to any society? How natural, too, for her, who could not fail to be conscious of her gifts, both mental and physical, to put a high value upon herself, and be waiting patiently for a handsome offer. "Well, she may give her heart and hand to another," he sighed, "but she cannot take away from me the pleasure I have in loving her."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an Inn."—*William Shenstone.*

The morning sunbeams rested sweetly on the soft green courtyard of Linnburn, finely checkered by the shadows of the two stately plane trees, and enlivened by a gay turn out of poultry of various breeds, all in the most beautiful feather; the pet lamb was frisking about; the brown mare and foal looked over the fence into the yard; while Mysie, the collie, was squatted on the grass beside the hammock—and for a very good reason—its young mistress was sitting in it—Miss Mary Helen Webster—a precious jewel worthy of such a lovely setting.

Mary had a small volume, bound in red and gold, in her hand, into which she occasionally glanced, and then allowed the book to rest in her lap, as if its pages were suggesting pleasant thoughts sweeter than those in the book. She was not in the habit of going to the hammock so soon after breakfast, but she may have had a purpose in resorting to it early this morning. For one thing, she knew that Thomas Saughie Potter would pass the hammock on his way to Woodbank, to keep his appointment with Mr. Graham, and it would afford her an opportunity to exchange a word or two with Thomas, if that were of any consequence. At any rate, when that worthy emerged from the Honeysuckle gate, she called out to him:

"Well, Thomas, and are you off to Woodbank?"

"Yes, my lady. Can I have the pleasure of delivering a message for you?"

"No, thank you, Thomas; I have no message that I remember of."

Thomas thought her bright eyes were not quite so clear as usual; he might be mistaken, but he fancied her sleep had been disturbed a little—just a little—though still looking radiant.

"Shall I not say you are blooming as fresh as the morning—and that you slept as sound as a top?"

Mary coloured slightly, but quickly answered: "you must use your own discretion, Thomas. Better say nothing about me at all." Then regarding him archly for a moment—"What a happy man you are, Thomas! roving about from house to house, like a bee from flower to flower; leaving when you have got all the sweets you require."

"Even so, my fair lady. And now may I be bold to ask what sweets you are sucking out of that pretty book?"

"'Tis nothing new, Thomas; only 'The Lady of the Lake.'"

Thomas assumed a thoughtful attitude for a few moments, and then smiled; on seeing which, the lady blushed—the colour deepening as his eyes rested on her with a significant gaze.

"Oh, yes, Miss Mary; nothing new: only the old, old story—the love, courtship and marriage of a beautiful lady called Helen, and a noble gentleman of the name of Graeme. Well, I am glad—sincerely glad for your sake, that the young gallant I am going to see is worthy of his famous name-sake; indeed I was greatly pleased with him—such a handsome, manly fellow he is—such a fine, frank, open countenance—and such a pair of eyes!"

'Hem! 'a pair of eyes, with lids to them,' as Viola said."

"Nay, pardon me, I'm not jesting. Mr. Graham's eyes struck me as his most remarkable feature: eyes that see deeper into a woman's heart than the common herd of men. I beg to congratulate you."

"Dear me! Thomas. You are indeed jumping to a conclusion very suddenly. Are you aware how slight—how very slight is my acquaintanceship with Mr. Graham? Why, I have seen him only twice in all my life!"

"But then two such meetings, Miss Mary!

> We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
> In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
> We should count time by heart-throbs."

Mary held down her head, toying with the book in her lap; her face revealing clearly how Thomas was probing her heart.

"Your first meeting was three and a half years ago, I am told, and now you are brought together again as if by the merest chance; but I venture to say that this second meeting, accidental as it may seem, has been ordered by Providence for a gracious end. There was the good George Herbert, the poet, who married Jane Danvers three days after their first meeting—three days, mark you, not three years. But I must be off;—good-bye for the present."

"Thomas! just a word, if you please. Did you find the 'prophet's chamber' comfortable? it was not so tidy as I would like it."

"The chamber was all I could wish. And how very nice and comfortable are the socks you kindly laid out for me. I don't know how much to thank you for them."

"The socks are a mere trifle, Thomas; I must look out another pair for you—you are such a wanderer—socks are really useful to you."

"Ah! Miss Mary, walking is so pleasant with my new socks on that I am tempted to walk away from you. Well, good-bye again."

He had only taken a few steps when Mary's musical voice called after him "Thomas!" a summons which he at once obeyed, and stood again before his benefactress with pleasure.

While she paused, as if hesitating what to say, Thomas blurted out—"I think you had better go with me. Will ye go?"

"Oh, Thomas! I wonder at you; that would never do. What would Sally think of me for coming between her and the apple of her eye? Poor, dear Soul! how she dotes upon her master's grand-

son; I never knew anything to surpass it. But that is not what I called you back for; I've got a message for you."

"Trust me. I shall be happy to deliver it."

"Well, when you're going that way, at any-rate, I wish you would call at Mrs. Forman's Inn and tell Miss Jessie that I should like very much to see her to-morrow forenoon to spend the day with me. Tell her to put on a pair of strong boots, as it is likely there will be some walking. The fact is, Thomas, as you probably know, two young gentlemen, as well as Mr. Graham, are to be here to-morrow, and we purpose going to the top of Ben Katelow. I thought, at first, of asking Bella Muir to join us—you know Bella, of course—but I met one of her brothers at the ford this morning, and he told me that Bella was not at home. It is rather unfortunate that Bella is not to be had, for I am not very sure how my ministerial friends would feel after gallivanting with Jessie, an Innkeeper's daughter! And then, Mr. Graham, too, the son of a pious elder, he may have a prejudice against the publican."

"But the money! Miss Mary; the money will cover a multitude of sins."

"True, that did not occur to me, Thomas. We sometimes hear of a minister marrying the daughter of a rich distiller, or wine merchant, and, I daresay, the gold puts a fine gloss upon it in the eyes of the world. Well, Jessie, as we all know, is getting a tocher of a thousand pounds; but, indeed, she is herself the best tocher: a very nice, good-looking girl, and well educated into the bargain."

"You express my sentiments thoroughly, Miss Mary. I shall arrange the matter properly for you."

"Please don't say anything to Mr. Graham about Jessie's coming: I should like him to meet her here without the least prejudice on account of her father's calling."

After one or two more hints relative to the execution of his commission, Thomas took his departure.

Mysie rose and trotted after him a few steps, but Thomas turned her back.

"Where were you going, Mysie?" said Miss Webster; "were you also going up to Woodbank to see the stranger? a favourite of yours!" she added in a sweet caressing voice, as the affectionate creature crouched and whimpered fondly at her feet while being patted and smoothed on the head; a pleasant outlet for the lady's access of tenderness at this moment.

"Oh how I wish it might be a fine day to-morrow—a day like this—then—happy, happy thought! we shall climb the hill together. Heigho! John Anderson, my jo, John! I wonder if we shall climb the hill of life together. Thomas the Rhymer hints as much."

Dipping into her book again, she read a few lines which caused her heart to beat with joy; with rapture she recited them again and again, till she was sure the verse was stamped indelibly on her memory:—

> Arouse thee from thy moody dream,
> I'll give thy heart heroic theme,
> And warm thee with a noble name,
> Pour forth the glory of the Graeme.

What a pity the *Lady of the Lake* did not occur to her, she thought, during the parley with her father regarding the name of Graham. It would not be too late yet; and she sighed and wondered if other people as well as the old domestic Sally and herself had such a high admiration of Davy—uttering the pet name with a tremulous, fearful joy—and could join her in exclaiming:

> For of his clan in hall and bower,
> Young David Graham was held the flower.

The flower reminded her of the sprig of holly in her album; so she closed the book and walked slowly into the house and into her favourite room where lay her album. Taking it up she looked into it with glistening eyes at the dried holly leaves, and then with quiet fervour kissed them—once for the sake of auld langsyne, and over and over again for the happy, hopeful present.

Meanwhile Thomas had been wending his way up the braes, and was now at the Golden gate, where he paused to take a breath and look around him. The new socks on his feet inspired a grateful feeling as he moved along over the soft turf, causing him to think most kindly of the fair donor. No wonder that Thomas liked a roving life when he found so much to minister to his fancy. What a privileged fellow he was! He had just been talking with a young and captivating lady, and now he was on his way to enjoy a conversation with a gentleman, whom he shrewdly suspected to be, or at anyrate would very shortly be, her sweetheart. Yes, it was particularly interesting, especially to him, a poet. Burns said he was in the secret of half the loves of Tarbolton, but Thomas Potter's

experience of sweethearts ranged over many parishes, and for a much longer period than the Bard of Coila's.

When he reached the farm road skirting the wood, he saw Mr. Graham approaching as if to meet him.

"Good morning, Thomas. I hope you are very well."

"Good morning, sir. I rejoice to say I am in good health."

"I am glad to hear it—in fact, Thomas, if you will excuse me for saying so, you are looking as fresh as a bridegroom with your 'beard new reaped'—a practice, you see, I don't indulge in now-a-days."

"A beard becomes you well, sir."

"Beware of flattery, Thomas. But let us say no more about ourselves. How are all our friends at Linnburn?"

"All serene and cheerful, sir. Miss Mary—or Helen, if you prefer it—was sitting in the hammock, as I passed just now, beguiling her leisure with a book."

"A very pretty picture indeed, Thomas. And were you curious enough to learn what book was occupying the morning thoughts of the young lady?"

"What would you say to *The Lady of the Lake?*"

"Thank goodness! that is not the latest work of fiction."

"I felt some pride in seeing her with that book, as I did myself the pleasure of giving it to her last autumn."

"In reading it, Miss Webster pays you a fine compliment, Thomas."

"Well, sir, I was laying that flattering unction to my soul until I remembered that the name of the heroine is Ellen, and that she does her best to glorify the hero—the hero—a namesake of yours!"

Graham's face lighted up with a glad surprise while Thomas was speaking, and a flood of joyous hope flashed into his soul. The lady's meaning could not be mistaken. He did not, however, deem it politic to betray his feelings to Thomas, who probably guessed a good deal from his countenance and manner, but simply exclaimed—

"A singular coincidence, Thomas!—a very singular coincidence! But we needn't stand here"—placing his hand kindly on Thomas's shoulder; "let us be moving. Come with me to the post-office and have a talk by the way."

They called in at Woodbank in passing for a few minutes, and promised to return in time for dinner.

Graham was more curious to see the interior of the rural hostelry than the post-office, after what he had heard about the landlady Mrs. Forman; and he thought Thomas would be a pleasant sort of fellow to have a glass of ale with and a crack.

Rathie Inn—or rather, Hotel, according to the sign—was just a quarter-of-a-mile or so from Woodbank, and only the public road to Glen Capel dividing it from the smithy—the "smiddy!" Graham could take off his hat before it. Fondly his eyes lingered about the flowery porch at the smith's house: for was it not recently hallowed by the presence of a gracious being?—truly the saint of his deepest devotion last Sunday evening!

Across the road in front of the smithy Graham noticed a pretty large green closed in by a low beech hedge. "What place is this, Thomas?"

"That, sir, is the piece of ground presented by Lady Rathie to the young men hereabout for recreation and the practice of gymnastics—preparing themselves for the Capel games. It's but a small green compared with your public parks in Glasgow."

"But large enough for the population. What would you say is the size of the green?"

Thomas went close to the hedge and carefully measured the green with his eye: "I should say there's only a rood of ground, or thereby."

"A rood! Quite ample space for the rude sons of the hamlet," said Graham with a lambent smile, but Thomas evidently didn't see the ghost of a pun.

So Graham threw out another feeler.

"Yes, it was very kind of the Countess—indeed very civil of her to give them this *rood* present."

"Very kind of her," rejoined Thomas, at same time looking enquiringly into his companion's face, as if the subdued chuckle in his voice required and expected a further and perhaps a different kind of response; but he divined nothing.

Graham would try something broader.

"They have got two fine cabers there, Thomas."

"Yes, sir; the gift of her ladyship, too."

"Oh, indeed. Then we had better be exact in our measurement, Thomas. You say the Countess tossed these cabers, so to speak, into the bargain—Why, then she has given one rood and two poles."

Thomas saw it and smiled—even broke out into a quiet laugh.

Here Graham turned round and looked at the inn. "Is that Mrs. Forman at the door?" he asked in a whisper.

"It is; and she'll be expecting us. She knows me quite well. I'll go and speak to her till you return from the post-office."

"Capital idea! and then I'll join you and ask Mrs. Forman for two pints of her best."

The post-office was only a stone's throw from the inn. Graham talked for a little with the boy behind the counter, and as there were no letters for him—so much the better—he invested in a pound of sweeties, as if to shew he did not come entirely for letters. The sweeties would be useful; besides, it was absolutely necessary he should spend some of that money he had in his pocket—that round dozen of one pound notes he received as interest from Leadbetter was a trifle too bulky in his purse. Moreover, a holiday without spending is no holiday at all.

The few minutes Graham was away suited Thomas admirably. He advanced to mine hostess of the Rathie Inn, sure of a kindly welcome.

"Good morning, Mr. Potter. Hoo's a' wi' ye? What a stranger you are."

"I'm very well, thank you, Mrs. Forman; and I am very glad to see you are looking fresh and hearty—a sure sign that you are prospering as well as ever. What a wonderful manager you are!"

"Come in, come in, Mr. Potter, and dinna stand haiverin' there," said the landlady, with a blithe voice and a smiling look.

Mrs. Forman led the way into her best parlour and gave Mr. Potter a seat, then immediately said, "You're an auld freend, ye ken, an' maun get a taste oot o' my ain bottle."

To prevent the bottle being brought out, Thomas hastened to explain that the gentleman she saw with him would be here in a minute or two, and he himself had a message from Linnburn to deliver before he came—a message from Miss Webster to her daughter, Miss Jessie. In a very short time he had it all clearly arranged with Mrs. Forman, who, as well as Jessie, was delighted with the proposal—that the latter would be sure to go to Linnburn, and that Mr. Graham, though introduced in the meantime, should be none the wiser who was to be there.

Of course, Thomas explained who Mr. Graham was, and spoke of him in very complimentary terms; whereupon Mrs. Forman protested it would be very shabby of them if they "wouldna tak' a dram oot o' her bottle."

"No, no, Mrs. Forman—some other time will be better. This young fellow is complainin' about no bein' able to spend the money he has in his pouch up here. It'll please him, ye ken, to let him melt a shillin' or twa o't"—slipping into the vernacular to humour mine hostess.

"Weel, weel, Thomas; sae be it; ye ken best."

Before entering the inn, Graham noticed that it was thatched, and like the smithy across the road was cruciform; and as the smithy was used sometimes as a place of worship, he could not refrain from smiling at the similarity of shape of the two buildings, in neither of which one would expect to find an assembly of Christian worshippers. How gladly he remembered that the unexpected had happened in one of the buildings.

He received a gracious welcome from Mrs. Forman; his rich, cheery voice and hearty manner seeming to captivate her completely.

"Ay, you're very like yer grandfather, Mr. Graham—even yer voice is like his."

"Ah, but I don't make such a good use of it, Mrs. Forman: I couldn't sing you a ballant like him."

"Mebbe no, mebbe no; but a Glesca man finds a better use for his tongue than singing ballants wi't."

"Perhaps he does. By the way, grandfather was telling me about the flower-show that is coming off, and I was interested to hear that you are always a prize-taker for some things. What are you to exhibit this year?"

Mrs. Forman mentioned the fruits and flowers of which she had the best expectations; concluding by inviting him to take a step into the garden before going away. She would also open the door and let them enjoy a walk along the den behind the hotel, which Mr. Graham might like to see.

He thanked her, adding, "There is nothing I am fonder of than a garden, and a stroll through the den, which Thomas was telling me about, will be a great pleasure indeed."

She then left the gentlemen to finish the ale which Graham had ordered.

Our friends had been shewn into the best room, and Thomas remarked, after the landlady's exit, that one of the company at least was considered a gentleman by Mrs. Forman, as she reserved that parlour exclusively for the gentry. "Ay, she's a shrewd woman, mind you—she wouldn't have brought me in here if I hadn't hinted you were coming after me."

Graham expressed his surprise at finding such a good-sized, well-furnished apartment in a house of one storey with a thatched roof. "What! a piano, too!—more for ornament than use, I suppose, Thomas?"

"Miss Jessie plays on it, they tell me."

"Miss Jessie! I never heard of her before. Is she a daughter?"

"Yes; an only daughter, and not long returned from a boarding-school in Edinburgh, which may account for Jessie not being known to you."

"Well, upon my word, Thomas, but this *is* an agreeable surprise. The old folks hereabout seem to be dreaming, and have precious little idea apparently of what interests a young fellow. I had a strong curiosity to pay this inn a visit, but I never expected to find such a nice bit of soft goods. And so, Miss Jessie's education being finished, she is now to act the fine lady—play the piano and look out for a husband. Is she anything pretty?"

"You can judge for yourself, Mr. Graham: she is at home, and no doubt we shall get a blink of her in the garden."

"Oh, but give me some idea."

Thomas paused for a few seconds, and seemed amused at Graham's impatient curiosity; no doubt at same time considering what reply to give, for his critical remarks would soon be brought to the test. Happily the young lady's qualities were positive, and Thomas had little hesitation in describing her.

"Well, I think Miss Jessie is a bonnie lass, and she has very pleasing manners. She must be very good-natured, as I never meet her without seeing a sweet smile on her face. These qualities, backed up by a thousand pounds, will bring the fair lady a host of admirers. It is an open secret, I may tell you, that Mrs. Forman is to give her daughter a tocher of a thousand pounds."

Graham remarked that he had been told Mrs. Forman was making lots of money; and that she had even offered the wherewithal to the Earl—or rather to the Factor—to build a proper hotel for her; but he scarcely expected she would be able to give her daughter a thousand pounds on her wedding—country people have such exaggerated notions about a few hundred pounds.

After some further talk, Graham proposed that they should step into the garden to see the boarding-school belle. They could not say for certain that she would be there, but Thomas had no doubt that so clever a woman as her mother would arrange for Jessie

being within easy reach before they cleared off the premises. Sure enough, on their way out Mrs. Forman's quick ear caught the sound of their footsteps, and duly presented herself before them just as they reached the front door.

"Weel, gentlemen, are you ready to have a look at my garden now?"

"If convenient for you, Mrs. Forman, we shall be delighted," answered Graham.

The gable of the inn faced the public road, and the garden was in front; there being space between the house and the garden sufficient for a carriage to get in by to the door and turn.

"We canna keep oor garden sae neat and trim as your grandfather, Mr. Graham—we haven't time. But there's plenty growth in't you see."

Graham liked a luxuriant growth: it was so natural like, and made one feel as if sauntering in a wood. He complimented Mrs. Forman upon her splendid blackberries, as large as geans; and made other flattering remarks as to the rest of her fruit, to which mine hostess listened with much pleasure.

But they had still to behold the crowning attraction of this Eden. Thomas happened to be leading the way, and on coming to a side-walk on the left he exclaimed, "Ha! the Queen-rose of the garden! How do you do, Miss Jessie?"—advancing and shaking that young lady cordially by the hand as she emerged from the bower.

As Graham approached, Thomas, with a wave of his arm, said gaily, "Here, I have brought you a gallant gay this morning, Miss Jessie. Allow me, Mr. Graham, to present you to the best flower in the garden."

After making a polite bow—his face brightening with surprise and admiration on seeing the lovely apparition before him—he paused for a moment, and then almost stammered out, "I fear we are intruding, Miss Forman."

"Oh, no; not at all, Mr. Graham—it is so very quiet here that I am always glad to see a visitor."

This reply completely restored his self-possession. "Thank you. I felt we had come to your sanctum and disturbed you—just in the middle of that very nice story;" and his keen eyes glanced roguishly at the paper she had been reading, at same time catching the title of it.

The lady frankly owned he had guessed correctly, smiled and

blushed, looking down at "Young Caledonia" she was unconsciously twitching in her hand; then with an upward glance at the tall and handsome stranger, said very modestly, "We are so accustomed to being called upon, Mr. Graham, we don't consider any part of the time our own; and, of course, by the nature of our business we are bound to welcome every one who comes. Is that not so, mamma? See! there's a machine with some more coming."

"So it is, Jessie;" turning round and waving her hand to the new-comers. "You'll excuse me, gentlemen. Here, Jessie, there's the key o' th' den; you can open the gate and let in the gentlemen whenever they're ready." And off she ran.

Miss Forman was a truly sweet picture in her hazel-coloured dress, trimmed with scarlet, having a yellow rose on her breast—and so charmingly framed, too, by the green bower. Thomas was right about Jessie's beauty and good nature: her large blue eyes aglow with liquid light: her young, fresh face open and candid as the day; her quiet, simple manners, native refinement, and unaffected speech—all betokened a sensible, sweet-tempered, nice Scotch lassie.

They continued talking for a few minutes after Mrs. Forman's exit, when the gentlemen hinted that they had better be moving, as it would not be fair to monopolize the lady's company, seeing that the others just arrived might be waiting for her; Graham adding with courteous emphasis, "But you mustn't suppose that we are tired of your society, Miss Forman. As a proof of it, I shall be happy—if you will allow me—to drop in again and have some music from you."

"Thank you. I shall be very pleased."

She then led the way out of the garden to the den gate. There was a road through this beautiful den to Rathie Castle, but the Countess wished it to be kept private, and care was to be taken that only respectable people should be permitted the privilege of walking in it. The folks at the inn could use their discretion. So Miss Forman opened the gate, and smiled as she locked her friends in; holding up the key and looking archly at them. "Now, you are my prisoners, and I wish you joy of your den!"

"What will you take to ransom us?" asked Thomas gaily. "Will twenty kisses from this young gentleman not do it?"

"Oh, no! for neither love nor money will I let you out again." Then she smiled bewitchingly at her prisoners, who relished her

little joke very much, and wondered what the playful girl would do next. She did not keep them long in suspense.

"Well, if you manage to escape the lions—there is the key, and you can let yourselves out."

Waving adieus to their pretty jailor, they sauntered off.

At high noon, with the sun shining hotly in the open, nothing could be more grateful than a ramble through the cool leafy shades of that highland den, at once so lovely and aromatic.

In a short time they came to the famous spot where they had a splendid view of the castle. There the castle stood in all its majestic grandeur on a smooth lawn, enshrined among trees, with a range of heather hills in the back-ground. Nature had here received some help from Art: a few trees cleared away at the bend of the river unveiled a scene of surpassing beauty. A rustic arbour graced that striking stand-point, in which one might sit and gaze and dream for hours and hours.

Our friends sat down in the arbour—not without romantic feelings on Graham's part as he beheld the castle, and knew that Lady Helen and the other fair inmates often sat in that same bower. It was simply enchanting. Thomas had promised to give him some more particulars relative to Miss Webster's father and mother—more especially some account of the early life of the father; whose simple, uneventful, yet essentially heroic career was, as Thomas had said, extremely interesting as well as instructive. Where could they find a more fitting place than the charming arbour in which they rested to relate the short and simple annals of a peasant, some of whose happiest days were passed under the shadows of yonder castle?

When Thomas came to the end of his tale, Graham looked his watch and found it was high time they were hurrying home to dinner. But how thankful he felt for the life-sketch to which he had listened! The information he had just received regarding the Webster family, combined with what he had learned from other sources, all tended to greatly deepen his love for their handsome and accomplished daughter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. GRAHAM WRITES TO JOSHUA LEADBETTER.

WOODBANK COTTAGE,
RATHIE, Wednesday, 17th July, 18—.

MY DEAR JOSHUA,

I have the greatest pleasure in writing to you. Already I have spied out the beauties of the land, and, my dear fellow, I wish with all my heart to share with you the joy of my discoveries.

First, I must tell you I have just dined, and that I am sitting in the wood under the patriarchal branches of a spruce fir, finely sheltered from the sun. Please note these facts, Joshua, and then imagine how happy I am. Martin Luther confessed he wasn't much of a saint immediately after dinner, and after a beefsteak Lord Byron felt savage. Thank Heaven! I am not like these men. I have fared heartily on the sweetest of highland mutton, and I never felt more like a Christian than I do at this moment.

Joshua! let me whisper it into your ear. Since we parted I have been the hero of the most romantic incident that ever happened in this world. Of course, you have guessed there is a woman in the case. Pray excuse me saying anything about *her* on paper; my dear fellow, do have a little patience. What I have got to tell you about her—my heroine! bless her a thousand times! is too romantic, too delightfully precious to be recorded with this common Todd's Perth office black ink. No, Joshua, my dearest of chums! you must really wait till I see you face to face—with—yes, with a pint of wine in a silver tassie between us; then, ah, *then* I shall unfold a tale which will electrify you!

Oh! how I wish you were here. And yet it is perhaps better that you aren't! My own thoughts at this moment are such a delicious banquet; moreover, I might be awfully jealous of you, you rascal! you are such a lady killer. Never mind, my boy, I have another revelation for you. Lend me your ear again. I have found a—a sweetheart for you too! (Sensation.) Are you intoxicated with joy? Do you wring your hands in a delirium of pleasure? You would most certainly do it, if I could only paint the pretty charmer properly. Now don't you wish you were with me in the highlands a-chasing the wild *dears*? I'll tell you what it is, Joshua—you might be one of the happiest fellows in creation with this girl as your wife. And I should be proud, immensely proud, to see my bosom friend the husband of so good—so fair—so sweet a creature! Are you not in a perfect frenzy to know all about her? Is she young?

pretty? intelligent? has she any money? you ask me in a breath. Yes, yes, money too—lots of it—with sure prospect of more. Pray calm down, my dear fellow, calm down: the bird is still in the bush.

How and where did I earliest meet her? In her father's garden, in the bower reading. I was greatly charmed with her—no wonder: just you fancy a pretty maiden of nineteen summers, attired in a light hazel coloured dress trimmed with red, having a beautiful yellow rose on her breast. And such a sweet lovable face! the very picture of health and good nature: soft brown hair and large blue eyes filled with liquid light; a serene, playful, happy expression—in fact, Joshua, to any fellow coming from the city tired and wearied with the riotous world, I can imagine nothing more soothing, nothing more refreshing, than to gaze for a few moments upon the extremely pleasant, open, sunny countenance of Miss Jessie Forman. There, now! And let me tell you

She's modest as ony and blithe as she's bonnie.

I am sure you will not be disenchanted though you hear that this paragon is the daughter—the only daughter—of the innkeeper here: more especially when you learn that the Rathie hostelry is highly respectable, and mine host and hostess much thought of. Won't you be delighted, you wanderer! to come and stay here from a Saturday till Monday? I shall undertake that you will be very comfortable, and that you will thoroughly enjoy yourself. Of course, the maid of the Inn would be the chief attraction. Perhaps you think I'm joking in assuming the role of matchmaker; perhaps so, but there is a serious tone in it, you may depend. Just look here. Jessie is healthy and nice looking; and with such a managing, energetic mother, she cannot fail to be exceedingly well trained.

Now, my boy, don't you imagine that she is but a simple country lassie, who has seen nothing of the world, and would not be a fit companion for a man who has, like yourself, travelled a good deal; let me inform you Miss Jessie has been two or three years at a boarding school in Edinburgh, and has seen a little bit of life. "Well, so far good," say you, "but what about her money?" Her money? She is worth a thousand pounds already! Not a doubt of it, Joshua, for what "a' body says ye ken maun be true." And it is easy to believe what the natives say—That the Formans are just coining money. You see they have quite a monopoly: not another Inn within a radius of five or six miles.

To be sure, the tocher is not the jewel for you; and I would never dream of telling you of Jessie if not well persuaded that she is really a fortune in herself. In any event, you must come north. I know you like dearly to spend a quiet Sunday in the country. Ah, you sly rogue!

Well do you know some half-dozen cosy howfs where you can take your Sabbatic rest. But just you try Rathie the first time you come to Redmuir, and all other places will hide their diminished heads. Why, besides the people of the Inn, who will give you the proverbial warm welcome, and something more, if I mistake not, you will have to pay a visit to Woodbank; and more delightful and more romantic than all, you must not forget to go to Linnburn Farm. Ah, Joshua! Joshua! Linnburn is a spot of surpassing loveliness. It beggars description. I cannot, however, tell whether the Queen of Linnburn will be there when you go. She is there just now, she is *there*, my child! And, oh for the eloquence of a seraph to tell you all about *her* when we meet. Joshua, my dearest, confidential chum, all this is *sub rosa* meantime, mind you.

But here's my grandad coming and I must stop, reserving my budget of news till we meet.

Remember me kindly to the old folks, to Marchmont and *all* his family circle near to you—might I not say *dear* to you:

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

DAVID GRAHAM.

JOSHUA LEADBETTER, Esq.,
Commission Merchant,
GLASGOW.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"They were blest beyond compare,
When they held their trysting there,
Amang thae greenest hills shone on by the sun."
—*Principal Shairp.*

Thursday morning, 18th July, promised well for a ramble: true, the signs of heat were not the best adapted for mountain-climbing or for a grand view from the Ben. What about that, so long as the sun was shining and the ground was dry. Assuredly David Graham did not repine. Far from it: he thanked his stars for being favoured with a succession of golden days—golden in more senses than one. What cared he for the distant prospect? while the wild flowers and the purple heather formed his carpet, and, beside him—entrancing thought!—the lady he admired more than any other lady in the world! Wherever she walked was holy

ground, and a halo encircled her steps. The distant prospect, forsooth!

> Give him but what her girdle bound,
> Take all the rest the sun goes round.

As they had arranged to start from Linnburn at one o'clock, he was up betimes to breakfast so as to be ready for an early dinner: a fortunate thing, as it put him in capital trim for the journey.

Setting out at half-past twelve, he took the near way along the edge of the wood. He anticipated much pleasure this afternoon, although his feelings were not quite so romantic: to-day he was not to be the only guest of that delightful family from whom he had received such flattering attention, and he must be content with a share of their kindness.

Anon he reached the Golden gate. This is the second gate to be opened before entering the charming valley of Linnburn; and some of you, like Graham, may remember the advice given in an old *Tretyse of Fishing with Angle*—"Take good hede, that in going about your disportes ye open no man's gates, but that ye shet them again." Fortunately the farmer of Linnburn had hung his gates in such first-rate style that it was easy to open and shut them. So Graham closed the Golden gate with care. Pausing for a moment to consider which way he would go down the braes, his eye alighted on a tall fox-glove, standing like a sentinel beside the gate; he stooped to admire it, and there, to be sure, was a busy bee improving the shining hour in the purple bell. He chose the broad grassy path to the right, and moved along it for a bit: then he halted to survey the scene, which he found revealed new beauties every time he gazed upon it. But the scene never before looked so enchanting as it did at that moment when his delighted eyes beheld two ladies sitting in the hammock under the plane-trees, with the collie and the pet lamb beside them. One of the ladies was, no doubt, Miss Webster, but who was the other? Could it be Bella Muir? Possibly. As he drew nearer he observed that one of them had on a light-coloured dress, and, if he were not mistaken, the figure looked very like Miss Jessie Forman's. He hoped he was right—he would be so happy to have a good opportunity of knowing Jessie better.

"But where are the young ministers? No appearance of them anywhere. Have they been listening to the voice of the hermit, with his tempting offers?" sings softly—

"O tarry, my son, till the burning noon passes.

If they have, they are very callous pilgrims indeed, for no lover worthy of the name would linger the fractional part of a second." So Graham thought, flattering himself with the reflection, and anticipating no small enjoyment if he should have the honour and the exquisite pleasure of alone escorting these young ladies to the top of Ben Katelow.

"Hallo! here comes Mysie," he exclaimed, as he saw that affectionate creature scudding up the braes at full gallop to welcome him, having been despatched, no doubt, by the ladies, who were looking towards him and waving their handkerchiefs. The sheep cleared out of the collie's way pretty sharply, and then turned round to see what game Mysie was after next.

"Oh, Mysie, my bonnie, bonnie lass! is that you?"—patting her as she leaped frantically about him. "No wonder the tinker said you were a fine doggie. Ah, I wish your young mistress would welcome me with such signs of affection. Will the time ever come think you, Mysie? Let me caress you again for her sake. Now I shall deck you with flowers for your kindness;" and he plucked a few sprigs of the wild thyme bejewelling the edge of the pathway, and placing them among the glossy black locks of Mysie's neck, beckoned to her to rejoin the ladies at the hammock. And the intelligent creature, quickly understanding the sign, scampered off.

"Good morning!" said both ladies, rising from the hammock to shake hands with Mr. Graham.

"Good morning!" he responded cheerily.

Miss Webster, glancing at the floral decoration of Mysie's neck and smiling, said: "And so you've returned our messenger to let us know you are up to time."

"Yes: 'pun-provoking thyme.'"

"Which means courage, you know, in the language of flowers," said Miss Forman gaily: "and we are pleased to infer from this sign that you are not faint-hearted, and not at all a laggard in keeping your appointments."

Most humbly bowing his thanks, "Miss Forman, you put a very pretty interpretation upon the wild thyme. How quick-witted you ladies are! I assure you the thyme had no meaning—no allegorical meaning to me whatever: it was simply an impromptu decoration."

"Well, at any rate, you are up to time," said Miss Webster

archly, "and we are glad to see you; you are the only faithful swain: the other gentle shepherds haven't come. I had a note from Mr. Stephen saying that he and Mr. Scrymgeour could not be here till six o'clock—too late, of course, to think of Ben Katelow—but that they would be happy to take tea and spend the evening with us. It is a pity, but it can't be helped;" adding with a knowing smile, "Circumstances, I daresay, over which they had no control prevented them."

"Oh, yes, certainly," said Graham, smiling in his turn at the stereotyped phrase, and glancing significantly towards Miss Forman, who was patting Mysie, remarked, "Mr. Stephen is very good at scaling mental heights, but I am not so sure of his ability for Ben Katelow on a hot day like this."

Miss Forman laughed at this remark as if it were funny. She had not yet seen Mr. Stephen, but very likely Miss Webster had posted her up regarding the young divine, and something had tickled her risible faculties.

"I thought," said Graham, "that both gentlemen had been taking the advice which a certain aged man and a hermit gave to the pilgrim of love: 'O tarry, my son, till the burning noon passes;' and so they seem to be."

This sly hit seemed to be much appreciated by the ladies: Miss Webster exclaiming, "Oh, Mr. Graham, you can't expect the pale student to have the strength and lung power of your famous namesake. If you are 'breathed like the Graeme' the Ben will be child's play to you.

> Right up Ben Lomond could he press,
> And not a sob his toil confess."

"Ah, indeed! How very long-winded that namesake of mine must have been. But then, you see, he lived among the hills and had constant practice climbing them. True, I've had some practice in mounting stairs—a good deal of practice, in fact, as I happen to live in a top-flat; and, besides, there are plenty of stairs in the warehouse to trot up and down: so that after all I should not be so badly prepared for mountain-climbing;" glancing up towards the Ben.

"Oh, you needn't look at Ben from here," exclaimed Miss Forman; "he is not at all gigantic from this point of view. You don't know what a formidable fellow he is until you get up upon one of his shoulders."

"You have been on his head, I suppose, more than once, Miss Forman?"

"O dear no! I've never got beyond the feet of the noble Ben, but I hope to be better acquainted with him to-day."

"Don't you think it will be rather warm, Jessie?"

"What about the heat—we won't melt."

"We won't dissolve into a dew, I hope," said Graham.

"Well, I can tell you I have seen such a mist on the top of the Ben that there would have been some danger of dissolving in it." And Miss Webster gave a slight shudder at the very thought.

"Let us be off at once, Mary," cried Miss Forman, springing out of the hammock.

"Dear me, Jessie, there is no immediate hurry. Sit down, Mr. Graham, and rest you a bit; no time will be lost while waiting till it cools a degree or two."

While the ladies resumed their seats in the hammock, Graham sat down in front of them in a rustic chair, the handiwork of the farmer himself, and copied from one he had seen at Rathie Castle.

What a pleasant wayside inn you have, Miss Forman," said Graham; "and such a picturesque den yon is! I was greatly taken with it; and I thought how very much a friend of mine would have enjoyed the ramble we had yesterday. I was writing to him in the afternoon, just after I returned, and I told him to be sure and stay a Sunday at Rathie Inn the next time he comes to Redmuir or Lochdale. I took it upon me to say that he would be made exceedingly welcome by my friends in this quarter; so I trust you will make room for the traveller and shew him a little attention—for my sake to begin with."

"Certainly we shall be delighted to see him. I have no doubt that any friend of yours, Mr. Graham, would be made welcome even for his own sake." Miss Forman's face glowed with fresh beauty while making that happy reply.

"Thank you very much. Mr. Leadbetter—Mr. Joshua Leadbetter, I may mention, is my friend's name. He is a Commission Merchant in Glasgow, and has occasion to be north three or four times a year. I know he would like much to pass a Sunday at Rathie—especially with the prospect of cheerful company, and if there is music, so much the better; for my friend is very fond of music, and is himself an uncommonly fine singer."

"That would be splendid. Now I do hope, Mr. Graham, your

friend will be sure to come; I shall feel awfully disappointed if he doesn't, after you have raised my expectations. May I ask what like a gentleman he is?"

"Well, I might raise your expectations too high were I to describe Mr. Leadbetter; but this I shall say, you will find him a thorough gentleman, and although not a professed ladies' man, I am sure you will find him entertaining—and I think you will like his appearance."

"Tell Mr. Leadbetter to come by all means. Say how lonely, how *very* lonely we are; and that a visit from him would do us—Oh, ever so much good!"

"If Mr. Leadbetter was in our place just now," said Miss Webster, giving the hammock a swing, "and experienced the luxury of this sort of thing, he would be in no hurry to leave off. It is just on a sultry day like this that the charms of a hammock under the greenwood tree are fully realized. You can temper the heat nicely by a gentle motion; and a zephyr stirs such a myriad of tiny fans overhead, making the air so deliciously cool."

"Hear, hear!" cried Miss Forman gaily, "we, too, must have a hammock, though we haven't such splendid trees to hang it on."

"A capital idea, Miss Forman, and when my friend comes to Rathie he will have a luxury which very few hotels in Scotland can boast of."

"Very good. Don't forget to mention to Mr. Leadbetter about the hammock. It must be got at once."

After some further talk, Graham at length broke out with, "Well, ladies, shall we not be up and doing now? Shall we much longer,

> Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
> Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time?"

No sooner had he uttered these lines than Mr. Webster appeared at the Honeysuckle gate.

"Ay, ay, sirs; an' hae ye no taen th' hill yet? Gude mornin', Maister Graham. Hoo's the fowks up by?"

While Graham made answer, he observed that Mysie had risen and was hovering about her master, eyeing him intently as if waiting for orders, or to be taken notice of. Graham remarked about this loyalty of the collie to its master.

"Yes, I sometimes wonder mysel' at the cratur. I niver mak' a fuss wi' 'er, like you fowks, an' she disna' get her meat frae me

either, an' yet she'll trot efter me th' haill day an' show perfect obedience. But she winna do onything for the mistress, she'll no turn the sheep for her, an' yet she feeds th' cratur! Hoo's that Mysie, lass? Hoo d'ye differ frae a lion or a teeger in that respeck?"

"Fine question that, father, for the Zoological Society," said Miss Webster playfully. "But we must really make a start if we are to go."

Mr. Webster jestingly remarked that he would bring his long pole and help them safely across the ford.

"Oh, there is no danger to-day, father, all the stones are visible. Even Jessie will be able to skip across herself."

"Skip across!" exclaimed Jessie at the riverside, "easy for you, Mary, with so much practice. If it weren't for that ugly stone in the middle, I wouldn't be a bit frightened."

"Why, you needn't be afraid, Jessie," taking her by the sleeve, "you won't sink, cream always comes to the surface,—this"—alluding to her cream coloured dress—"this will float you like a cork jacket."

"Ay, its all very well for you to make fun of me, you who could skip across on one foot. I believe I could cross quite easily, if it weren't for these new boots."

Mr. Webster, who had come to the ford with the party, asked them to "hover a blink," and he would fetch his long pole with which he was in the habit of helping old and nervous women over: and turning on his heel ran off for it.

"Oh! don't mind it," cried Miss Forman. "Hey! come back: I'll get across quite well."

Returning, Mr. Webster eyed the frightened damsel with a comic twinkle. "I'll carry you over, Jessie, as I used to do; but sall yer no sae licht noo, an' it would be mair becomin' if this young gentleman would undertake the job."

"Oh, no, no. I'll manage fine. I'll take off my boots, and then there will be no danger of slipping."

Miss Webster started with affected alarm, then laughingly exclaimed: "Don't take off your boots, Jessie, or you'll make it a more *bootless* task than ever," quickly touching her shoulder to prevent her.

"By all means keep on your boots," urged Graham, joining in the merry laughter, "You know there is nothing like leather."

Immediately after this humorous counsel, and without the slightest hesitation, Miss Webster ran across the stepping stones and back again, just to shew her friend, Jessie, how easy it was. And then she led the way again, standing triumphantly for a few seconds on the doubtful stone to dispel Jessie's fears. In that way her courage was brought to the sticking place, and she stepped across with little difficulty.

This coquetting episode with the stepping stones, by keeping our friends at the river-side for a space, enabled them to inhale the fresh breeze off the water, and gave them a stimulus for the journey. Still, they could not help feeling that the "best and master thing" to do on such a hot day would be to linger by the shining river; Graham remarking that it would be the height of bliss to place a camp stool on the flattest stone near the middle, and sit there facing the stream. "Oh! it would be so refreshing to breathe an unlimited quantity of cooling draughts."

As they walked over the soft turf of brightest emerald on the other side the most fragrant odours filled the air, as if pressed from the wild flowers and the grass by their feet. "What a splendid show of ferns, queen of the meadow, forget-me-not, and fox gloves," Graham was remarking, when Miss Webster said softly, "Here comes Charlie Samson, our man-servant, if you please, a very obliging fellow he is."

As Charlie approached he glanced modestly at our party.

"Warm day, Charlie," said Miss Webster kindly; Miss Forman also giving him a friendly salute.

"Do you think we shall see anything from the top of the Ben this afternoon?" asked Miss Webster, smiling at the evident absurdity of the question.

"No verra muckle I'm feard," answered Charlie, solemnly shading his eyes with his hand and looking up and round about: "but mebbe th' mist 'ill clear awa' afore ye get to th' tap."

At Millburn Cottage (Charlie's house) they had to cross a tiny wooden bridge spanning a picturesque burn, running at right angles into the Rhymen, and then a gate to open; thence the ascent of the Ben might be said to begin.

No sooner had they passed through this gate than two ladies appeared, both of whom accosted Miss Webster and Miss Forman very cordially. The ladies were Mrs. Gray, the Factor's wife, and one of her daughters.

Miss Webster made anxious inquiries regarding Miss Ella, an invalid daughter, at home; and also about Mrs. Laing, the game-keeper's wife, who had been ailing for some time, and on whom she intended calling on their way up the Ben.

Meanwhile Graham, who was a stranger to the ladies, passed up the road a few paces, stopping to examine a yellow flower growing beside a tangled mass of broom and whin.

"Mr. Graham," called a clear musical voice. He looked round with a slightly startled air. Miss Webster smiled and beckoned him to approach. So he doffed his hat and advanced towards the ladies.

After being introduced, Mrs. Gray explained that she knew Mr. Brownlea, his grandfather, very well, and that she could not think of allowing his grandson to pass by without showing him some courtesy. She also mentioned the great interest which Mr. Brownlea was taking in the forthcoming Flower Show at Rathie, not forgetting to speak about his wonderful pansies; and asked particularly whether Mr. Graham expected to be present at the show.

He replied that unfortunately his holidays would be over before the day of the show. He would have liked very much indeed to see it, especially the grounds and gardens of the castle, which were open to the public that day.

"It is a pity you cannot come to the show, Mr. Graham; as for the grounds and the gardens, my husband would be glad to take you through them any time, although you would prefer to see them on the show day, when there will be an instrumental band present, and the Earl and Countess with their family moving about." Mrs. Gray wound up by inviting them all to Craighill on next Monday afternoon, to have tea and a little music. They could then also arrange for a visit to Rathie Castle.

Graham and his companions, having no other engagements they knew of, gladly accepted the kind invitation.

Resuming their journey, Miss Webster remarked: "This we may say is the first winding stair leading up to the Ben, Mr. Graham, and a pretty stiff pull it is to begin with. But one does not weary on the way with such a wilderness of wild flowers to delight the eye."

"It is indeed a highly ornamental stair-case. By the way, can you tell me the name of this?" plucking the yellow flower he was examining when called away.

Miss Webster smiled. "Oh, that is Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon; you see it is closed, and the sun is not far past the meridian."

"Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon," said Graham, laughing, "what a funny title. Is not Jack a wise gentleman of the oriental type, closing his eyes under this broiling heat? having in fact his siesta, like a sensible fellow of the olden time. I shall not forget about Jack."

When they reached the level highway, where they could breathe more freely, Graham, turning to Miss Webster, said: "Mrs. Gray is a pale-faced lady, and rather a striking contrast to her blooming daughter."

"Yes, so she is. The one who was with her has got her father's complexion; but poor Ella! who has long been an invalid, seems to take after the mother in every way—complexion, form, and disposition. There never was a more angelic creature than Ella Gray. Poor, dear Ella! she has not known what it is to be free from pain or uneasiness of some kind for the last dozen years. And yet what a model of patience and gentleness she is." As they walked along Miss Webster gave Mr. Graham some further details regarding her friend Ella, proving the girl to be singularly amiable in spite of her chronic ill-health.

Before climbing the Ben they had to walk along the road leading to Rhymen Kirk for nearly a mile, under the shade of fir trees, some of them the old Scotch kind, or bonnet fir; the quiet saunter westward with the valley spread out before them was most pleasing. The ascent began at the end of this strip of firs.

They had not gone far up the hill when they reached the game-keeper's house, and as Miss Webster had arranged to call and see his wife, they all stept in by to it. John, the husband, was out in the court-yard splitting fire-wood, and he at once invited them all to come in. As Mrs. Laing would likely be in bed, Graham hesitated about going into the house, making some excuse that he was a stranger and it would disturb her. But John would not hear of it, they must all go in and rest them awhile. Miss Webster, with ready womanly tact, solved the difficulty: she would go in first and prepare Mrs. Laing.

When the others entered, Miss Webster was sitting on the side of the bed holding the invalid by the hand, and with looks and words of tender womanly sympathy was doing her best to comfort her. Miss Forman, who also knew Mrs. Laing, advanced to the bedside and spoke to her in subdued kindly tones; but neither her

attitude nor her words were charged with the deep natural feeling manifested by Miss Webster. When the latter spoke, she bent forward and brought her face into a line with that of the sufferer; reminding one of the words of the Psalmist: *My heart said unto thee, Let my face seek Thy face.* Graham was touched by Miss Webster's expression of countenance and by the altered tones of her voice. What a surprising change! The gay and sprightly lady of a few minutes ago transformed into a perfect sister of mercy. Nor was it in kind words alone that Miss Webster's sympathy expended itself: she had brought with her some needful medicine, a fresh smelling bottle, and a packet of cough lozenges; assuring the grateful patient, before leaving, that she would take the chance of the first one crossing the ford for the Ben, to send her another supply, besides promising to come back soon again.

"What a motherly person she is this young lady," said Graham to himself, "and if she is so kind to one of her own sex, having no special claim upon her, how will she feel when the rich golden shaft, &c., &c.!"

While resting halfway up the hill and chatting pleasantly together, Miss Forman abruptly observed, "I fancy you must be a poet, Mr. Graham—you have such a pretty way of expressing yourself. What do you say, Mary? Will you second me if I move that Mr. Graham recite to us one of his own poems?"

"I shall be very glad indeed if Mr. Graham will favour us so highly"—supporting her words with an eloquent glance.

"Many thanks, ladies"—raising his hat; "you make a very flattering request. But I must tell you frankly that I am not a poet—not a professed poet, anyhow. If I were, I should, like the rest of them, be only too eager to read a production. I am unknown as a poet, I repeat, but it so happens that I have a short versified piece which must possess some merit, for it actually appeared in a local paper in leader type." He went on to explain that the poem was the only one he had ever sent to the press—or at least the only one that had ever been published; narrating also the circumstances which gave rise to its composition—thus briefly stated: There was to be a great Demonstration on the battlefield of Drumclog on the anniversary of the "famous victory," and as his friends Marchmont, Leadbetter, and himself had arranged to be there as spectators, he thought he would refresh his memory with the incidents of the battle: moreover, he found these so

spirit-stirring that it was a comparatively easy matter to throw them into verse. This poem he now carefully took from his pocket-book, remarking that he felt all the more disposed to read it seeing that they had been talking about the Covenanters. After unfolding the printed paper and bowing to the ladies—fit audience though few—he recited as follows:—

VERSES

Composed to be sung on the Battlefield of Drumclog.

Tune—"Scots wha hae."

Nigh two hundred years ago,
On this field the Victor's blow
Struck our country's direst foe,
Made him turn and flee.
Calm and fair that Sabbath morn,
Holy prayers on high were borne,
Came the twang of martial horn—
Came the hireling slaves.

Sad and moving was the sight
When the Watchman from the height
Fired a shot and ran with might—
Cried, "The foe has come."
Douglas told them Self-defence
Lawful was in highest sense,
Sanctioned by Omnipotence—
Justice to themselves.

And their burning sense of wrong
Made their arms feel doubly strong,
Made them pant to rush along—
Made them do or die!
Old and weak were brave and calm,
And they sang a cheering psalm,
Begged of Heaven the sacred palm—
Righteous victory!

Here our Sires with strength and skill
Fought with all their heart and will,
Dearest blood did nobly spill
For our Liberty.
Let this great and mighty throng
Shout a grand and solemn song
To commemorate the strong
Martyred on this field.

Celebrate the joyful hour
Crushed to earth the tyrant's power,
Reared a part of Freedom's tower
Guarding Church and Home.
Glory to our gracious God!
By whose aid our foes were trod,
Slain or routed on this sod,
That we might be free!

"Splendid!" cried Miss Forman, the moment the recital was over. The elder lady, however, who had been listening with rapt

attention, did not find utterance all at once; but when the author meekly turned his gaze to her the glowing face he beheld was far more eloquent and flattering than her spoken compliments shortly afterwards. She also begged to be allowed to shew the poem to her father—a lover of poetry, and one who had always taken a deep interest in the struggles of the Covenanters. Graham readily assented; stipulating, however, that the verses were not to be exhibited to the young ministers they were to see in the evening.

He then took out his watch, and, on seeing the time, gave a low whistle of surprise. "Well, ladies, if we are to go up higher, we had better not stand upon the order of our going, but go at once: there is no time to be lost if we intend to join our ministerial friends at tea."

"Oh, we must really finish our journey," cried Miss Forman, springing to her feet: "it would never do to go home and say we weren't able, or were too lazy to go to the top. What do you say, Mary?"

"Well, you know, Jessie, it is no object to me to get to the summit; I would rather leave you and Mr. Graham to decide."

"Very good. Then, as Mr. Graham is a stranger in these parts, I move that he be our umpire."

Graham humorously accepted office, and forthwith began to deliver his judgment:

"Ladies, I presume that our chief object in wishing to top the Ben is in order to get a grand view. Well, the mist will not permit of that. We are all agreed on that point. Shall we, therefore, make a toil of the journey for the empty boast of saying that we were at the top? I think not. Had we arranged to meet our friends there it would have been our duty to fulfil our promise, notwithstanding the heat and the mist; or had we been very curious to examine the soil or the plants on the highest peak, there would be some reason for prosecuting the ascent. But our friends are to meet us at the base of the mountain, so to speak, and what do we care for the geology or the botany of the summit? Not much, I suppose. Our prime object, in addition to the pleasure of the walk, was to get a glorious view. I, for one, would be very glad indeed to look down on Lochdale and The Haws—and even cast my eyes as far as the sea at Montrose"—(Miss Webster blushed a little at the mention of Montrose). "But it's no use, ladies, in this hazy atmosphere: so, in my humble opinion, we should postpone the ascent to a clearer day."

"Agreed," said both ladies.

On their way down the mountain side Miss Webster promised them some recompense for leaving the Ben thus early: they would just be in time to gaze on Millburn at the very height of its beauty. Wishing her friends to feast their eyes on this lovely scene, bathed in the golden rays of the westering sun, she had deferred calling their attention to its various charming features until their return journey.

After hearing that, Miss Forman (what an impulsive lassie!) proposed a run down the hill with a view of getting to Millburn as quickly as possible—they must not lose the bewitching scenery by being too late for the proper sunlight. So off they scampered right merrily.

They had lingered by the way on the upward journey; now they lost no time in returning. Before long they were on the steep, winding pathway leading to the river—a very appropriate entry to so romantic a place as Millburn you would think, when you beheld the wilderness of bushes and wild flowers adorning the high and rugged banks of the burn rushing towards the Rhymen past Charlie Samson's cottage.

The gate is closed behind them—again they are within the charming enclosure of Millburn. Standing on the wooden bridge, overhung with clusters of wild roses, they watch Charlie's children paidlin' in the burn, trying to catch wee minnows with their hands.

"Now, is this not a lovely spot?" exclaimed Miss Webster with enthusiasm. "I may be ultra-patriotic, or home-sick, or whatever may be the reason, I tell you frankly there is no place in the wide world—excepting Linnburn—that I love and admire so much as this sweet spot. It is no poetical license to sing—

> Here Simmer first unfaulds her robes,
> And here she langest tarries.

It is the fact—the real, simple fact. The opening in the hills yonder"—pointing with her finger—"and the deep ravine leading down to our farm, allow the earliest sunbeams to gild Millburn; and"—turning round—"observe how the ground has sloped gently down on this side, permitting the setting sun, as he now does, to flood the scene with golden radiance, while poor Linnburn, as you see, is steeped in shadows. Is it not singular how Nature has lavished her favours on this humble dwelling? Look! how sweetly the sunbeams sleep on the thatched roof of the cottage, and how

these lordly ash-trees spread their arms tenderly over it as if breathing a benediction!"

"It is indeed a very sweet idyllic scene," said Graham with quiet rapture.

"I was sure you would agree with me. I cannot imagine a happier playground for children; and these bairns, mark you, have a monopoly of it, with nothing to fear—well," smiling, "unless, perhaps, that restless stirk of ours when it casts an envious eye on this rich pasture, and dashes across the river to steal a bite of it."

They next walked up the side of the burn a few yards, to where it emerges from the rocky defile overhung with brambles, rowans, and wild-roses, Miss Webster leading the way as descriptive guide. Pointing to the focus of greatest beauty, she resumed, "Quite a fairy grotto, is it not? lit up with rose colour for our special benefit! How lush and green the ferns are! and how fresh the moss on the boulders where the big speckled trout play hide and seek. I remember with what pleasing awe I used to peep into this twilight gorge when the sun went down, or perhaps not shining at all. One would not expect to find a rocky gorge like this so near a shallow burnie, and it is so hidden by branches that only the enterprising explorer finds it out. So you are all the better of having a native with you to exhibit the lions."

"Very much the better, I am sure," said Graham with a grateful look.

"Come now, please, and I'll shew you the well." So they walked along the meadow till near the centre, and there they beheld a sight for a painter—the perennial fountain at the breast of the brae, shaded by a silver birch.

"Perhaps you think our mossy well, gemmed with violets, prettier than this. And so it is—just now. But in very dry weather, where is our sparkling water? Echo answers—'where?' This, I repeat, is a perennial fountain: when the stream at our pipe is a mere thread, here the water is plentiful. When all around is parched and dry, this bonnie wee well is indeed the 'diamond of the desert.' So you see what rare privileges and advantages our friend Charlie and his family enjoy in their miniature castle and grounds."

Graham cordially endorsed every word. But indeed it was impossible to do otherwise after listening to such a speaker on scenes she loved with all her heart and soul. At that witching

hour of roseate sunlight, not only Nature, but Nature's darling masterpiece—lovely woman!—shone resplendent. While Miss Forman may have smiled at her friend's enthusiasm, and perhaps, also, at the unconscious air of the schoolmistress she had assumed in her capacity of guide, Mr. Graham was deeply touched by the revelation of a noble soul. To his love-lit eyes all the movements of its fair owner were the perfection of grace—to his ear all her words the most enchanting music. While the sun gleamed on her beautifully inspired face,

> Her pure and eloquent blood
> Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
> That one might almost say her body thought.

A LOVE STORY OF TO-DAY.

BY JAMES STURROCK,

Author of "Sketch of Dr. Norman Macleod," "Sermons on Scottish Song," "The Prince's Charm," &c.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Jolly shepherd, shepherd in the shade,
In the shade so merrily,
In the shade so cheerily.
Joy in thy life, life of shepherd's trade,
Joy in thy love, love full of glee,
Both sing and say—sweet love for me!"

John Wooton.

OUR friends were glad they did not go to the top of Ben Katelow, for it was a quarter of an hour beyond the time when the young ministers were expected ere they reached Linnburn. Before passing through the Honeysuckle gate, Miss Webster cast her eyes up the braes, and, seeing two dark figures moving away from the Golden gate, suddenly exclaimed, "See! there they come. Isn't it delightful we are back in time to give them a welcome."

As the visitors wended their way leisurely down the broadest pathway—walking very circumspectly, as became gentlemen of the ministerial cloth, Miss Forman became rather impatient of their slow progress. "Poor mountaineers these! Why don't they copy

Roger and Patie and come brattling down the brae when they see ladies waiting for them."

"It is pretty clear, that *we* cannot lend the swiftness of the roe to their tardy feet"—taking out her handkerchief and waving it—"but let us do our best to hurry them down. Meantime kindly run into the house, Jessie, and tell my mother they are coming."

Miss Forman did not require to go. Mrs. Webster having appeared at the Honeysuckle gate, the signal was given to her, and she hastened away to infuse the tea.

Mysie came trotting in by and began leaping upon Mr. Graham as if quite an old friend: a kind attention he cordially reciprocated.

"Run now, Mysie—run up the braes and fetch the strangers," said Miss Webster, pointing towards them, but only half in earnest. The sagacious creature wagged its tail and fawned on its young mistress, but seemed to feel no real call to bound for the newcomers. The lady smiled significantly. "It does seem as if Mysie had some respect for persons after all: she readily bolted to meet you to-day, Mr. Graham."

"But then I was not a total stranger to Mysie, which makes some difference."

"Oh, no! not at all!" cried Miss Forman, laughing: "the fact is, Mysie is not accustomed to bring black sheep from the hill. She has no liking for the blackcoats, any more than I have."

Miss Webster turned and walked towards the hammock. "We may as well take a seat till they come: it will make them feel more at ease to see us resting."

So the ladies sat down in the hammock, while Graham seated himself in the rustic chair beside them.

"And so you don't like blackcoats, Jessie?" said Miss Webster.

"I have a prejudice against them."

"Do you mean the coats or the men?" asked Graham.

"Both! I can't help it; and there's no use asking me why."

"Well, Jessie, you know as well as I do that black sheep make the sweetest mutton; and may not the best of men have black coats?"

"I agree with you about the sheep," said Graham gaily: "the butchers in Glasgow take good care to keep on the heads of the black sheep they hang up in their shops."

"You might treat us to something more poetical, Mr. Graham," objected Miss Forman.

Luckily at this moment that gentleman heard the song of the lark. Looking up contemplatively at the quivering speck, he replied: "You don't think of the colour of the lark just now, fanning the purple clouds and flooding the glen with delicious melody. Ah! Miss Forman, you must not forget that our sweetest singers are very modest and sombre in their plumage: and that the black-coats you so dislike are often transformed into singing robes, while hundreds, ay, even thousands, are entranced by the heavenly music of the wearers."

Paul Stephen and James Scrymgeour had forgathered with John Webster at the foot of the braes; they paused for a few minutes while John talked to them and pointed out several places of interest. Our friends in the hammock and Graham had thus leisure for this little by-play.

When the new arrivals were half-way up the avenue, accompanied by their host, Miss Webster advanced to meet them.

Graham looked intently at the visitors as they approached—more especially at one of them, whom he thought he recognized: and then turning sharply to Miss Forman said, "If I am not mistaken I should know one of these gentlemen—the younger of the two—Mr. Scrymgeour: yes, to be sure"—stepping forward eagerly to meet him.

"How are you, Mr. Scrymgeour?" he said joyously, without waiting to be introduced to Mr. Stephen. "Who would have thought we were to meet here of all places in the world?"

"Very strange indeed, Mr. Graham. We have come from Dunoon to-day, and very glad we were to leave behind us the crowds of Glasgow Fair people. What a contrast Dunoon is to this quiet glen."

Then followed the introduction to Mr. Stephen of Mr. Graham, who at once made enquiries for Mr. Marchmont and his circle, presently living at Hunter's Quay, in a villa charmingly situate in front of the Hafton woods. Miss Dallas, however, was not there, which no doubt accounted for Mr. Scrymgeour having no reluctance to tear himself away from the enchanting shores of the Holy Loch.

Graham felt it comforting to believe that, handsome though Mr. Scrymgeour was, he would not likely be his rival while striving to

gain the affections of Miss Webster. As for Paul Stephen, he knew next to nothing about him. But it was abundantly clear from the first sentence he spoke that he was no ordinary man: indeed, the rich sonorous voice and the sprightly manner would have struck despair into the bosom of a faint-hearted wooer.

Paul Stephen was a Licentiate of the Church, but neither a placed minister nor a probationer. Now over thirty years of age, outsiders wondered why Stephen did not try to get a church. He had passed through the College with distinction, and the very few pulpit appearances he had made were so promising—why did he hesitate about being a minister? For this reason—as his intimate friends were well aware—he was halting between two opinions: not whether he would serve God or Baal, but whether he should become a litterateur or a minister.

The first pause made by him in his ministerial career was caused by the state of his health, just as he was finishing his curriculum; the family doctor having advised him to travel abroad for some time to strengthen his constitution, and at the same time enlarge his knowledge of the world and his views of life—an advice which Stephen, with his father's concurrence, readily adopted. Fond though he was of study and preaching, young Stephen did not take kindly to the idea of settling down as the pastor of a congregation, so that he was well pleased with the doctor's wise recommendation. The "grand tour" on the Continent would just suit him; and as his father—a prosperous florist and seedsman in Glasgow—was quite able to afford the expense, Paul had no compunction whatever in starting.

Shortly after his departure—his new departure, it might be termed—he noticed in one of the Glasgow papers, daily sent to him, an intimation offering valuable prizes for the best two stories, not to exceed a given length, and to be ready by a certain time. *There* was a chance for a clever young fellow, like him, to make a name at a bound. Well, he entered the list of competitors, and gained the first prize. In due course the stories were published, and Paul Stephen's name was noised abroad as the rising Scotch novelist.

Greatly strengthened by his sojourn abroad, Paul did not mind obliging the best of his would-be patrons by partaking in their social cheer; but as for preaching—why, his literary success had

caused the pulpit to recede farther and farther into the dim distance. Clearly literature was his forte. By-and-by, however, he discovered that the literary profession did not afford him all the satisfaction he longed for, and again he seriously thought of looking out for a church. His father had never ceased expressing his desire to see his son a minister, and as many other esteemed friends joined him in his persuasion, assuring Paul that when it became known that he was a clerical candidate, half-a-dozen churches would be trying to get him, he felt as if the oracle, *vox populi vox dei* were being sacredly whispered to his soul and conscience.

Possibly, too, the conversations he had with Miss Webster during the past winter—a lady who inherited the parental admiration for the preacher's calling—may have had something to do in deciding Stephen to don the ministerial gown. What will a man not do to please the woman he loves?

Already two calls had been presented to him. He declined them both—neither being suitable. What he wished was a church, "not in the busy world nor quite beyond it," and he would just wait a little.

Meantime he was delighted to come to Rathie for a few Sabbaths; perhaps to no place in the world would he have gone so eagerly—at least during the summer vacation, when a certain charming young schoolmistress would be one of his most intelligent hearers.

James Scrymgeour was a cousin of Paul Stephen's; a fact which accounted for their being together now, for beyond the other fact of their professional studies being similar there was little more than the accident of kinship that made them sometimes companions.

He was the eldest son of the late John Scrymgeour, of the firm of Dallas and Scrymgeour, Warehousemen, Glasgow: nothing, therefore, could be more natural than the friendly relations existing between James and the Dallas family, as well as the probable closer relation which some people were prophesying.

Scrymgeour had not the mental gifts nor the fame of Stephen, but he was considerably younger—only twenty-three—and had a much finer personal appearance, which, combined with ordinary abilities, a very good voice, and pleasing manners, would very

likely procure a church for him in good time. Ladies would take very kindly to such a candidate, and readily vote for him. The acute observer, however, did not quite like the self-satisfied look and air always beaming on Scrymgeour's countenance, nor the lofty way he carried his head and tossed it back, as if he felt himself superior to everybody. Such a demeanour did not harmonize with the thoughtful humility so becoming in a divinity student. For all that, it does not follow that Miss Dallas saw anything but love and manly beauty in Mr. Scrymgeour's bright blue eyes, fresh complexion, and handsome form: on the contrary, the haughty airs to her gaze may only have increased his patrician aspect, just as the erect bearing and proud dignified carriage seemed to add to his middle-sized stature. Such an eligible young man, whether engaged or not, could hardly fail to have a special interest for Miss Webster or Miss Forman.

At the tea-party, Paul Stephen, as the oldest guest, sat at Mrs. Webster's right hand; Mr. Scrymgeour was placed beside Miss Webster; Mr. Graham supported Miss Forman; while Mr. Webster and his young son, Andrew, were the croupiers, so to speak.

Mrs. Webster was unusually proud and happy presiding over her present company. She felt highly honoured in having Paul Stephen at her table, and could not help paying him very marked attentions, which had the good effect of opening his heart and the floodgates of his vigorous mind.

Mr. Webster was rather quiet at the beginning; casting a sagacious look across the table from time to time, as if taking in the measure of the talented young minister who had already distinguished himself as an author, in what unco guid folk would term profane literature; but now that he had taken holy orders, he might yet make his mark as a sacred writer, and rank with such divines as Bunyan and Baxter. Indeed, Mr. Webster could not refrain from gazing at Paul Stephen with a certain feeling of awe when he contemplated the possibilities of his future career.

Andrew, as became his years, kept silent, gazing with reverence and admiration on Mr. Stephen, as an intelligent schoolboy: for how could he regard with indifference the author of a famous prize story?

They talked lightly and pleasantly at first on various topics,

dwelling a good deal on matters pertaining to Glasgow, and, in particular, the humours of Glasgow Fair, then in full swing, but more especially the Fair of the olden time, when Paul Stephen—not to go any farther back—was a boy. From the foot of the classic Saltmarket, where the annual Saturnalia was held, to the Green—the people's forum—was only a stone's throw. What scenes were to be witnessed on the Green on summer nights! Stephen graphically described the discussions and preachings which took place there, but chiefly on Sabbath nights; addressing himself mostly to his host, as he appeared to take the deepest interest.

"Weel, Maister Stephen," said Mr. Webster, "I maun say, ye hae been at mair colleges than ane, an' I hope we'll get the benefit o' yer learnin' an' experience the short time ye're to be i' th' glen. We had a meenister body a' th' wey frae Edinboro this summer. I expeckit great things frae him, as they said he was an able man; but O dear me! he had sic a peekin voice the hauf o' th' fowk—especially them a wee thing dull, like mysel' —could mak' neither heid nor tail o' him. Noo, what is th' earthly use o' a preacher if he canna mak' himsel' be heard? O Sirs, I loss a' patience wi' thae peekin billies. If sic men hae learnin' an' abeelities, let them use the pen, or teach, an' gie the poopit to men that can speak wi' some pith."

Paul Stephen, conscious of his powerful voice, felt somewhat flattered, but interjected, "Men that can 'ding the guts out of the Bible!"

"Na, na, sir, I dinna mean mere pheesical force, though I like plenty o' that too. I generally find that a preacher who has life an' energy is practical an' to th' point: th' very opposite to thae preachers wha sing awa' to themsells, for a' th' warld like a laverock up i' th' cluds—no sae bonnie, tho'. Noo there, when I'm gaun aboot th' braes amon' th' sheep, dronin' or singing to mysel', the sheep nibble awa' an' pey nae attention to me, but the meenit I gie th' word o' command their heids are up in a jiffey. That's the wey you meenister chaps should speak to yer flock if you want them to gie ony heed t'ye instead o' fa'in' asleep."

"I thoroughly agree with you," said Stephen with energy. "I always notice that the preachers on Glasgow Green who gather the largest crowd are courageous, bravely outspoken men—men who speak with a will and to the purpose—men who fire off shot-like

sentences that thrill the multitude—every word like the dunt of a hammer and a 'trumpet call to action.'"

"Fine, min! Ah, sir, that's the richt kind o' preachin'—action, obedience: not hearers of the word only, but doers. The man that can fire us to do and obey—that's the proper man for the poopit."

"Decidedly!" cried Stephen with emphasis. "We don't want long dry discourses; we have no patience with displays of learning—what we hunger and thirst for is the revelation of a noble soul and a heroic life, breathed to us warm and musical from the burning lips of a true Christian."

"Hear, hear! Man, I'm richt glad to hear you speak that wey, an' I only wish that a' th' young preachers were o' th' same wey o' thinkin'. I often think what puir deid craturs we are compared wi' th' preemitive Christians, or even wi' th' hearty, generous people of Ezra's time. Ye mind o' Ezra? Fetch me th' Bible, Andrew; I would just like to refresh yer memory wi' a verse or twa."

The Bible was brought from a side-table and passed by Andrew carefully with both hands to his father. After adjusting his spectacles, John Webster turned up the desired place with ease: indeed the book opened almost of its own accord at the eighth chapter of Nehemiah. Then he read aloud in a sonorous voice: "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up." O sirs, isn't it grand to see the reverence which the fowk in thae auld times had for God's Word? I've read somewhere that th' Mahommedans 'll no haud the Koran below their girdle. I honour them for that."

Graham remarked that he had seen a small Testament—an old one—supporting one of the legs of a piano.

"Weel, sir, I wadna gie muckle for the music that comes oot o' that piano: no that th' piano itsel' may be a bad ane, but there could be nae richt music i' th' souls o' them it belanged till. Assuredly *they* hadna the speerit of Ezra. Verse aucht, 'So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.' Now, hoo mony o' you meenister billies o' th' present day can read like Ezra? It maks me jist wild when I hear a man read a chapter in a cauld wey—and in a sma' whisper—so as, forsooth, to keep a' his energy for his ain puir bit sermon. Nae wonder, I say, that there's sae

muckle speeritual deidness i' th' warld. Let's see what was the result of Ezra's readin'—verse twal: 'And all the people went their way to eat and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth' (to mak' great mirth, mark you); 'because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.' They didna come awa' yawnin' an' wi' lang faces, nor were they glad because the readin' was by, an' they could now play themsells like bairns. No; they rejoiced because they understood God's precious word an' loved it—they were made happy when they learned all that their Heavenly Father had promised to them that love Him."

Then followed a lively discussion relative to shepherds, pastoral and spiritual. Mr. Webster stoutly maintained that a minister's life was a very easy and comfortable one; while Mr. Stephen, with much force and eloquence, denied that such was the case—especially the life of a city minister. But he had always regarded the care of sheep on the hills as a most healthy and sweetly idyllic occupation. Whereupon mine host mentioned two or three things which opened Stephen's eyes, and took not a little of the Arcadian poetry out of the shepherd's fancied existence. In short, some of the facts put forth on both sides were striking and new to each of the speakers, so that their opinions regarding the assumed unalloyed ease and comfort of their respective vocations were very considerably modified; and the argument ended as it began, with the utmost good temper.

Mrs. Webster's face was a study during this discussion. Sitting back in her chair, her folded hands resting on her lap, it was evident she was taking the liveliest interest in the conversation. She dearly loved to see her husband engaged in vigorous talk. Often she thought what a powerful man he would have been with a college education; and every such reflection strengthened her resolve to supply that much felt want to her only son. But indeed her feelings during the dialogue — or duologue rather — were various: while her husband was listening eagerly to Mr. Stephen, absorbed entirely in hearing his statements or in framing a reply, Mrs. Webster at one time would be lost in admiration of her husband's eloquence, and at another would be watching with tender interest to mark how Andrew was enjoying the intellectual contest; picturing, too, in her mind's eye, that proud and happy day when her darling boy would be shining, like Paul Stephen, in table oratory. Anon she would gaze complacently at her daughter, and

wonder which of the three gentlemen present—all of them highly eligible—might be her dear child's partner for life.

When the party broke up, pleasant allusion was made to the prospect of hearing Mr. Stephen in the church on Sunday next; Mr. Graham, in particular, being greatly interested in the forthcoming event.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"A strappin' lad he takes the mither's e'e."—*Burns.*

The pleasing duty of seeing Miss Forman safely home from Linnburn devolved upon Mr. Graham, and, when bidding her good night, he promised to look in next day on his way to Lochdale.

There was nothing particular to keep him in the glen on Friday, and besides, he was eager to get home to relate the great discovery he had made. Charged with such delightful news, Graham could not be otherwise than happy and doubly happy, too, that he was to return again on Saturday. It would never do for him, poor fellow! pent up in the smoky city all the year round, not to stay all the time he possibly could among the hills: Oh, dear no; especially as he had promised to his kind Linnburn friends to come and hear Paul Stephen preaching on Sunday, and then spend the afternoon with them. Moreover, by so doing, he could all the more easily accept Mrs. Gray's invitation to Craighill on the Monday following. These were irresistible attractions, the pleasure of which he would never for a moment dream of foregoing. What a lucky fellow!

Well, on Friday morning, sometime after breakfast, he started for Lochdale. On nearing Rathie Inn he heard the sound of a piano—most welcome music to him; causing him to whisper—"All, all is food for my too, too poetic soul!" In two minutes he was in the best parlour of the inn, seated by the piano beside the fair performer, the charming Miss Jessie. She was playing the *Overture to Guy Mannering*, a favourite of his, as he entered. She at once rose to welcome him, and sat down on a chair away from the piano. Very soon, however, he begged her to resume playing the overture—he was so fond of it. With a gracious smile she immediately complied.

The first bar or two thrilled him with delight, making him feel

somehow as if piano music had never so charmed him before. He could not but take most kindly to the fair spirit who was ministering so richly to his enjoyment. But, indeed, his eyes were charmed quite as much as his ears. Now he gazed rapturously on the white fingers dancing nimbly over the keys, but oftener his gaze would be riveted on the happy face which glowed and smiled in sympathy with the music. It was such a treat to watch her expression as she dashed off the air always sung to the words—

> Yestreen a braw wooer cam' down the lang glen,
> And sair wi' his love he did deave me,
> I said there was naething I hated like men—
> The gude forgie me for leein', for leein',
> The gude forgie me for leein'.

That Jessie was keenly alive to the humour of the song was abundantly evident; moreover, the coy maiden seemed to throw herself with more joyous abandon into the music, words not being the medium of expression.

Graham could hardly stand it—he felt he could fling his arms round the enchanting gipsy and kiss her right off! "Come! come! now, Miss Forman, don't take so much wicked fun out of the music. I know fine what it is you are laughing at."

She stopped playing and regarded him archly.

"How do you expect that I can trust Mr. Leadbetter to such alluring wiles? If you're going to copy the heroine of that song when he comes to see you—I must——"

"Oh, but I won't behave that way to *him;* for your sake, if not for his own, I shall try to be a little more truthful."

"Very good. And don't forget to take a ramble with him through the den. If you do, I am sure he will never be done singing—

> We'll meet beside the dusky glen
> By yon burnside."

What a lively fancy you have, Mr. Graham; you have painted Mr. Leadbetter in such bright colours that I'm afraid I won't have the pleasure of seeing him. He will think Rathie far too dull."

"Keep your mind easy. It will be no fault of mine if he doesn't find his way north here, the very first time he has business at Redmuir. I must say, though, that my friend is a very fascinating fellow, and I may have good cause to be jealous of him." Graham looked slyly at the young lady while he thus spoke jestingly.

"Oh, now, Mr. Graham, don't say so. I know quite well that *your* heart is elsewhere!" Then turning quickly round on the stool she dashed off a continuation of the overture.

Graham said nothing; he looked enquiringly at the lady while she went on playing, and mused. "And so this young, seemingly artless maiden, has divined my secret! What prophets women folks are in affairs of the heart. I spoke not a word of love, and I tried to be as courteous and attentive to her as to Miss Webster. How could she then make the discovery?"

He felt pleased—very pleased indeed—at being told what he knew himself to be true. And was it not strange that he should find hope in Miss Forman's remark about his heart being elsewhere? a remark which might have been one of her stereotyped phrases, learned at the boarding school, meaning little or nothing, and at the most might be only a "draw" or a "feeler." But Graham's perceptions were electric—were quick as a woman's. Not the remark simply struck him most; rather it was the way it was uttered and the sudden resumption of the music, as if to conceal her emotions, or, more likely, to evade any questioning. Yes, there was hope most assuredly; if there were not, Miss Forman, being an intimate friend of Miss Webster's, and a frank, generous lady, would have managed somehow to tell him gently to beware of going too far on the ice. But certainly there was nothing in her manner to lead him to infer that Miss Webster was either engaged, or that she favoured another.

Still briskly went the music; and the laughing, sweet tempered little minx seemed absolutely to revel in the enjoyment of her own brilliant performance, well knowing all the while what were the sentiments her eloquent fingers were interpreting. And, equally well, so did the attentive listener.

After playing a few minutes she wisely paused to allow an interval for conversation. Crossing her hands upon her lap she listened demurely to Graham's compliments; after which they talked over yesterday's events and the forthcoming Church services by Paul Stephen. She also made some enquiries about Mr. Scrymgeour in a way which shewed he had impressed her a good deal.

Although the talk did not flag for a moment, Miss Forman snatched up another piece of music, saying—"with your permission, Mr. Graham, I shall now play to you *Lord Rathie's*

Welcome; it would never do for you to go home without hearing *the* tune of the parish."

Graham was delighted. He had never heard *Lord Rathie's Welcome* to his knowledge, and it was very kind and considerate of her.

Jessie was just in the middle of the *Welcome*, a soul-stirring march, when mine hostess suddenly entered, as if the tune were a signal for a gathering of the clans, and she had hurried to the rendezvous.

"Sic a lassie that is for music, Mr. Graham; she would thump awa' th' haill blessed day if I would lat her. Ay, an' ye've been playing *Lord Rathie's Welcome;* you'll mak' me believe its the flower show day. I'm sure she's juist deavin' ye, Maister Graham."

"Oh no, not at all, Mrs. Forman. I am very much delighted with the music, I assure you."

He then made some complimentary remarks on her excellent management, and he thought her highly entitled to get a proper hotel built.

She seemed much pleased. "I maun gie ye a dram oot o' my ain bottle the day, Maister Graham, efter yer kindness to Jessie. Ye see his Lordship winna alloo me to sell speerits, but, of coorse, I keep a bottle for my ain freends. Play awa', lassie, till I come ben again."

The family bottle was soon brought, and healths were drunk after the good old country fashion.

After a very agreeable crack, and when Graham was making signs of leaving, Mrs. Forman said—"Ye're gaun hame th' day, Maister Graham—ye're surely no to tramp to Redmuir are ye?"

He answered such was his intention. Being a fine day and nothing to carry he had no doubt he would enjoy the walk.

"But there's nae occasion to walk, Maister Graham. Jessie an' me are gaun in wi' th' dog-cart, an' we'll be very glad to gie you a lift if you care for it. This is a market day in Redmuir, an' we've some shoppin' to do."

Graham, of course, could not refuse such a kind offer, and said that, as they were going into town at anyrate, he would only be too glad of their company and the drive.

That matter having been settled satisfactorily, Mrs. Forman next proceeded to consult her guest on a matter of importance.

"By-th'-by, Mr. Graham, as ye come frae Glesca, and are a man

of business, I wish ye would gie me yer opinion aboot some Railway bonds I boucht for Jessie this summer. There's sae muckle roguery i' th' warld that I would like to mak' sure that thae bonds is a' richt. Bring the papers, lassie, till I lat Maister Graham see them."

Miss Jessie was absent two or three minutes searching for the documents. Meanwhile, the wily mother improved the time by telling her favoured visitor that she had put a thoosand pounds in Jessie's ain name as a marriage tocher; "some fowks think I did wrang in puttin' sae muckle money in her ain name. Maister Wood, th' Banker, wha got the bonds for me, said it wisna usual for parents to invest sae muckle in a dochter's ain name. But I wadna listen to him. I could easy spare th' thoosand pounds, an' as Jessie has been a gude, kind dochter to me, I've the maist perfect faith in her, an' am sure that naething wrang 'll happen tae the money because I've gi'en her a' th' power o't. I'm to lippen her at onyrate."

Jessie handed the papers to her mother, who at once passed them to Mr. Graham for inspection; remarking, "you'll ken weel, nae doot, Mr. Graham, aboot the four Glesca Railways, an' you'll see there's a bond by ilka ane o' them for twa hundred an' fifty pounds. I was advised no to put a' th' eggs in ae basket."

Graham looked at the Debentures very carefully with all the air of a professional man expert in scrutinizing such documents. After the first glance at the papers, he remarked that all the four railways were reputed to be sound and profitable undertakings, and that in any event, as the bonds were preferable, they might be considered as safe as the Bank of England. Then after closely examining the amounts, the signatures, the seals, and the stamps on the Debentures, he said he had no hesitation whatever in pronouncing the bonds to be genuine, and the investments good and safe.

"I'm muckle obleeged t'ye, Maister Graham. Noo, Jessie, you've heard what a Glesca lawyer has said aboot yer railway bonds; so you need hae nae fear about them."

Graham opened his eyes wide at this speech. "Pardon me, Mrs. Forman, but if you refer to me as the Glasgow Lawyer, I am sorry you have made a mistake. A particular friend of mine, it is true, is a lawyer in Glasgow, and it is through him that I happen to know about such documents."

"Oh, to be sure, Maister Graham; it's me that's made a mistake. Yer freend, Sally, was tellin' me about ye and yer companion, Maister Marchmont, an' I've mista'en you for the lawyer. Oh, weel, there's no muckle hairm dune, I hope; an' ye've satisfied me jist as weel as yer freend."

The Debentures were again returned to Jessie to be placed in her own repositories; after which she was to give the stable boy instructions to get the dog-cart ready. The mother whispered a confidental word or two in Mr. Graham's ear, and then hurried away to put on her bonnet.

Very soon they were all in the conveyance. Jessie took the reins and shewed Mr. Graham, who sat beside her, how gracefully she could hold "the ribbons"—her mother being very proud to let such a well-bred gentleman see how highly accomplished in every way was her only and beloved daughter.

It would, perhaps, have added considerably to Graham's pleasure if Mrs. Forman had remained at home, but as such a course might not be quite judicious, it was just as well the mother accompanied them.

The drive, however, proved to be truly delightful; pleasant talk being kept up all the way. But the talking did not prevent Graham indulging an undercurrent of thought. "And so John, who drove me from Redmuir, was quite right about the thousand pounds: there couldn't be the ghost of a doubt about it now. Well it is surely a high compliment to be taken thus into the family confidence. Oh, very flattering, indeed!"

At first Graham believed that the Bonds were exhibited to him with the real *bona-fide* desire of having his opinion as a Glasgow gentleman without any ulterior motive, especially as he was erroneously credited with being a lawyer. But on reflection it was pretty obvious that Mrs. Forman's motive was to let a probable suitor for her daughter's hand know for certain what her marriage portion would be, and thus stimulate and encourage him in his courtship. He was fully alive to the flattering compliment, but in the meantime it could hardly be said that 'Barkis was willin'.' "I think, however, Jessie would suit Leadbetter admirably," mused Graham, "and I hope she will take his fancy."

They arrived at the cross of Redmuir fully a quarter of an hour before train time. As Graham had promised to return to Rathie on the morrow, it was easy for all of them to say good-bye; not a

shadow of pathos need there be in their brief farewell. Just before parting they were talking gaily about the lively time they would have when he returned to the glen—what delightful drives, and what charming concerts! So all were exceedingly merry and light-hearted when they cordially shook hands and said good-bye.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley."—*Burns.*

After parting with Mrs. Forman and her daughter at the cross of Redmuir, David Graham thought if ever there was a tide in his affairs which promised to lead him on to his ideal of domestic happiness, that tide was now assuredly rolling at his feet. What bright prospects in store for him when he returned on the morrow to Rathie!

To begin with: a drive up to Glen Capel with Miss Webster and Miss Forman, which Jessie's mother had with such kindly forethought arranged for them; they always went to Capel to see the annual athletic sports, but she saw no reason why the girls should not have an extra drive when they had the chance of a gentleman to look after them; although it was a pity—a great pity—Mr. Graham would not be able to go with them to the games. Then "the Kirking," to hear the Reverend Paul Stephen; for various reasons that would be a rich treat to Graham; for, apart from the enjoyment of Miss Webster's society, he would have the intellectual delight of criticising the sermon to her and her circle, and thus probably further advancing his suit. And on Monday—really it seemed too good to be true—they were to spend the afternoon at Craighill with the Factor's family, when a visit to Rathie Castle would also be planned. Moreover, if he stayed in the glen during the rest of his holidays, a fortnight still, doubtless other trips would be taken—all of them of more or less interest. Would he come out of all these engagements scathless? Would he leave the glen as light and free as when he first entered it? He feared not. As a proof, he already felt a mild fever in his heart which would inevitably come to a crisis.

On his homeward way to Lochdale, the lover fever troubled him but faintly—so full was his heart with joy at the prospect of

meeting his folks to tell them the romantic and wonderful discovery he had made at Linnburn.

No one could be happier than his mother when she learned from his own lips—and to her he gave more details than to any of the others—what had been the happy result of his visit to his grandfather's. She had been long anxious to see her son taking a wife: now there seemed a fair hope that her fond wish was within measurable distance of being realized. After hearing all he had got to say regarding Miss Webster, the mother, with characteristic impulsiveness, exclaimed—"Now, David, I do hope when you go back to-morrow you will make it up between you and Miss Webster at once; you allowed the lass to slip through your fingers before—take better care this time."

David's face beamed with joy. "I must have given you a very favourable impression of the young lady when you venture to give me such a strong advice—even without seeing her."

"Well, you see, like myself, Miss Webster is the daughter of an industrious farmer, and no doubt has had a good up-bringing, and as you are highly pleased with the lady, I feel as if I could take kindly to her."

"You are just like Sally, mother. Sally says that I have only to speak the word and a bargain is made. You are taking no account of rivals—the probable rivals—I referred to; and even supposing I was the favoured individual, you surely don't suppose that I could gain the victory in a few days. Indeed, I hardly think it would be wise for either of us to surrender so soon. Miss Webster knows she is worth the winning, and, like a superior woman, is not likely to dispense with the wooing: lightly won, lightly esteemed, you must remember."

"Very well, David, I leave the matter to your own judgment."

This conversation tended to enhance his mother still more in his high esteem. He knew that, like his father, she was very unworldly, but he hardly expected her to sympathise so readily with him in his feelings towards Miss Webster—a lady whom she had not seen, and who, perhaps, had only her sweet self to offer as all her marriage dower.

His father was out on some church business when David returned from Rathie and published the thrilling news. Not till evening, when the old people were alone by themselves, did Mrs. Graham have the pleasure of relating their worthy son's adven-

tures. The father listened with much interest, and rejoiced to believe that a settlement in life was not far off now from David. "I do rejoice with all my heart that David has found out that lady again," observed the tender-hearted father, after musing for a few moments. "I remember he was much impressed with her at the time; indeed her memory haunted him like a pleasant dream, and again and again he somehow managed to refer to Miss W. in our conversations during those New Year holidays. And I was a good deal struck by a remark which he made, in a rather pathetic tone, as he thought of the lady disappearing from his sight—in all likelihood for ever. 'Is it not a sad thing,' he said, 'to meet with a young lady—one so lovable and intelligent—one who had been to me like a gracious and affectionate sister for the time—time unfortunately far too short! that she should pass away and be seen no more: mingling, as it were, like a drop in the great ocean of humanity never again to be recognized.' And yet, after three years and a half, he has found her again, and his admiration of the lady is not abated one jot or tittle. Is it not wonderful?"

On Saturday forenoon, David went along the Cawdor road for a walk. Ben Katelow was 'glowing in the sun's golden light,' and the region beyond was no longer a vague dreamland to him, but a veritable paradise where he had found his Eve. Country people trooping into market, seeing a gentleman standing gazing steadfastly towards the hills, would lift their eyes, too, in the same direction to mark if any unwonted phenomenon were engaging his attention, but perceiving nothing unusual, hasted on, probably muttering to themselves, "the man is crazy, or dreaming."

He was very glad he had not another night to wait before setting off for that beloved Mecca of his heart; he had only his dinner to take, then—hurrah for the highlands! To give him a proper appetite for dinner, as well as for sentimental reasons, he must walk as far as The Haws. He could not really hope to prosper in his love suit unless he paid his regards to the dear old farm—peeping in, of course, at the old smiddy door; but, indeed, every smiddy was now an object of tender and romantic interest. No need to narrate the thoughts and feelings which stirred his heart as he moved slowly along, casting his eyes on all the familiar scenes, with ever and anon a fond glance towards Ben

Katelow. He was brimful of hope and unalloyed happiness. So joyous was he during that enchanting walk, he never for a moment entertained this saddening thought:

> Never morning wore to evening,
> But some heart did break.

He had yet to learn that a telegram had arrived for him. When it came his folks at home wondered much what it could be about, and were considerably exercised as to whether they should hand it to David when he returned, or wait till he had dined. Telegrams came so rarely to that quiet household, and when they did come, each one caused so much excitement, that they could not help deliberating as to the best time for delivering the one addressed to David. They had reason to suspect that the message was from Mercer & Co., on some urgent business, probably necessitating David's immediate return to Glasgow; if so, it would be most vexing, for they knew his whole heart was bent upon returning to Rathie in the afternoon. So they decided not to destroy his appetite, and thus far counteract any evil tidings. In the circumstances, Mercer & Co. had no right to assume that a telegram would find Mr. Graham in Lochdale, so that a delay of half-an-hour or so in handing him the message was neither here nor there.

Accordingly he enjoyed his dinner in happy ignorance of what awaited him. The meal over, his father did not deliver the telegram all at once; he saw that David was in high spirits, and that a sudden and violent reaction would not be good for him. So in his quiet characteristic style he tried to moderate his son's exuberant hopes of enjoyment—winding up his paternal homily with—"There's many a slip between the cup and the lip." Thus prepared, the message was put into his hand, not with the solemn air as if it contained a matter of life and death, but rather as if forgotten: "Oh, by-the-by, David, there's a telegram lying in the shop for you: I hope it won't interfere in any way with your plans."

David's countenance fell; an expression of anxiety and pain passed over it while he read as follows:—

"*Manager of Edinburgh business taken ill. You will require to fill his place. If at all possible return on Monday morning for instructions.*"

Bringlow (the junior partner of Mercer & Co.) was the sender. Graham feared that before breaking the envelope. He knew that

Bringlow would gladly spoil his holiday if he could. He augured nothing good from the cold-hearted sinister way Bringlow received his reminder that he was leaving for his three weeks' holiday; still, so long as his friend, Mr. Barnhill, was a partner, he did not think that Bringlow would venture to injure him seriously. What was to be done? Would he obey the summons? Oh, it was a thousand pities he had come down to Lochdale yesterday—that he had not at least waited over Sunday, so that he might have conscientiously said he did not receive the telegram in time to return on Monday morning. His next move in the game of life was a most crucial and vital one—so it seemed to him; it was, shall he run the risk of losing a good situation—*a la* all the world for love, and the world well lost; or do the duty which liest nearest him, and trust the consequences. He was angry—terribly angry at Bringlow—and not in a proper mood for judging wisely. He had slipt into the backshop after perusing the telegram, not wishing to shew his troubled visage to any chance customer. His father, too, had quietly followed him as if feeling that his presence was needed to allay the rising storm.

"Low blackguard!" cried David passionately, tossing the telegram contemptuously from him.

The meek and gentle father looked at his son with feelings of surprise and tender pity: surprise, because during all the nine or ten years David had been away from home, he had never seen even so much as his countenance ruffled during his frequent visits; he was always so pleasant—so happy and desirous to make every one else happy—tender pity, because he loved his first-born fondly, and was grieved to the heart to see him so moved, knowing well that it must be something very serious and aggravating that could so vex him.

Shutting the door softly, the father sat down beside his son to try and soothe him. He looked at him sympathisingly a few moments without uttering a word, and was cheered to see his features gradually becoming softer and brighter—looking as if paternal counsel would not be lost upon him. "I hope, David, you will see it to be your duty to obey your master!" he began in a most persuasive tone. "Hard as it no doubt is in this case, I am sure you will find that obedience is the wisest policy—yes, just let us answer the telegram at once" (rising to go for a telegraphic form), "and then, if you like, you can relieve yourself of your bad blood."

"My dear father, I have always tried to be obedient, but I am not at all sure that it is necessary for me to comply with this imperious request, because I know there are half-a-dozen—three or four at least in the warehouse—any one of whom is well enough qualified to go to Edinburgh. That is what troubles me most. Why should that mean, malicious fellow, Bringlow, pester me during my well-earned holiday?"

"Well, David, I grant you may be right so far, but remember it is not wise—it is not right—to argue in such a matter. You think there are others equally qualified to go to Edinburgh, but seemingly it is not your master's opinion; at anyrate, he is acting as if he thought otherwise, and you are clearly bound to yield to his authority."

"If you knew all the circumstances, father, you would better appreciate my feelings; you would understand why I hesitate to be kicked about by that man, Bringlow—contemptible earthworm that he is!"

"No doubt, no doubt, David. Well we can talk it over again: meantime you will kindly please me by writing an answer. Robert will despatch the telegram, and then your mind will be so far at ease. Believe me, you won't regret doing so."

Then placing a telegraphic form before his son, David, without further parley, but still agitated, wrote as follows:—

"*Telegram just received. As requested, will return to Glasgow on Monday morning by first train.*"

"Now you will breathe more freely, David, and I am well pleased you have taken my advice."

"Well, you know, I couldn't bear to do anything that would give pain to you; indeed, rather than do so, I never told you before how this man Bringlow annoys me. Pardon me for troubling you about him just now, but I feel impelled to take your further advice and relieve myself of some bad blood. The fact is, I believe Bringlow is trying to pick a quarrel with me (there being no love lost between us), so as to have some excuse to give to Mr. Barnhill for dismissing me. My dear father, you have always—I may say—been your own master: you know nothing of the indignities which a servant has to suffer. I have always tried to do my duty faithfully—to be obedient, respectful, and even humbly deferential towards all my employers; but I must say it goes bitterly against the grain to be deferential towards Thomas Bringlow—he is such

a low, sneaking coward: nevertheless, even towards him I have never forgotten that he is one of my masters. I used to get along with him very well, but somehow he seems to have taken offence at me; and he is one of those mean, despicable creatures who will never forgive what they construe as an offence against themselves. You have no idea of the man. For instance: there are fellows in the warehouse — worthless fellows, morally considered — whose leisure time is spent chiefly in billiard-rooms, music-halls, or the public-house: eye-servants every one of them, and yet these men contrive somehow to be favourites of Bringlow. And what do they do, think you, to gain their master's esteem? Oh, they seem terribly busy or frightened whenever he comes in sight. When he approaches they are most deferential—disgracefully deferential, I would say—and each one is off like a shot to obey his slightest behest. To a weak mind all that is very flattering. But how do these same fellows behave behind his back? Talk of their master disrespectfully—as Tam, or T. B., and often mimic his peculiar ways."

Here some one knocked gently at the door, and Robert popped in his head. "Father, Andrew Thomson wishes to see you for a minute." Andrew was the beadle of the church, and had come to speak to elder Graham about a session meeting to be held on the morrow.

During his father's absence David had time to collect his thoughts, if that were needed, which was not the case: for Bringlow's doings had, unhappily, been pressed upon his attention too frequently, so that his mind was made up long ago regarding the course of action which he intended to pursue in the warehouse—at least so long as Mr. Barnhill was a partner.

He rather began to consider what sort of letter he should write to Miss Webster, explaining his inability to return to Rathie as promised. But he had not proceeded beyond the first sentence when his father joined him again. Before resuming his tirade against Bringlow, he asked if the post for Rathie had left; if not, he would like to send off a few lines at once. He was told that the postman had gone—even before the telegram had arrived. The news was not displeasing; he would have all the more leisure to pen his projected epistle.

After getting out some more of his bad blood, his father was making some consolatory remarks when again called to the front shop. David thought he had better clear out: he was interfering

with business. So he went up to his bedroom, where he would have peace and quietness to write to Miss Webster.

It was a very pleasing as well as a consoling duty: for surely writing to a lady is the next best thing to speaking to her. Graham was a neat, pretty writer, and an elegant missive from him to a lady of Miss Webster's taste and culture might prove a barbed arrow shot by Cupid. But how shall he begin? how shall he address her? in particular, what is to be the invocation clause? as Mr. Marchmont would say. The most natural form seemed to be, Dear Miss Webster! How the word dear in its present conjunction thrilled him as perhaps it had never done before! His hand actually trembled when he began to write. Pausing for a moment or two, and again considering how very friendly the lady had been with him, why not boldly begin, My dear Miss Webster? Oh! what a happy mortal he would be if he had only the right to use the possessive pronoun in its full significance! There was Jonathan Weathercock addressing as "My dear Miss W." a lady to whom he had never spoken—although he greatly admired her. But that was a poetical license which would not do in this case—not in the first letter at anyrate. How delightfully perplexing! With Miss Webster's sweetly smiling face so vividly in his mind's eye, what a luxury to run up the scale of endearments—from dear Miss Webster up to my own darling Mary! as if she were listening with downcast eyes and modest grace to every honeyed syllable he was uttering!

But he must really begin his letter—to draft it at least. After a good deal of weighing of thoughts, balancing of phrases, and choosing of words (for, of course, he must be doubly careful in writing to a school-mistress), he eventually produced a scroll of which the following is a fair copy:

LOCHDALE,
Saturday, 20th July, 18—

DEAR MISS WEBSTER,

The enclosed Telegram reached me to-day—too late to write you by the first post.

I cannot tell you how extremely sorry and vexed I am at being thus prevented returning to Rathie this afternoon, but have little doubt you will consider the Telegram a sufficient apology for not coming. It is most unfortunate, for I must confess I was looking forward to my return with unbounded delight. It is a bitter disappointment: moreover, this business order in the middle of my holidays troubles me in more ways

than I care to write about. But there is no alternative: duty must be attended to before pleasure.

I shall, however, indulge the hope of seeing you again at Linnburn before your holidays are over. Perhaps the manager, whose place I am to fill, may be soon better, and again—hurrah! I shall be a bird of freedom. I know well whither I should like to fly; indeed, if I had only the wings of a dove I would not resort to this method of making my apology. And what a world of anxiety and speculation would thus be saved. As a lover of song—nay, simply as a man of feeling, I cannot help saying at this crisis—

"My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here!"

I beg to offer you all my most sincere thanks for the great kindness shewn to me during my visits to charming Linnburn, visits which I shall cherish as the happiest and most romantic of all my golden memories.

With kindest regards to yourself and all your beloved home circle,

Believe me to remain,

Yours very sincerely,

DAVID GRAHAM.

P.S.—On second thoughts, I send only a copy of the Telegram, as it has not yet been confirmed, and it may be advisable for me to have the original, in case of any mistake.

D. G.

Miss MARY HELEN WEBSTER,
Linnburn, RATHIE,
By REDMUIR.

After dispatching this letter Graham felt as if the sting were taken out of his disappointment. Besides conveying an apology to Miss Webster, he fondly hoped the tone, and even the language of the epistle, would convey the impression that he cherished a special regard for her; and, if right in believing this regard to be mutual, she would certainly keep the field clear until his return. He need not, therefore, unduly worry himself about any advantage to be taken by his rivals, who had the supreme felicity of being near his adorable.

And in the evening, after listening to his father's wise and loving counsel—counsel inspired by a true heart and illumined by a long Christian experience—he was fully persuaded that the Sovereign Disposer of all events had a gracious purpose to fulfil in separating once more for a time two kindred souls after having kindly and most unexpectedly brought them together again after a lapse of three years and a half. Mysterious and inscrutable are His ways to us poor human mortals; for we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. Our hero was convinced that the deepest

wisdom lay in patiently, humbly, and even cheerfully following the cloud step by step, not desiring to look beyond it, but hoping and believing that before long it would again lead him to the glen flowing with milk and honey—to him the veritable Land of Promise.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Then in the Bass's dungeons strong
Was chanted Babel's captive song,
And kissed their bonds those sterner few
Whom threats nor torture could subdue."—*Anon.*

"I said Tantallon's dizzy steep
Hung o'er the margin of the deep."
Sir Walter Scott—Marmion.

At five o'clock on Monday morning, when David Graham rose to prepare for his journey to Glasgow, the access of religious joy of the previous day, which bestrewed the path of duty with flowers, had cooled down, just as the rosy hues of yestereve had changed to the cold, misty grey of the morning. Face to face with the stern reality of again resuming business, he felt afresh how hard it is to bid farewell to love: fortunately his sense of duty did not depend upon the ebb and flow of his blood, so that his resolution to proceed wavered not for an instant.

He was well aware that of two who love the one who remains is more to be pitied than the one who departs; and he inwardly sympathised with Miss Webster, for he could not help believing that his non-return to Linnburn would disturb her peace of mind. He hoped, however, the arrival of his letter would restore her equanimity.

On his arrival in Glasgow he went straight to the warehouse, and, with as good grace as possible, duly presented himself before Mr. Bringlow as your most obedient servant. Bringlow seemed a little surprised when he beheld the victim of his malignancy standing dutifully before him, and grinned and chuckled as if he quite enjoyed witnessing the evidence of his delegated power. Graham bore the insult with a Christian meekness worthy of his father, waited quietly for his orders, and then hastened to obey them with as much seeming respect towards his undeserving chief as he could force himself to assume.

Graham had a special liking for going to Edinburgh. So much did he admire the "modern Athens," no sooner was he seated in the railway carriage than the river of his thoughts ran towards Scotia's darling seat with such force as nearly to make him forget Linnburn. Thinking of Edinburgh conjured up the great Sir Walter, who sang so eloquently of the "Queen of the North—mine own romantic town;" and as these glowing terms were in Marmion, in which a namesake of his chum, Marchmont, figured in scarlet coat and blue vest, with a banner depending from his trumpet, as one of the heralds and pursuivants attending the Lord Lyon King-at-Arms, a pleasant train of association was opened up.

Now he was hurrying to the poet's birthplace, the "Empress of the North," and historic memories were crowding upon him, affording a deep solace in his great disappointment. Oh, how grateful he felt for the stores of knowledge he had been able to lay up! Ardent admirer though he was of the fair sex, he was truly thankful that his only books had not been woman's looks. But he was delighted at the prospect of gazing once more on the Edinburgh ladies, so widely famed for their grace and beauty; to see whom promenading on a sunny afternoon in Princes Street—the Madeira of the city—is a sight never to be forgotten. Unfortunately it was July, and the elite would be all out of town: for, like the belles of the western metropolis, the fair Athenians "danced all winter and dooked all summer." Happy thought!—he would go to the east coast and behold them flirting and disporting themselves in their showy costumes by the seashore. Pretty well acquainted with the watering-places on the Clyde, he would now like to have a peep at some of those on the east coast. Indeed he had long cherished the wish to make a pilgrimage to North Berwick. An enthusiastic admirer of Marmion, how could he fail to be imbued with an eager desire to gaze on Tantallon Castle? a lover of song, what more natural than a longing to behold the Berwick Law? over against which the boat was rocking while the love-sick swain was drinking out of a silver tassie a service to his bonnie lassie; a poet of the Covenanters! his heart burned with emotion at the thought that while at Tantallon Castle he could feast his eyes on the Bass rock —the amazing Bass!—at one time the Bastile of Scotland. Happily, too, for seeing the ladies, North Berwick was the most fashionable summer resort. Well, he hoped to have that pleasure on the afternoon of his first Saturday in Edinburgh.

Mercer & Co.'s business in Edinburgh was only a retail shop which they had taken over from a bankrupt (they being the chief creditors) with the view of realizing the stock to the best advantage; but as the shop turned out a paying concern under their own management, they were still keeping it on. The manager was a Mr. Ferret, who had been transferred from the Glasgow warehouse, where, of course, Graham knew him very well. Ferret was one of Bringlow's favourites, and Graham did not like him at all, being disgusted with his unblushing obsequiousness. This much, however, may be said of Ferret, that while he sacrificed much of his manhood (if he had any?), he was free from the heinous vices which disgraced some of the other favourites. He was one of those men to whom business seems everything: so intent was he on pushing the trade that he never dreamed of taking a holiday unless absolutely compelled by the state of his health to do so; and, being a careful man, he had not till now broken down, notwithstanding many years assiduous attention to business.

Graham knew Ferret was still in the shop, and he was not a little anxious to see him, so as to form some idea how long he would have to occupy his place. Arrived at the shop, a short interview explained everything. Bringlow had been through lately, and being in a generous mood, suggested to Mr. Ferret that he should really take a few days at Portobello, along with his wife and family; trade was quiet, and it would be so easy to send a man from Glasgow to look after the business in his absence. After seeing and hearing Ferret, Graham was more than ever satisfied that, in urging the Edinburgh man to take a holiday, Bringlow did so from the double motive of giving pleasure to one, and pique to another—namely himself. However, he was not to give way to melancholy; matters might have been much worse: as it was, the dark cloud was already turning its silver lining. "In what way?" you will ask. Because it was arranged that Ferret would come into town to attend the shop on Saturday—he could not bear to be absent on Saturday—and he was sure four or five days at Portobello would set him up, and bring back the colour to his face, which Bringlow said was too pale for him to be healthy. Graham, of course, did not try to dissuade him from his laudable intention of coming up to town on Saturday. Not likely. It fitted in too well with his darling project of going to North Berwick.

To enhance the pleasure of the trip he bought a "Guide Book to North Berwick, and its Environs," which he perused diligently in the evenings. Moreover, there was a good library in the lodgings, which enabled him to refresh his memory with the historical facts bearing upon the Bass Rock and Tantallon Castle; so that by the end of the week he was well primed with information.

At a quarter past two on Saturday afternoon, he started for North Berwick, and was hopeful of accomplishing all his plans, and returning to Edinburgh in the evening. In case, however, anything unforeseen should occur, he left word that he might not be back till Monday morning. He was glad he took this precaution. Before going to North Berwick, he intended leaving the train at Drem Junction, and then walking to Dirleton to look at the "loveliest village of the plain," according to the Guide book; but somehow he did not hear the porter calling out the name, and he was hurled on to the terminus. He was sorry at missing Dirleton, for he did not well see how he could do justice to Tantallon Castle and the Bass Rock, and also the pretty village the same afternoon. This circumstance, combined with the charming weather, he thought quite sufficient temptation to stay over the Sunday. It was not every day he was on such classic ground.

As no time was to be lost he set off at once for Tantallon. On the way he thought of his friends at Linnburn. His poem on the Battle of Drumclog had drawn from Miss Webster such a cordial expression of interest in the struggles of the Covenanters, it would be no small pleasure to tell her all about the famous Bass.

He did not linger long in North Berwick—so eager was he to get to his destination. Passing through the town, he was cheered by the sight of some pretty ladies, whose smiling faces told of healthy exposure to the sun and the breezes. And just on the outskirts that sunny afternoon—such is life! quite another picture presented itself, being a group of rustics returning from a funeral. This solemn spectacle seemed altogether out of place, on a fine summer day, in a neighbourhood which Graham expected to find all alive with health and gaiety, with nothing to remind him that our bowers of love and bliss are often entertwined with cypress. And yet these men in sables were eloquently suggestive of the sad times of persecution, when ministers of the Gospel had to march along that same road as prisoners to the Bass.

The first glimpse of the Bass rock gave a more cheerful turn to Graham's thoughts. The melody of "Gae bring to me a pint o' wine" rose instinctively to his lips, while his eyes were glancing towards the ocean, trying to fix at what spot the boat was rocking at the moment of farewell.

No mention being made in the Guide Book about admittance to Tantallon Castle, and having caught a glimpse of the top of the ruins, he went straight on without asking for the key at the adjoining farm-house, which he ought to have done. Fortunately, it so happened there was a party already in possession, as was abundantly evident when he drew near the outer gate, which was open, and through it streamed the lively sounds of dance music and merry voices.

On passing through the buildings, he beheld on the green sward of the inner court, open to the sea and in full view of the Bass, a gay company of young ladies and gentlemen in the full swing of a country dance to the inspiriting strains of a flute and fiddle. What was to be done? Was he to consider himself an intruder and retire? He answered the question by quietly moving about among the ruins—guide book in hand. While scaling the stairs he was out of sight of the party, but they no doubt saw him afterwards carefully examining the colossal ruins, and even measuring with his walking stick the thickness of the walls, which at some points were exactly twice the length of it. And as ever and anon, he consulted the guide book and made pencil jottings, he would be looked upon as no common observer; an impression which would be deepened when the solitary tourist planted himself on the wall projecting into the sea, and appeared to be earnestly making a sketch of the ruined castle.

While so engaged, a gentleman of the pic-nic party, after a short parley with the others in the interval of the dance, to Graham's surprise, left the company and made straight for him. What could be his mission? He was not kept long in suspense. The commissioner begged to be excused for troubling him, but as they were short of gentlemen they would be very pleased if he would come and have a dance with them, if he were not particularly engaged otherwise. Graham thanked him for the very kind invitation, and said he would be very glad indeed to have a dance, if quite sure the presence of a stranger would not restrain their hilarity. Being assured heartily that his addition to the

company would increase the fun, as in dancing the more the merrier, provided the sexes were equal, he at once accompanied the gentleman. He did so gladly, and his joy was much heightened before he had been many minutes among them: for, wonderful to relate, it turned out they were not all strangers to him—he knew at least one lady!

Before being introduced to the general company, he was led towards the commissariat; the most conspicuous objects there being half-empty strawberry baskets, flanked by lemonade and ginger beer bottles, and a little apart from these was a case containing bottles of a larger growth and darker hue, supposed to hold liquor of a greater potency, doubtless intended for the bearded portion of the party. As Graham emphatically belonged to that class, the master of ceremonies, with a nod towards the dark bottles, asked him what he would have: adding, "we have some fine claret cup, perhaps you would prefer a glass of it this warm day?"

He chose the claret cup and found it delicious. After a few sandwiches and strawberries, well washed down by the choice nectar, he was fortified for approaching the company of some sixteen or eighteen ladies and gentlemen, who were conversing in groups, and seemingly waiting for the stranger before resuming the dance. In one of these groups stood a young lady whose back was towards Graham as he advanced. Something in her form and air struck him forcibly as resembling that of a young lady he had met the other week, and her name was just rising to his lips when she turned slowly round, and looked at the newly arrived guest with a demure smile, blended with certainty and doubt.

"Miss Forman!" exclaimed Graham suddenly; and while the two shook hands, some of the ladies blushed, partly in sympathy with Miss Forman, and partly out of admiration for her handsome friend.

The introductions being over—"On with the dance, let joy be unconfined," cried an enthusiastic damsel, whose emotion had been pent up too long, and who was evidently eager to receive some attention from the new comer, while the flute and fiddle were flinging out their merry music.

"Let us have 'Triumph' now," said the master of ceremonies, and the couples forthwith arranged themselves: Graham quietly leading Miss Forman to the foot of the dance, so anxious was he

to learn the latest news from Glen Rhymen; in particular, whether she had seen Miss Webster before leaving, and if they all went to the church last Sunday to hear Paul Stephen. It was indeed glad tidings to be told that, while they were much disappointed that he did not appear, as fully expected, they, the ladies, both indulged the hope after his letter came, that somehow he might be able to be present at the Flower Show and the Games. And how Miss Webster envied her going to North Berwick, for who could tell but that she might come across Mr. Graham in her rambles. Miss Forman did not tell him that his non-return to Rathie, and his departure for Edinburgh, decided her to accept the invitation to visit friends at their summer quarters in North Berwick. What about that? Well, to be sure, it would be flattering to be told that so nice a girl would have remained at home for his sake. But, oh! nothing to the joy now derived from the special interest and attachment, which her ingenuous confession had clearly shown, her friend, Miss Webster, had manifested towards him: what inexpressible bliss filled his bosom at the mention of her dear name—such rapturous hope was inspired by the few, simple, artless words of the fair creature by his side. He longed to embrace her! For such an access of ineffable joy, was it not worth while to have suffered all the bitter disappointments? Oh, the beauty of the sea to him at that exquisite moment—the deep blue sea, sparkling in sunlight! Oh, the freshness of the green turf, so firm and elastic, on which he stood with impatient feet—so overflowing with happiness, and so keen to clasp his partner round the waist—unspeakable privilege of the dancer! and whirl her through the pousetting with all the passion of a lover.

The dancers were not easily tired. How could they—under such exhilarating influences as the cooling, strong sea breezes, and the rich old emerald turf, on which the feet rebounded as if it were india-rubber? At length, after endless rounds of "Triumph," they all squatted down on the green sward in full view of the Bass. Graham was in the centre of one group, among whom were Miss Brown and her brother—two members of the family Miss Forman was visiting. Naturally, the talk fell on the Bass rock, now brilliantly lighted by the westering sun. What a contrast that sweet idyllic picture to the dark and stormy times of the Covenanters! But this was not the time to give utterance to gloomy thoughts, and Graham chose rather to refer to the sunnier and more playful

facts connected with the Bass; and this he was encouraged to do by Mr. Brown, an intelligent-looking young fellow, who remarked that he had seen Mr. Graham consulting his guide-book, and would like to know something of its contents. Mr. Brown was promptly and eagerly seconded by the ladies, Miss Forman being one of them. The group were listening with deep interest when the Master of Ceremonies came bustling about, crying "Feet! feet! ladies and gentlemen; you know we have two or three dances yet—come away! come away!"—cracking his finger and thumb by way of emphasis: "it won't do to sit long on the grass while we are heated."

Very pleasant though it was to rest on the velvet turf, they recognized the wisdom of the M.C. and sprang to their feet; knowing that when the dance programme was finished they were to go to the inn at Canty Bay for tea; after which, if the water proved smooth enough, they were to have a sail to the Bass.

Flute and fiddle were forthwith sounded. With immense spirit the dancers went through the "Haymakers," and very soon restored the circulation to its natural briskness—and a trifle more.

When they rested again the groups were pretty much as before; and as the sea, and the rock, with the solan geese ever flying about it, were constantly before their eyes, a renewal of their former talk was inevitable. And so Mr. Graham, as the guide-book man, was called upon to give them a few more interesting facts.

Again the M.C., looking his watch, intimated that they would require to change their camp, as it wanted just about five minutes to tea-time. Our hero was kindly invited to tea along with them in the hotel at Canty Bay, a few minutes' walk in the direction of North Berwick, where they would be delighted to hear from him more about the Bass rock and the castle.

When all were seated at the table, the picture was a most charming one. Naturally, Graham, Miss Forman, and the Browns gravitated towards each other; and no doubt the rest of them were grouped according to their affinities or friendly relations. They were all very merry, glowing with health and happy excitement.

After tea, Mr. Butler (the M.C.) withdrew to consult about being rowed over to the Bass; returning soon with the opinion that it would be injudicious to ferry across—there was too great a swell on the water. So they agreed to sit still for a while, and have a song or two instead.

A pause ensued—no one seemed inclined to begin. After a

few minutes of playful banter, and one after another had been asked to favour the company without success, Mr. Butler begged Mr. Graham if he would kindly open the concert. "It is not very courteous," he said, "to ask our guest to sing first, but we have found your company so entertaining, Mr. Graham, that we consider you one of ourselves, and you will excuse us for not treating you as a stranger."

Cries of "Hear, hear; yes, yes; Mr. Graham will give us a song."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your compliment. I am sure, ladies and gentlemen, after the very kind way you have treated me, it would be very ungrateful on my part not to do what I can to please you. Well, I have lately been humming a song, which I think would be very suitable on this occasion, and I shall try it." Loud applause. "The song is Burns's famous one—'Gae bring to me a pint o' wine,'" more applause. "Under the shadow of the Berwick Law," pointing towards it, "you will agree with me that the lyric is highly appropriate." Chorus of "yes, yes, certainly."

This graceful little speech made the company feel very easy about the forthcoming song, and all composed themselves to listen with eager curiosity.

Having a fine, robust tenor voice, and being in splendid form, Graham sang with such dramatic energy and skill that quite electrified the company: the expression on every face was one of rapturous delight, sustained till the song was ended, when the pent up enthusiasm broke forth in acclamation.

This was most gratifying to the minstrel, and he felt so thankful he had been able to do something in return for the generous hospitality of his new friends. But sweeter far to him than the tumultuous cheering, was the gentle voice of Miss Forman, when she whispered in his ear, "You have done splendid, Mr. Graham." Only she of all those present could guess why the singer threw so much tenderness into the line—"'Tis leaving thee, my bonnie Mary." How glad he felt that one of the hearers, a gracious and generous lady, would bear a faithful report to his mistress dear—for so he loved to regard the maid of Linnburn. She had not yet heard him sing, and as she was passionately fond of music, it could not fail to deepen her interest in him and favour his suit, when she learns how well he acquitted himself at Tantallon Castle and Canty Bay.

When the party broke up, the Browns, knowing that Mr. Graham was anxious to see Dirleton, kindly volunteered to go thither to church with him on the morrow. They would have gladly, also, offered him a bed, but their house was full to the door. He thanked them, said good night, and went direct to the hotel which they recommended; where he found very comfortable quarters indeed, notwithstanding the extra busy season.

(To be continued.)