



LEAVING THE MANSE.

THE
ORPHANS OF GLENULVA:

A Story of Scottish Life.

Thos.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
'THE PIOUS BROTHERS,' 'THE EVERLASTING
KINGDOM,' ETC.

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM OLIPHANT AND CO.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

MDCCCLXII.

250. 9. 30.

PREFACE.

THERE is much difference of opinion, even among truly Christian people, as to the propriety of mingling Fiction with Fact, in books avowedly designed to promote the best interests of the reader ; and yet, with the very highest model before our eyes, the problem should be easy of solution : for, without dwelling on the Old Testament Scriptures, where, in the childhood of the Church, picture teaching is so largely used, did not our divine Master, Jesus Christ, inculcate the very highest lessons of spiritual wisdom, by means of parables—stories

of ideal persons, or illustrations drawn from surrounding objects ?


Nor was 'the very chiefest' of our Lord's Apostles, ashamed to 'become all things to all men,' that He might 'save some ;'¹ and never surely was it more warrantable, to follow His example in this respect than at the present time, when works of fiction, for which the youthful mind will crave, are so largely made the vehicle not only of moral pollution, but of insidiously embuing the mind with erroneous views, on the most vital doctrines of the Christian religion ; and this often in so attractive a form, that the poison may have done its deadly work, ere its presence was suspected. Supposing that in a medical treatise, written avowedly for the use of students, unsound and dangerous theories were advanced, the evil would require to be met ; but who would think of doing so in the pages of an agricultural journal, or a magazine for the promotion of the fine arts, which the

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 22.

parties endangered would never read? The error must be met where it takes its rise; and thus the writer has been led, to overcome any hesitation she may ever have felt, as to the propriety of offering to the public a little book, in which the characters and incidents are to a large extent real, although linked together and illustrated by the aid of fiction; and this she does, with the fervent prayer that He in whose hands the feeblest agency may become mighty, would condescend to use it for His own glory, and the good of those for whose benefit it is chiefly designed—the youthful members of the higher and middle classes.

THE ORPHANS OF GLENULVA.

CHAPTER I.

 STILL and sultry day in the month of August had been closed by one of those gorgeous but lurid sunsets which betoken a thunder-storm ; and the pastor's family, after uniting in the evening prayer, had assembled around the supper-table, in the pleasant parlour of Glenulva Manse.

Mr Gray was still in the vigour of life ; and, although a student and a scholar, was no pedant ; but, to a heart overflowing with Christian benevolence, he added a bright and joyous temperament, which commended the Gospel he so faithfully preached, and gave him ready access to the human heart.

Of late, however, a shade of sadness seemed to

have fallen upon his spirit, which might be explained by the frequent anxious gaze, that rested on the sweet though faded countenance of his wife, where the traces of wasting disease were but too legible.

Deeply sharing in the same anxiety, Ellen's quick-sighted affection, caught the expression of her father's eye; and a tear, that would not be repressed, gathered in her own. But there was one of the little family group, whose thoughts seemed wandering to other scenes,—a noble-looking youth in his twentieth year—the pastor's only son.

Walter and Ellen Gray had spent their earlier years, in the cheerful retirement of the manse; playmates and fellow-students, under the watchful care of their gifted father, and gentle Christian mother; who had herself received a liberal education, and relinquished the society of the gay and wealthy, to share the humble fortunes of him, who had early won her affections.

Until Walter had entered his eighteenth, and Ellen her sixteenth year, no cloud had obscured the brightness of their peaceful dwelling; but Walter having made choice of the medical pro-

fession, it became necessary that for some years, a large proportion of his time should be spent in Edinburgh ; whither, after many fervent prayers and affectionate counsels, he proceeded at the commencement of the winter University term, accompanied by his father.

Leaving the parental roof for the first time, and parting from all he most fondly loved, the heart of the affectionate youth was sorely wrung ; but he struggled hard to play the man, and repress the rising sob. Hitherto his conduct, as well as his progress in study, had been all that fond parents could desire ; but he was only a child of promise, not of grace, and there were elements of character which caused the deepest anxiety.

Conscious that he possessed great talents, he was fearless and self-reliant ; yet watchful affection could discern how keenly alive he was to ridicule ; and how facile his open, ardent temperament might render him, to skilfully-applied flattery. Nor had he been long absent from home, until the tone of his letters evinced a change in his habits of thought. Ellen's warm-hearted effusions, filled with reminiscences of

former days, received constrained although affectionate replies; and it was manifest that the common ground between them was becoming more and more circumscribed.

Had not Walter's intercourse with his father, been marked by the same constraint, this might not have caused much anxiety; seeing that new studies and varied society, would naturally foster mental development, and give rise to tastes and pursuits, in which an artless girl, however intelligent and well instructed, could scarcely be expected to share; but the change was evidently a pervading one.

For the second time Walter had returned during the summer holidays, which had now almost come to a close; and on each occasion he was the bearer of well-earned honours. But the buoyant happiness of early days was gone: he was often restless or moody; and although gleams of fond affection would occasionally burst forth, his conduct towards those who loved him so well was often reserved and capricious, rendering it evident that home had lost its attraction.

And whence this melancholy change? Alas!

Walter Gray had fallen among evil associates, whose example had shed a blighting influence over the bright hopes of his boyhood. One brilliant youth especially, who had gained a great ascendancy over him, by flattering his intellectual vanity, had stigmatized the Christian religion as only fitted for women or cowards; and succeeded in making him ashamed of his father's God. Thus he was led into scenes which his early impressions prevented his enjoying, and which were only entered to prove that he had escaped from leading strings. With such feelings and reminiscences pent up within his mind—for Walter never gave them utterance at the manse—the delight of social intercourse was at an end, and he longed for the time when he should again escape from a home, where even the tender solicitude of which he was the object increased his wretchedness. Alas! could he have anticipated the circumstances under which he was next to leave the home of his childhood, how precious would every moment of the present have been!

On the evening when our narrative opens, Mrs Gray's quick-sighted affection soon marked

the abstraction of Walter, and the shadow that had fallen on her husband and daughter; and with the ready tact of watchful love rallied her own spirits, and, calling in the aid of her naturally playful fancy, appeared so bright and cheerful, that anxious care was for the time forgotten; and even Walter seemed to be the light-hearted affectionate youth of former days.

But the sound of a horse's feet, followed by a loud and hurried knocking at the house door, startled the party, suddenly arresting the flow of pleasant converse; and a servant entering, announced a messenger from a distant cottage, whose solitary inmate had hitherto resisted all Mr Gray's efforts to obtain access to his heart, or even to his comfortless home. Now struck down by sudden and fatal illness, the arrows of conviction and remorse were rankling in his very soul, and in anguish of spirit he implored the presence of the pastor, whose visits he had formerly despised.

Without a moment's delay, Mr Gray rose to prepare for accompanying the messenger; although the night had become dark and threaten-

ing, while thunder growled in the distance, and a few heavy drops of rain were falling.

Mrs Gray and Ellen spoke not, but exchanged glances of fear and anxiety ; while the impetuous Walter, at once starting to his feet, exclaimed—

‘ Surely, sir, at this hour, and in the prospect of a thunder-storm, you will not endanger your health, and cause anxiety to my mother and Ellen, for the sake of an unworthy fellow, who despised and insulted you while in health, and only desires your presence now, as he would that of a Romish priest, because the craven fear of death is upon him.’

‘ Walter,’ replied the pastor gravely, ‘ whether to the openly wicked, or to those who forget God, death is the king of terrors ; and to the bravest heart, if reason be unclouded, his near approach must ever be appalling, unless he be met as a conquered enemy. With reference to poor Leonard, his previous character only makes me the more anxious to obey the summons ; and do I not profess to be the follower of Him who returned good for evil, and came to seek and save the lost ?’

Mrs Gray and Ellen ventured to inquire whether the visit might not be postponed until the morning ; but the messenger replying that the poor sufferer's agony of mind was great, and his danger imminent, they could not urge delay.

‘Then,’ said Walter, ‘if my father insists on going, he must allow me to accompany him.’

‘Nay, dear boy,’ replied Mr Gray with a cheerful smile ; ‘Leonard’s cottage being two miles distant, I have, to save time, ordered my horse, and shall have the company thither of my worthy friend Andrew Bell. As to my return, Fleetfoot can at once discover when we are homeward bound, and will make short work of it. Your company will make the time pass more cheerfully to your mother and sister ; otherwise’—and an expression of sadness shaded for a moment the pastor’s fine countenance—‘I should have wished you to accompany me.’

Turning to give the parting embrace to his wife and daughter, Mr Gray gently rebuked an expression of sadness and anxiety, that seemed disproportionate to the occasion.

‘Nay, dear ones, look not so woefully ; were

I superstitious, you would send me away with a foreboding of misfortune. I trust I shall soon again be with you; meanwhile, think of Him who for our sakes had "not where to lay His head," and do not magnify a short ride in a rather dark night into a formidable enterprise.'

Arthur Leonard was not a native of Scotland; nor were his history or present means of subsistence, known to the people among whom he had come to reside. Dark in countenance and distant in manner, he had shunned intercourse with his neighbours, and roughly repelled the kindness, that would have prompted them to offer assistance to a stranger, who seemed to have neither wife nor child.

Mr Gray had occasionally met Leonard on the road leading to the nearest town; and, in his visits to the neighbouring cottages, had repeatedly tried to obtain access to his lonely dwelling, but had always been rudely repulsed. The unhappy man had committed a deadly crime, on the fruits of which he now subsisted, and, as a fugitive from justice, coward conscience kept him living in the constant fear of detection, shunning all intercourse with the

world, beyond what was needful for the supply of his wants. But if human law had been thus evaded, he was now arrested by a summons from a higher tribunal.

The inhabitants of the neighbouring cottages had not seen Leonard for two or three days, when Mrs Bell, happening to pass in the evening, distinctly heard groans issuing from his dwelling. She immediately communicated this to her husband, who was still engaged in field labour; and he having consulted with one of his fellow-labourers, they at once proceeded to the cottage, and endeavoured to gain admittance. But no answer, except such sounds as had been heard by Mrs Bell, having been made to their repeated calls, they determined on forcing open the door, when a sad spectacle met their view,—the unhappy man stretched on his comfortless bed in a raging fever!

They were immediately assailed by the agonized cry, 'Water, water! It has begun!' followed by a perfect torrent of language the most appalling. But we shall not dwell on a scene so harrowing to the spectators, who, with Christian kindness, immediately summoned Dr

Allan, a skillful medical practitioner, residing at no great distance ; while two elderly women, either of whom would rather have shrunk from remaining alone with the unhappy sufferer, undertook in the meantime to attend to his wants, and render the aspect of his abode less comfortable.

The doctor at once pronounced the case hopeless ; but his judicious prescriptions alleviated the patient's bodily suffering, although by this means his mental anguish only seemed to burst forth with fresh violence. 'The arrows of the Lord' had entered into his soul, and, amidst dark and unconnected allusions to past crimes, and anticipations of future woe, he implored the presence of the pastor, whose visits he had so often rejected.

In the spirit of his Master did Mr Gray enter the desolate sick chamber, and listen to the confession of crime, now for the first time wrung from the unhappy sufferer's heart, regardless of the presence of two or three neighbours. The pastor did not extenuate the guilt of the dying man, nor pronounce him 'absolved' because of his confession, but implored him even at the

eleventh hour, to cast himself upon the mercy of Him, who invites even the chief of sinners to wash in the blood of atonement and be clean.

Long he spoke with fervid eloquence of the fulness and freeness of Divine grace to all who, confessing and abhorring their transgressions, are willing to accept it; enlarging on the case of the dying malefactor, which stands out in solitary grandeur, that none may despair; but 'a darkness that might be felt' still brooded over the poor sufferer's soul.

Feeling that the language of inspired truth, applied by the Spirit's power, could alone avail in such a case, Mr Gray bent over the dying man, and softly repeated the words, 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;' 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.'

Then, followed by the awe-struck witnesses of the solemn scene, Mr Gray knelt by the bedside, and poured forth such heart-wrung, wrestling supplication, as is felt to be the Spirit's voice, although uttered by human lips; and,

ere long, the solemn stillness that followed, was interrupted by Leonard exclaiming, 'Can there be mercy for such a miserable, hell-deserving wretch as I am? O Lord, remember me, as Thou didst the dying thief!'

Then, pausing a moment, and raising his clasped hands and eyes, he added, 'And, wondrous, wondrous grace! hast Thou not remembered me?'

It was a sudden gleam of light that startled all present; but whether it more resembled the first bright streak on the eastern horizon, the sure harbinger of perfect day, or the flash of the expiring taper, that lights up for a moment the recesses of the sick chamber, soon to be shrouded in deeper darkness, can seldom in such cases be certainly known, except to the Searcher of hearts: for how often, when the sufferer has been unexpectedly restored to the world, has such apparent conversion proved evanescent as the morning cloud or the early dew!

In conversation with Leonard, Mr Gray had learnt that a widowed sister, whose heart he had almost broken, resided in a neighbouring county. She was ignorant of his place of abode, but

would, he thought, gladly come and wait on her brother during his few remaining days on earth ; the rather, that there was reason to hope he had received 'another spirit.' It was therefore resolved that, without delay, her presence should be requested,—the neighbours undertaking to perform in turn the necessary duties, until her arrival ; and the poor exhausted sufferer, perhaps for the first time in his life, expressing gratitude.

It being now considerably past midnight, Mr Gray felt anxious to return to his family, who, he feared, might not retire to rest until his arrival ; but it having thundered violently at intervals, with heavy falls of rain, Andrew Bell wished to see him safely on the way. To this, however, he would by no means consent, feeling that, in the prospect of the next morning's labour, the worthy man greatly needed rest.

As engrossing events, more immediately connected with the principal narrative, will prevent our returning to Arthur Leonard's death-bed, it may be proper to mention here, that, after nearly a week of intense suffering, patiently endured, his eyes were closed by his Christian

sister, with the good hope that he had passed from death unto life.

There was much in the scene he had just quitted to fill the pastor's mind with absorbing thoughts ; and it may be that as he rode the reins were held in a too passive hand. A great part of the homeward way, however, had been safely passed, when a vivid flash of lightning, almost simultaneous with a tremendous peal of thunder, startled Fleetfoot ; who, rearing and plunging, suddenly dashed his rider to the ground, and rushing home frantic with terror, filled the anxiously expectant family with dismay.

Forgetful of everything but agonizing anxiety, Mrs Gray and Ellen would instantly have set forth with Walter in quest of the beloved husband and father ; but, with much presence of mind, he repressed their desire, reminding them that his father could not be far distant, and might on his return need all their tender care. It would therefore, he said, be kinder to remain at home, and have all in readiness for his reception ; despatching, meanwhile, the lad who took charge of the horse in quest of Dr Allan.

Some cottagers who lived near the manse gate

were hastily roused in passing, and soon joined in the anxious search ; nor had they proceeded far, until the insensible form of him they sought met their sorrowful gaze.

At first they feared that life was altogether extinct ; but it proved to be a deathlike fainting fit, chiefly caused by a contusion of the chest, which, in the fall, had been violently precipitated against the ragged stump of a tree, fracturing several ribs, and causing extensive suffusion of blood in the cavity of the chest.

Very tenderly was the unconscious sufferer conveyed to the home whence he had so often issued on errands of love and mercy, now, alas ! suddenly brought to a close ; for ere long the faithful servant was to respond to the summons, ' Rest from thy labours, and come up hither.'

In speechless agony did the mother and daughter receive the party ; but divine strength, and utter forgetfulness of selfish feeling, combined to impart the needed presence of mind. There was no confusion, no loud lamentation, but a deep grief, which, while it blanched the cheek, added activity to the trembling hand.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN fear and anxiety did Dr Allan hasten to obey the summons, that called him to the bed-side of the beloved pastor and friend, from whom he had so lately parted, in health and strength, at the door of Leonard's cottage ; but having succeeded in restoring animation, and ascertaining the extent of the injuries, he shrank from meeting the agonized gaze of the afflicted family, for he had no word of comfort to offer. He felt that the hours of the honoured sufferer were numbered. But although the laboured breathing and contracted brow of the pastor, gave evidence of acute bodily suffering, perfect peace manifestly reigned within ; yet, as his eye rested on the loved ones who stood around his couch, and fixed one long gaze of unutterable affection, on the beloved partner of his life, a momentary expression of anguish passed over

the sufferer's features, and in broken but fond accents, he requested to be left alone with his physician.

The door having closed on the lingering footsteps of his family, Mr Gray beckoned Dr Allan to approach nearer, and grasping his hand, he, in low, earnest tones, interrupted by great difficulty of breathing, gave utterance to the anxious thoughts, that not even the strong faith vouchsafed in the prospect of death, could altogether banish.

‘Allan,’ he said, ‘I know that my earthly warfare is well-nigh accomplished, and that for me, unworthy me, a crown of glory is prepared. Blessed be God, I can also in some measure lay hold of the promise, “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me;” but, dear friend, my poor heart still cleaves to the dust. Walter has not fulfilled my fond hopes; and my gentle Ellen, so young and fair, who will shield her from the rough blasts of adversity? I say not from the assaults of temptation, for I feel confident that already her young heart is given to Him who will keep her from falling. Could I but hope

that my beloved Eliza might be spared to them, even for a few years, what sweet consolation would it give ! I know that a fatal disease has undermined her constitution, and often, poor short-sighted idolater ! have I anticipated the desolation which her loss would cause ; but now, pardon my weakness, and tell me—Is there no hope ?’

For a brief space, strong emotion kept the Doctor silent ; but at length he replied—

‘ Yes, my friend, there is hope,—a hope full of immortality,—although your question may not be answered as my heart would fain dictate. Long has your Eliza lingered, as it were, on the very threshold of the unseen world, often suggesting the thought that your fervent supplications to Him who has the keys of death alone withheld her from entering in. Soon will the days of her suffering be ended ; but when, ere long, you meet in fulness of joy, and begin together the service and the song which throughout eternity shall be ever new, no anxious care for the dear ones left in your Father’s hand will dim the glory of your inheritance.

‘ Believe it, my beloved friend, He who so

often made you a "son of consolation" to others, will in your time of need, sustain you by the richest consolations of His grace; nor even suffer your dear children to want even an earthly friend.

'Walter may not as yet exhibit the fruits of youthful training, quickened by Divine grace, as they are seen in your sweet Ellen; but the child of such early promise, and so many fervent prayers, cannot be lost; while in his sister's character there are, I am persuaded, elements of strength, by means of which she will guide, rather than lean helplessly on him.'

'I thank you, dear Allan,' replied the pastor; 'it was but a passing cloud, and the Sun of Righteousness has dispelled it, by shining into my soul with the bright assurance,—"The promise is to you and to your children;" "to those that are afar off," as well as "to them that are nigh." He who was the guide of my own youth, when early deprived of earthly parents, will be a Father and a Friend to my dear ones. And now the parting from them is the only bitterness of death.'

Mr Gray's family, to whom the brief interval had seemed painfully protracted, were now re-

called, and the bright calm that rested on his noble countenance, in some measure communicated itself to their desolate hearts; enabling them to unite with the Doctor, who, like themselves, endeavoured to 'hope against hope,' in devising and executing every plan which skill and affection could suggest, for the alleviation, if not the removal, of the distressing symptoms under which the cherished sufferer was labouring; but no material relief could be obtained. He was hastening to the land where the sorrows of time shall be forgotten amidst the joys of eternity.

Nearly a week passed in this anxious watchful attendance, in which the mother and daughter were ably assisted by Annie M'Donald, an aged domestic, who had been Mrs Gray's nurse, and accompanied her to the manse, when she entered it a youthful and happy bride, had remained in the family ever since, and was now regarded rather as a maternal friend than a dependant.

But the closing scene at length drew near, and, amidst its desolation, the promise in all its preciousness was fulfilled: his latter end was peace. Fain would the dying pastor have ad-

dressed a few parting words to each of his family, especially to Walter, on whom his eye often rested with anxious affection ; but the difficulty of breathing was great, and for a time a few broken sentences alone were distinguishable. Ere his spirit departed, however, there was a short bright interval, in which, his countenance radiant with holy joy, he spoke in rapturous language of his own glorious prospects, and of his assured hope that the whole family would one day be reunited in the land where there is no parting. To each he addressed a few earnest words, breathing hope and consolation ; then added faintly, ‘ And now, darlings, kiss me, and for the last time say “ Good night.” There shall be no night there !’

The affectionate embrace was bestowed by each, and, closing his eyes, the loved sufferer soon fell into a gentle slumber. The breathing was now calm and regular, but ere long it became feebler and less frequent, at length ceasing so gently, that the exact moment was only marked by the devoted wife, in whom overstrained nature at length gave way, and she sank to the ground in a death-like swoon.

Walter, in whose heart remorse was mingled with deep grief, was thoroughly unmanned, and sobbing convulsively, he clasped the inanimate form of his father; while Ellen's tearless eye wandered from one parent to the other, in the momentary bewilderment of her first overwhelming sorrow. But presently, rallying her thoughts, she exclaimed—'Father, mother! we must not lose you both!' and flew to the assistance of Annie, who, with trembling hands, was applying the needed restoratives to her beloved mistress; and ere long faint symptoms of returning animation were perceptible.

'Wae's me, wae's me!' exclaimed the affectionate nurse; 'it's a widowed heart that's flutterin' in the bosom of my puir bairn, an' but for your sakes I could a'maist wish that her spirit were wi' his, wha for sae mony years has been the very licht o' her e'e; for, oh! it will be a dreary wak'nin'! But the Lord will sustain.'

And the desolate widow was marvellously sustained. Restored to the full consciousness of her bereavement, but anticipating a speedy reunion, personal feeling seemed almost forgotten in her affectionate efforts to soothe the deep

sorrow of her children, one of whom she could cheer and sustain by the hopes and consolations, that had shed a healing influence over her own bleeding heart. But Walter knew no such consolation : within and without, all was darkness and confusion ; love for his mother and sister forming the only sustaining principle, and even that embittered by the consciousness of his utter impotency to afford either help or comfort. We dwell not on the circumstances of the pastor's interment, nor on the feelings of the numerous mourning attendants, to many of whom he had been the messenger of life ; and who needed no invitation to follow his remains to the last resting-place. It is the believer's privilege to stand by the sepulchre of the friend sleeping in Jesus, and appropriate the language first spoken with reference to Him, whom the grave could not retain, and who is the Resurrection and the Life of His people—' He is not here, but is risen.' The precious dust indeed rests in the grave, but it is in the sure hope of a glorious resurrection ; and the emancipated spirit has already entered upon eternal life.

Bereaved hearts *must* bleed, tears of anguish

will be shed ; and He who knows His people's hearts has given the wondrous assurance, 'In all their afflictions He was afflicted !' But why should we seek the living among the dead ? Wherefore should we go 'to the grave to weep there ?'

On the following Sabbath, a solemn and touching discourse was addressed to a large and deeply affected audience, by an endeared friend of the deceased, who chose for his subject the last words spoken by the lamented pastor, 'There shall be no night there.'

Having drawn a vivid picture of the moral and spiritual darkness that has brooded over the earth ever since the introduction of sin, and presented to the eye of faith the true light which alone can irradiate the human heart, the preacher thus concluded :—

'Beloved friends, to you much has been given ; of you, therefore, the more will be required. Your dear and lamented pastor, shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, and, ever ready to spend and be spent in his Master's service, was a living epistle known and read of all men. His sun has gone down

while it was yet day ; and while the light in one beloved household is quenched, you feel as if darkness had overspread your own dwellings. But the Sun of Righteousness ever shines. May His healing and quickening influence visit your hearts ; and may strength and wisdom be given you, to be followers of Him, who through faith and patience now inherits the promises.

Though the way be dark and dreary,
Faith will lend its cheering ray ;
When the heart is faint and weary,
Hope will point to realms of day.

He who trode the path before us,
Bore for man transgression's load ;
And beams of mercy shedding o'er us,
Now He pleads our cause with God.

O ! then, wherefore doubting, fearing,
Should we linger by the way ?
Love divine, with promise cheering,
Beckons from the world away.

Friends in Jesus gone before us,
Leave their way-marks 'midst the gloom ;
Or, like a bright cloud hov'ring o'er us,
Tell of joys beyond the tomb.

CHAPTER III.

THE death of an affectionate parent is ever a heavy and desolating trial ; but perhaps in no case is the bereavement more painfully felt, than in that of the minister's family. Other mourners are often permitted to linger, amidst scenes hallowed by tenderest recollections ; to carry out, it may be, the plans of usefulness devised by the departed ; to be surrounded by accustomed objects rendered dear by association. But to the pastor's family all is changed ;—the desolate widow must abandon the home once brightened by wedded love ; the children must leave the spot where every tree and flower seems a familiar friend, poverty too frequently adding its heavy burden to the other trials : yet how often is the faithfulness of the Divine promise, made manifest even to the thoughtless world, by the remarkable manner

in which such families are provided and cared for.

Although Mr Gray had never possessed a large income, his heart and hand had, to the extent of his power, ever been open at the call either of his Master's cause or of suffering humanity. His son's education, too, had for some time past been expensive; hence the provision for his family was very slender, consisting chiefly of the widow's annuity, and the interest of a small sum, reluctantly given as Mrs Gray's wedding portion, her worldly parents having been disappointed by her unambitious choice.

But ere long it was manifest that the widow's removal would be to 'the house not made with hands,' not to any earthly dwelling. For a time she was so sustained by absorbing anxiety regarding her children, that her health appeared less feeble than formerly; but soon a violent recurrence of her worst symptoms utterly prostrated her exhausted frame; and with a burdened heart—which strong faith alone could sustain—she commenced the trying task of setting her house in order.

Shortly after Mr Gray's decease, situations

had been found for the lad and the young female domestic,—the faithful Annie, now in her sixty-first year, alone remaining. With Dr Allan and this humble friend, Mrs Gray now took counsel.

Walter's talents and energy of character would, his mother felt certain, enable him to struggle on to the close of his University course, and make his way in the world. Her anxieties, therefore, in his case, referred to something higher than mere earthly interests. But a pang shot through her heart, at the thought of all that her tenderly nurtured Ellen might be called to endure, when compelled to seek a home among strangers.

Mr Gray had been an only child, early deprived of both parents; and, like many of our best Scottish divines, having scarcely any inheritance beyond the rudiments of a good education, he had acquired learning and position solely by his own industry and talent, supporting himself in his student days by means of a tutorship, to which he had been recommended by one of his professors, and devoting the gathered up fragments of leisure to writing literary and scientific articles for Journals.

Nor were there many in her own connection towards whom Mrs Gray could turn her thoughts in this period of deep anxiety; her only near relative being a widowed sister, several years older than herself. Harriet had married at a very early age, and gone to a distant home, while her younger sister was little beyond the years of childhood. She had been united to a Highland proprietor, who owned extensive possessions, but was a man of no great mental refinement. She was early left a widow, with one daughter, the entailed estates passing to a distant male relative of the deceased; but the personal property being considerable, Mrs M'Kenzie, in addition to Stratheden Lodge as a residence, had an ample jointure, and her daughter was regarded in the neighbourhood, as a great heiress.

The characters of the two sisters were as dissimilar as their position. Naturally gay, frivolous, and somewhat selfish, Harriet had, without hesitation, accepted what was considered an excellent 'settlement,' although she had no special regard for the gentleman who offered it; and, believing that she thus fulfilled a mother's duty, she had educated her daughter with the same

views, fitted to shine in gay society; while the nobler faculties of the mind and the best feelings of the heart had been little cultivated. Yet in Louisa there were higher elements of character than her mother possessed, which circumstances might one day develop.

Although a friendly intercourse had, at rather distant intervals, been maintained, and the sisters had occasionally met, their position, tastes, and principles were so different, that it was with an aching heart the widow's thoughts rested on Mrs M'Kenzie, as the only female friend to whose care she could confide her precious Ellen.

Too young to dispense with female protection, and with means too limited for boarding eligibly, even had such a home offered, no other arrangement seemed practicable. Indeed, during the residence of the minister's family at Glenulva, their visiting circle had extended little beyond the members of the congregation, for the most part belonging to the humbler classes; while, in a few families of the higher rank, Ellen could only have held the position of a dependant. Mrs Gray, therefore, seemed shut up, in Providence, to communicating with her sister on the

subject that lay so near her heart ; and this she resolved on doing without delay.

Mrs M'Kenzie's natural character was rather frivolous than positively unamiable ; and when her better feelings were drawn forth, she would readily perform a kind action. Such a case was the anticipated death of her only sister ; and she immediately sent a most affectionate reply, expressing the earnest hope that her dear Eliza's health might yet be restored, but assuring her that, in the event of her decease, Ellen would be gladly received as another daughter ; and, being aware of the great difference in her own and her sister's views on the subject of female education, she added the assurance that no constraint whatever should be put on her niece's habits of life.

With a heart overflowing with gratitude, the widowed mother returned thanks to her heavenly Father for this token of His kindness ; and communicated what she had done to the faithful Annie, for whose comfort also she was anxious to make suitable arrangements.

It was at best with a bursting heart that the affectionate nurse could listen to any hint re-

garding arrangements contingent upon the removal of her beloved mistress ; but the thought of being severed from Walter and Ellen, as well as their mother, which had never previously entered her mind, was more than she could endure ; and, sobbing violently, she exclaimed—

‘ O, dinna, dinna speak o’ partin’ me an’ the dear bairns, if ye wadna break my auld heart. Did they no sleep in my bosom when they were wee things ? And have they no grown up beside me like bonnie flowers,—dearer to me than if they had been my ain, because they were my bairn’s bairns. An’ Miss Ellen mauna be sinder frae her brither ; it wad be an eerie thing to live in yon grand toun. But Mr Walter mauna be left to himsel’ : temptations are rife, an’ he that wad hae sent him kindly counsel has gane to the better land.’

‘ Dear Annie,’ replied Mrs Gray, ‘ this is not like your usual strong sense and kindly nature. You greatly distress me, by reviving the rebellious feelings of my own poor heart, that with a sore struggle had been brought to submit quietly to what is manifestly the Divine will. Had the Lord approved of our plans, He would have pro-

vided the means ; but, Annie, they are withheld. We are to walk by faith, not by sight. Little do you know what the thought of the children's being severed from each other and from you has cost me ; but He to whose care I have confided them is better than any earthly guide. He will preserve them from temptation, and raise up friends according to their need.

‘ And now, dear nurse, ’ added Mrs Gray, ‘ I have thought of a plan for you :—Accustomed as you are to think only of others, time would pass wearily were you not provided with useful occupation. Now, to your niece, Mrs M‘Intyre, and her family, you would be a rich blessing ; and I know they would be most thankful to have you. Let me, then, have the comfort of thinking that you will find a home with them, when I no longer need your affectionate care, and this beloved place is left to strangers.’

Annie was subdued. She still wept, but it was more gently ; and, grasping Mrs Gray's hand, she said, ‘ Forgie me, darlin’, and may the Lord forgie me for addin’ bitterness to your deep sorrow : a’ shall be as ye desire, but ye

mauna hinder me frae cherishin' the hope that my bairns will yet be restored to me.'

During the brief apparent revival of Mrs Gray's strength, immediately subsequent to her husband's decease, Dr Allan had suggested that the family should remove from the manse, at the time when it became needful for Walter to return to Edinburgh; and poor Ellen had sustained her spirit by the hope, that some little rural retreat might be found near the metropolis, where she and Annie would devote themselves to watching over the beloved invalid, and be frequently cheered by visits from Walter. But soon the futility of such plans was made manifest. The widow's strength declined rapidly; and as the projected time of removal drew near, they were anticipating, in deepest anguish of spirit, the severance of the last tie that bound them to Glenulva.

The faithful nurse, who had watched by the pillow of her beloved mistress, during the first hours of the night, having been persuaded to seek a little repose, Walter and Ellen had taken her place, their hearts too full to admit of much converse, their eyes riveted on her to whom their

affections were so fondly knit, and of whom they were so soon to be deprived. Nature had been failing so rapidly, that they scarcely expected the return of consciousness ; but, towards morning, their mother suddenly awoke, uttering, as in soliloquy, the words—

‘ My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Blessed be He who hath bestowed on me, His unworthy servant, a peace that passeth understanding,—a glorious peace !’

Perceiving her children, who had arisen, and now bent over her, she, with a sweet smile, extended her arms, and enfolded them successively in a last fond maternal embrace. Retaining a hand of each, she then said—

‘ The day breaks, my precious ones, and for me there will be no more night ; but my heart clings to you both. Oh ! how fondly ! Had it been the will of the Lord,—but, His will be done ! Ellen, love, you will not be an orphan, nor will the Father in whom you have put your trust ever leave you desolate. But, my son,—my beloved Walter,—O that this might be to you the morning of a new life ! “ He is faith-

ful that promised." Yes! He WILL perform; but O that it might be now! Now!' Sinking back on the pillow, from which strong emotion had imparted energy to arise, the dying saint closed her eyes, and fell into apparent unconsciousness. But soon rallying, the cheek flushed, and the eye beaming with that startling brilliancy that seems to reflect a light from the upper regions,—a look which, once beheld, can never be forgotten,—her gaze wandered from Ellen to Walter, and faintly murmuring the words—

“Ellen, pray for—watch over HIM’—

The flush faded,—the light of the eye was quenched,—the paleness and stillness of death overspread the beloved countenance!

With the first agonizing grief of the orphans, a stranger cannot intermeddle; but ere long it was painfully felt, that, although the first bitter tears were mingled, there could be no intimate communion of spirit between the youthful mourners. Ellen's pale cheek and tremulous voice, bore testimony to the deep mental struggle through which she had passed; yet there was a light in her eye, that spoke of victory won. But with her brother it was far otherwise. At his

father's death, sorrow, like an overwhelming torrent, had swept away every other feeling; but when the second desolating stroke fell, the whole unregenerate nature was roused, and his soul was in fierce rebellion against Omnipotence. *If*, he thought, *there were* indeed a Supreme Ruler, had He not dealt cruelly, unjustly, towards him and his; and wherefore should he be enjoined to wait upon the Lord for help or consolation? Thus Walter, although his sentiments were still for the most part confined to his own bosom, instead of imparting strength and comfort to his sister, added to her depressing care.

Immediately after Mrs Gray's decease, Dr Allan had, in accordance with her instructions, intimated the sorrowful event to Mrs M'Kenzie, who lost no time in sending an affectionate letter to Ellen, in which, her better feelings being powerfully called forth, she alluded in the kindest manner to the arrangement entered into with her departed sister, and expressed her own and her daughter's anxious wish, that her niece would join them at Stratheden Lodge without delay.

The Doctor, and a few other interested friends, had deemed it best that the orphans should leave Glenulva, the day subsequent to the interment; Walter accompanying his sister into Perthshire, and thence proceeding to Edinburgh. They would thus be spared the pain of witnessing the breaking up of household arrangements, interwoven with associations of the past, and their separation be delayed as long as circumstances would admit; the faithful Annie remaining to the last, that, aided by the friends, she might watch over the interests of the youthful mourners. And now the grave has closed over all that remains of the devoted wife and mother, whose dust will ere long mingle with his, whom she most fondly loved. But they rest together in hope; and 'when they awake,' they shall be satisfied with His likeness who is the Resurrection and the Life of His people.

Feeling that the sorrow of the orphans was one too deep for human sympathy, and that, in the near prospect of separation, the presence of strangers would be a restraint on the free interchange of thought, the friends who had been with them on the day of Mrs Gray's interment

considerately left Glenulva at an early hour; and grateful as they were, for the sympathy of those who had known and loved their parents, Ellen and Walter felt it a relief to be alone.

The last glowing tints had faded from the sky, and the landscape had assumed the cold and cheerless aspect that marks the twilight of closing autumn. Yet still the brother and sister continued to gaze abstractedly on the western horizon, where the clouds, lately arrayed in amber and ruby, now wore a sombre and deepening grey. Neither had spoken for some time; but at length, in a bitter tone, Walter exclaimed, 'Behold, Ellen, the emblem of our fortunes—ever becoming darker and colder. Would that it were all over; for behind there is naught but sorrow and regret—before and around, darkness and misery.'

'Nay, brother, mine,' answered Ellen, laying her hand affectionately on his arm, 'let us not add something worse than bitterness to deep sorrow, and cast a darker shadow over this sad parting hour. The God of our parents will be a Father and a Friend to us, if only we put our trust in Him. His word abounds with promises

of grace and strength, for every time of need. O that in this hour of deepest trial, you would put these promises to the proof !'

'Ellen, it is vain to speak thus,' he replied, 'to one who cannot sympathize in your feelings. When little children, we were taught to kneel at our mother's knee, and pray to our Father in heaven. We were told of His love and mercy, in sending His Son to die in our stead, and that from Him all our blessings and comforts came. But I do not recognise this heavenly Father in the ruthless Deity you worship.

'Sister, I am not a confirmed unbeliever, but the unquestioning faith of childhood is shattered; and as yet I have only obtained, in exchange, doubt and perplexity. But I am groping after truth,—a truth that will commend itself to the intellect as well as the heart,—that will not ask me to believe what is contrary to reason, nor to love a Being in whom I can discern neither justice nor mercy. If this miserable life be prolonged, I may obtain that of which I am in quest; if not, the problem will equally be solved.'

'Alas, alas!' exclaimed Ellen, trying to suppress the throbbings of her agonized heart,

‘it is even worse than I feared. Walter, my heart is too sore, and this is no time to discuss the evidences of Divine truth, even were I fully qualified for the task; but think you it was a baseless faith that enabled our noble father, and our gentle, loving mother, alike to triumph over death? and depart calmly, with intellect unclouded, and the full consciousness that they were leaving the children they so fondly loved, with slender resources, and few earthly friends? Nay, I speak not of myself, but of the grace that has been mighty to uphold: think you that a poor, timid maiden, never before severed from a fond mother’s side, could have been carried through the past, and enabled to contemplate the future, without shrinking, but for a realized strength that no earthly stay could give?’

‘Your calm self-possession,’ replied the young man, ‘and that of our parents, amidst trials to me overwhelming, has indeed been an enigma; and even should it only originate in a pleasant delusion, it is most enviable: but I can be no sharer in it. Doubt had previously entered my mind, and recent events have not been calculated to dispel it. Our father has been snatched

away in the prime of life, and, as it were, in consequence of an act of self-sacrificing benevolence; our mother, as if the period had been selected when you especially would most keenly feel her loss. My prospects in life are blighted, and you are henceforth to be a dependant on the bounty of Aunt Harriet, who is rich and happy, although in every respect our mother's inferior,—to be, forsooth, her daughter's humble friend, although, I doubt not, you are equally superior to her.

‘Yet you believe that all these “dispensations,” as you would call them, are sent by a God of infinite mercy and wisdom; and you expect me to love and trust HIM at whose hand I have suffered so much. I could understand such things on the supposition that the world and its inhabitants were simply created, and left to make what they could of natural laws; but consistently with the idea of a wise and gracious supreme Being, it is incomprehensible!’

Bitter was the anguish of listening to such sentiments from the lips of a beloved, an only brother; but, striving to maintain calmness, Ellen replied—

‘Did you ever doubt the wisdom and love of our dear parents?’

‘Fool that I was,’ rejoined the young man, ‘their wisdom I *have* doubted, and the thought is very bitter to me now; but their affection!—never!’

‘Then do you not remember,’ Ellen said, ‘how in childhood our faults were punished by some privation, or by what we felt more deeply, the apparent estrangement of our parents’ confidence and love?—themselves, I believe, the greatest sufferers. And do you not recollect how keen was our disappointment when a visit on which we had greatly set our hearts was suddenly abandoned, until we learned that poor little Fanny Graham had died of an infectious fever? O, brother! we are but in the childhood of our existence, and in this dark and troubled day, our Father’s path is in the swelling deep, and we cannot trace His footsteps; but a time will come, perhaps in part even here, when all shall be made plain. And, dearest Walter, how is it that you, who have received from the Almighty such noble intellectual endowments, are content to look on the mere out-

side of what concerns time and eternity, and to live, were it but for a day, without any security for the future?—to grasp a shadow, when the substance is within your reach?’

The young man, who seemed absorbed in painful thought, making no reply, Ellen continued thus,—

‘Fain would my desolate heart cling to you for guidance and strength; nor has the loss of our precious parents been half so bitter as this sorrowful parting, while I know that the strength in which you trust is veriest weakness. Beloved brother! it is written, “Seek, and ye shall find.” “So shall ye know, if you follow on to know the Lord.” O that you would put these promises to the proof; and if it be earnestly, prayerfully done, soon, I am persuaded, shall we rejoice together over treasure found, and be united in closer bonds than those of nature.’

Then taking from her pocket a small Bible in antique binding, she presented it to her brother, saying—

‘You remember this—our father’s last birthday present to our beloved mother, when her feeble hand could no longer sustain the one she

formerly used? Will you study it, dearest Walter, not to find ground for cavil, but to aid in your search after truth? And soon, I am persuaded, will the light of life irradiate your soul, causing you to wonder that you have so long been content to dwell in darkness.'

'Thanks, darling little monitress,' said her brother, accepting the gift, and affectionately embracing her. 'You, at least, have not forgotten our dying mother's last injunction, which at the moment grated somewhat harshly, on the proud heart that would rather have had you commended to my care. But she was right. From whatever quarter your strength comes, I feel that my own is comparatively that of a child.'

The last lingering ray of daylight had departed, and the clear, cold beams of the full moon, now shed their silvery light over the landscape; but the brother and sister were too deeply absorbed in conversation, to mark the flight of time, until the door was gently opened, and the pale, sad face of Annie appeared.

'I'm sorry to disturb you, dears,' she began timidly, 'but it's late an' cauld, an' ye've a lang

journey afore you the morn. An', Miss Eilan dear, I've been sittin' my leifu' lane, thinkin' o' them that's awa, an' o' the cauld world where ye've nae near freends to shelter you, till I can thol't nae langer.'

'Dear Annie,' said Ellen, rising and drawing the nurse kindly into the room, 'we have been thoughtless and selfish, forgetting that you, too, have a deep sorrow; but you are too kind and faithful a friend to be angry with us. To-night you and I shall share the same room, as we did in early, happy days. And it may be, dear nurse, brighter times will yet return to us all, although for the present it seems very bitter to part from all we hold dearest; and the future would be dark indeed but for the promise of light from above, of strength and guidance according to our need.'

As the orphans had to leave Glenulva at an early hour on the following morning, they separated after an affectionate 'Good night;' and their hearts having been fully opened to each other, a faint ray of light seemed to gleam on the future. Nor was it without hope, though with many tears, that Ellen pleaded that night,

on her brother's behalf, the promises recorded in His word who was not only the God of her fathers, but her own God; and her spirit thus soothed, she laid her head on the pillow, and obtained the much-needed refreshment of a short slumber.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was in the cold dim twilight of an October morning, that the brother and sister bade a last farewell, to the home of their childhood; endeared at once by fond and sorrowful memories. A neighbouring proprietor had sent his carriage, to convey them to the nearest railway station; but, with kind consideration, no member of the family appeared. Some humble neighbours, however, volunteered to remain with Annie, and render what assistance they could at the departure. Few words were spoken, and many tears shed, as the maternal friend clasped alternately to her bosom, those whom she still regarded as her children; and, amidst promises of writing frequently, and meeting as often as circumstances would permit, they were borne away from Glenulva.

As the distance was considerable, it was late

in the afternoon ere the youthful travellers arrived at the railway station, two or three miles distant from Stratheden, where their aunt's carriage was in waiting.

A chill tremor crept over Ellen's spirit, when she found the carriage was empty ; for although, in her deep sorrow, she shrank from intercourse with strangers, her heart yearned for the kindly sympathy of relatives ; and she had expected that her aunt, or at the least her cousin, would have been at the station to receive them. The apparent coldness of the reception extended to his orphan sister, was likewise keenly felt by Walter ; but although his knit brow and compressed lip gave evidence of indignant feeling, no word was spoken ; but drawing Ellen affectionately to his bosom, he seemed by the action to say, ' One friend and protector at least you shall never want.'

Mrs M'Kenzie, an elegant-looking, although somewhat stately lady, whose family resemblance to her beloved mother, disposed Ellen to cast herself on her bosom and weep, received her young relatives with a demonstrative kindness, in which Walter's quick and rather disor-

dered fancy, discerned a patronizing spirit ; but even he was touched, by the gentle quiet sympathy evinced by his cousin's manner, although the first glance of her showy figure, arrayed in fashionable mourning, had not made a pleasing impression.

Apt to judge superficially, Mrs M'Kenzie was charmed with the fine appearance and gentlemanly bearing of her nephew, whose natural advantages had been enhanced by a liberal education, and access to polished as well as intellectual society ; but in her niece she saw only a young spiritless girl, pretty indeed, but so destitute of *style*, that while Louisa would derive little benefit or pleasure from their companionship, neither was there any danger of her being eclipsed, in the circle where her mother was anxious that she should shine, as the ascendant star.

A few weeks of friendly intercourse served to banish the restraint of the first interview ; and although the sorrow of the orphans might be as deep, it was more subdued, than in the first days of their bereavement. But the commencement of the university term approaching,

it was with no little grief that the brother and sister contemplated a separation, which might be of some duration ; for although his aunt had kindly invited Walter to spend all his holidays at Stratheden Lodge, being now to a large extent dependent on his own exertions, he felt the necessity of economy both with reference to time and money. Hence, it was his purpose to seek an appointment for the summer as travelling tutor, in addition to accepting for the winter one or two private pupils, which the distinguished place he held among his fellow-students, always rendered it easy for him to obtain.

The parting was most affectionate ; nor did Ellen fail gently to reiterate her earnest hope that, amidst his varied studies, her brother would give a prominent place to that, on which are dependent the highest interests of time and eternity ; and Walter was at the moment too deeply touched, to admit of his sending a chill to his sister's affectionate heart, by an answer implying levity or scorn.

Left alone with relatives as yet comparative strangers, and with a vivid memory of recent heavy affliction, Ellen could not but feel very

desolate ; her mind, however, was not of the cast that gives way to listless repining. Hence, looking her altered circumstances fairly in the face, she besought strength and wisdom to prepare her for the trying future ; nor did she ask in vain.

Having been accustomed at Glenulva to the systematic disposal of time, her first aim was to ascertain by observation, how this could be accomplished consistently with her aunt's arrangements ; when one of her first pleasant discoveries was, that she could obtain free access to an excellent library, accumulated by former proprietors, and not greatly valued except as a possession, by the last owner. She also found there were several points, on which she and her cousin could reciprocally confer benefit : hence the prospect of her first winter at Stratheden, although depressing, was not to her well-regulated mind unbearable.

Louisa's manner and appearance so decidedly bore the impress of an education conducted by an accomplished French governess, under the eye of a worldly mother, that her cousin, whose heart had expanded at the thought of a youthful companion of her own sex, had at first

feared they would have little in common ; for Mademoiselle Dupont had pined for ‘ la belle France,’ amidst the shades of Stratheden, and imbued the mind of her youthful charge with the idea, that supreme felicity consisted in an unlimited enjoyment of the world’s gaieties, to which the natural introduction was a wealthy alliance. But ere long, Ellen discovered that, beneath a gay and fashionable exterior, there was concealed a heart unsatisfied with such enjoyments as the world can bestow, and capable of cherishing the warmest affection.

On the other hand, Louisa, whose perception of character was much more acute than that of her mother, soon discovered that her cousin, although nearly three years her junior, was in many respects superior to herself, both in talent and acquirement. She had hitherto longed in vain for congenial companionship : for there were depths in her character, as yet undeveloped, and the rise of a new and ardent attachment, was as delightful to herself as to her cousin.


Thus the winter passed away more speedily than could have been anticipated ; studies which

Louisa had previously considered dry and uninteresting, becoming attractive when prosecuted under her cousin's guidance; while she was proud and happy to communicate to Ellen, the mysteries of elegant needlework, which she had acquired from her governess. She likewise gave her cousin lessons on the harp, and their sweet youthful voices might often be heard, accompanied by its fine tones, or those of the piano.

Mrs M'Kenzie was rather a bewildered onlooker, than a sharer in these important innovations; indeed, she was by no means certain that she had not cause to be deeply offended. It could not be denied that Louisa was more habitually cheerful, and her temper pleasanter than formerly; nor could the most exacting self-esteem, discover anything like neglect of her comfort or wishes, on the part of the young ladies: yet, with the exception of music and drawing, neither their studies nor their recreations were such, as she would have suggested, or could feel much interest in; but were planned by themselves, and her consent merely asked. However, as there was nothing tangible to find fault with, they were for the most part left to their

own devices, with the exception of an occasional sarcastic remark, on their evidently purposing to astonish the neighbourhood, by coming out as learned ladies. She also condescended to accept, although somewhat coldly, various little adornments for her drawing-room, the result of their joint labours; for what, she thought, was the use of fashionable elegancies unless there were fashionable guests to admire them? And Mrs M'Kenzie not only felt really depressed by the death of her sister, but was very exact as to the etiquette of mourning: hence she felt that she could not with propriety, mingle much in gay society, especially at the assemblies in the county town; nor could she invite ceremonious parties while Ellen was wearing her first deep mourning for both parents.

CHAPTER V.

PRING was now advancing, that loveliest of seasons, when Nature, awaking from slumber, appears in all the delicate freshness of youth ; strewing her path with fairest flowers, and filling the air with balmiest odours : and as the cousins extended their rambles amidst the exquisite scenery in the neighbourhood, Ellen was struck with the exceeding beauty of the early flowers, several of which were new to her ; and she proposed giving interest to their walks, by collecting rare plants, and aiding her cousin in the study of Botany.

Louisa, whose natural tastes were simple, was charmed with the plan ; and as Ellen, by the aid of a powerful microscope (which had for many a day formed merely an ornamental part of the study furniture), displayed to her the exquisite perfection of structure and adaptation of parts,

exhibited in the most minute specimens of vegetable life, she seemed introduced into a new world, on which she entered with a delight and interest astonishing to herself.

One lovely afternoon, the cousins having extended their ramble beyond the usual limits, they sat down to rest on the flowery bank of a streamlet, that flowed from a neighbouring hill. The scene was fair and peaceful, carrying Ellen back in spirit to the home of her childhood, with all its sad and tender memories; while Louisa, who would not disturb the day-dream into which she perceived her cousin had fallen, amused herself by twining a tasteful wreath of the primroses and sweet-scented violets that adorned the bank.

At length, observing that an expression of deep sadness had stolen over Ellen's features, she aroused her by playfully throwing the wreath over her bonnet, and exclaiming—

‘ There now! you are lovely and fay-like enough to represent Undine; and poor I must be content to enact vain, naughty Bertolda. But who shall be our knight? My cousin ten times removed, the mighty Allan M'Kenzie, is neither romantic nor handsome enough; and I cannot

think of any one else. Walter, indeed, would be the very beau-ideal ; but then the knight must not be your brother, for we are to be rivals. But I declare the fair Undine is weeping ! And I begin to tremble, lest that streamlet which already seems to bawl more loudly, should expand into a mighty river, and sweep her away into her native element.'

'Pardon me, dear Louisa,' said Ellen, in a tone of such real sadness, as at once put her cousin's playful humour to flight ; 'my thoughts were wandering painfully to the past—to Glenulva, the peaceful home of my childhood, associated as it is with the memory of parents unspeakably dear, who taught us to regard happiness, not as the chief aim of existence, but as the natural result of devoting life to the great ends for which it was bestowed ; and I cannot help sorrowfully contrasting the present with the past. Your affectionate kindness, dear, has so filled my heart, that, except when past days of suffering or anxious thoughts about Walter would intrude, I have been most happy ; but when I think of the blessed influence my dear parents shed around them—nay, of the life I myself led

when under their affectionate guidance—I feel as if I had no right to this happiness: for, dear Louisa, are we not living as entirely for ourselves, as if we had no higher mission, than that of roaming from flower to flower, like that lovely insect?’

‘Now Ellen,’ responded her lively cousin, ‘I had purposed to be grave as a judge, but you *will* set me off again. Pray, what *vocation* should girls like us have but that of enjoying ourselves? I had supposed that the law of earning bread by the sweat of the brow did not extend to young ladies. We have got through the drudgery of education, and are now prepared to enjoy its sweets. Mamma has plenty of servants, so that our aid is not required in the domestic department; and for myself, as I do not contemplate becoming the wife of a country parson, with a small income, I have no ambition to be initiated into the mysteries of caudle and pudding, whereby I may be enabled to entertain strangers economically, and enact, at a cheap rate, “the Lady Bountiful” of the district.’

The dark eyes of Ellen flashed for a moment, as Walter’s would have done, ere, with heightened colour, she replied—

‘My mother, Louisa, held the position of which you speak with so much contempt; and when she doubted a servant’s power to tempt the fastidious appetite of some poor invalid, I have seen her prepare with her own delicate hands, the candle or pudding of which you speak; yet never, even among my aunt’s titled visitors, have I met one so thoroughly a lady.’

‘Forgive me, Ellen,’ exclaimed Louisa; ‘I am a thoughtless fool. Not for worlds would I knowingly say aught that would wound your feelings; but really your romantic, incomprehensible ideas of duty, made me forget myself; and who could have supposed the gentle Undine capable of flashing out into such magnificent indignation? We shall have her stamping her tiny foot next!’

‘We were both in fault, cousin,’ said Ellen, smiling; ‘and as you were the first offender, you shall first pay the penalty: therefore,’ she added gaily, ‘I shall imprison you by this stray ringlet, until you expound to me your idea of woman’s mission.’

‘As to women in general,’ replied Louisa, laughing, ‘I fear it will be presumptuous in me

to attempt even a sketch; nevertheless, at your command, I shall try. Well, then, I suppose there are always a very few ladies, like Mrs Fry and Hannah More, whose vocation it is to benefit mankind, or rather womankind. Then there is another very select class, who may be described as rather ornamental than in any way useful; who may be seated at the head of a table, on the same principle that an epergne is placed in the centre. Next, there is the class to which your dear mother belonged, but with which, I regret to say, I have no personal acquaintance. And, lastly, the numerous class on whom the curse of toil falls most heavily, often, as I have observed in the neighbouring hamlet, depriving the character of all interest; indeed, rendering it little superior to that of the lower animals.'

'But, cousin,' interrupted Ellen, 'amidst the wide range which your active fancy has taken, you seem to have found no place for the present company and their numerous sisterhood?'

'Patience, my dear; you shall be satisfied. I am aware that as yet I have found no place for our proper selves, but I am approaching the

fifth head of my discourse, and as it is intended to be the peroration, I mean to give it with all due effect; and as, inferentially, the child is mother to the woman, I must begin in the nursery. The little lady there should be gentle and obedient, behaving prettily in company, and not quarrelling with her little brother about the sweetmeats lavished upon them, when they make their appearance with the dessert. As she advances in years, she must submit patiently to all the discipline deemed requisite for turning her out an elegant, accomplished young lady; including the inclined plane and the dumb-bells; not forgetting the more elaborate process of acquiring a competent knowledge of the most fashionable modern languages; also music, drawing, dancing, etc. Thus, she will not only be qualified for making a good appearance when introduced in society, but have abundant resources for her leisure hours. Now, as one of the party most nearly concerned, I ask triumphantly, whether, after having been so long in harness, she has not a right to be turned loose, and roam for a season at her own sweet will?’

‘You have indeed,’ replied Ellen archly, ‘de-

scribed a most ornamental young lady, whose portrait should be drawn either "tripping it on the light fantastic toe," or reclining, novel in hand, amidst downy cushions, in a boudoir shaded by rose-coloured curtains. But waiving all allusion to her present value, either as a member of the household or a citizen of the world, has your paragon no plans for the future? For the secret of rendering youth perennial has not yet been discovered.'

'Again I say, patience, dear,' rejoined Louisa. 'With you I am quite confidential, and therefore I reply, she purposes, should she receive an eligible offer, to settle down as one of the heads of a household, when it will become her duty to live, if possible, on friendly terms with her husband, and avoid getting him into debt by her extravagance. Should she have a family, she will see that they are provided with proper attendants and instructors, occasionally looking after the dear little torments herself; and, should there be poor people in the neighbourhood, bestowing on them, when required, help in time of trouble, or when labour is scarce. And now, have I not described a pattern lady?'

‘Dearest Louisa,’ said Ellen, ‘we have trifled long enough on a subject of serious import. Now you must suffer me to sermonise a little. And first, I must have a text, which shall be, “She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth,” 1 Tim. v. 6. Now, the life of pleasure may not of necessity be spent in the ball-room or theatre, but includes all that is implied in living to and for one’s self, unmindful of the higher ends of existence here, as well as of systematic preparation for the endless state beyond. This life of pleasure I have lately been leading; and O! Louisa, I have been imbued with nobler principles, and have witnessed the result of their being exemplified in practice.’

‘Now, Ellen,’ responded her cousin, ‘this comes of your having a dispensation to attend the new conventicle at Glentroon, because my lady mother says it was “in the bond” that you were not to be contradicted. Had you sat by my side on the comfortable cushion in the old family pew, and listened to the soothing voice of good Mr M’Farlane, your morbid conscience would long ere now have been in the enjoyment of a peaceful slumber. Instead of a style of

preaching that only makes people miserable, our parson, who seldom troubles us with a visit, except when he comes by invitation to one of mamma's grand dinner-parties, dilates every Sunday on the mercy of God, reminding us that, because it was impossible for fallible creatures to keep His holy law, the Saviour was sent to pay the debt, leaving to us the comparatively easy task, of attending to religious duties, leading a moral life, and thankfully enjoying the temporal blessings bestowed by our heavenly Father, assured that if, by reason of human infirmity, we fail in doing all that is commanded, our sincere though imperfect obedience will be accepted for the sake of Jesus Christ.

‘Occasionally we are told that, in addition to the duties already specified, almsgiving is a very acceptable sacrifice in the sight of God; and at such times I naughtily fancy that the preacher casts a benevolent squint towards our pew, because, being a bachelor, he is in the habit of sending troublesome applicants for soup, jelly, etc., to the Lodge, where mamma has given orders that every Saturday the same shall be

liberally dispensed, to all comers who have his recommendation. It is but just to add that occasionally he drops a hint regarding the sad fate of the wicked; but with *that*, you know, we have nothing to do.

‘And now, with reference to our own sweet selves, I cannot think of any plan of usefulness in which we could possibly engage, unless you propose, after the immemorial example of heroines of romance, to instruct dirty rude children, and read the Bible to paralytic old women, with the pleasant supererogatory work, of making blue flannel petticoats and knitting coarse stockings.’

‘Dear Louisa,’ said Ellen, ‘do try for once to be in earnest, and not do violence to the feelings of your naturally warm heart, which I am sure is at this moment reproaching you for giving way to levity on such a subject. You have, indeed, drawn a sad picture of poor Mr M’Farlane’s soporific preaching, with which I know your own mind cannot be satisfied, yet I doubt not its results have been most injurious.

‘Much is to be done by Divine grace in the heart and household, before we can profitably go abroad to help others; but all having been

made new *there*, the question must arise, "What shall I render?" How shall I aid in communicating to others the blessings so freely bestowed on me?

'Remember, cousin, the text of which we were speaking the other day, "Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?" Had such been the Divine will, we too might have been sunk in poverty, or laid on beds of suffering; nor would the children be rude and dirty, were they not neglected first by their parents, and then by those to whom God has given the power to help them. Oh, Louisa, had you but seen the children at Glenulva, who, instead of either skulking out of sight, or staring rudely as they do here, would have run to meet us when we went botanizing, and, presenting their bouquet of wild-flowers with a pleasant smile, or an attempt at a curtsy, would scamper off without waiting for thanks, quite delighted that their gift was accepted. They were the children of poor parents, to many of whom my father's faithful instructions and my mother's judicious kindness had been blessed, insomuch that, even when there was no higher principle, the moral

influence on the district was such, that a dirty neglected child was scarcely to be seen.'

'You are right, Ellen,' replied her cousin, 'as you always are; but indeed my foolish tongue often belies my heart, faulty as it is. Often, since you came to the Lodge, have I felt ashamed of my useless butterfly life; and so far as I am able, I shall gladly lend my aid in carrying out any plan you propose, provided we can obtain mamma's consent. Meanwhile, we must not begin by committing an unpardonable offence; and if we do not hasten home, the dinner bell will have rung before our arrival.'

On entering the house, the young ladies were indeed greeted by the ominous summons of the last dinner bell; and as Mrs M'Kenzie was exacting in such matters, they, with the assistance of Louisa's maid, very hastily performed the duties of the toilet, and after the delay of but a few minutes, proceeded to the drawing-room which, however, they found tenantless.

As the bell ceased, the elderly footman had, as usual, swung open the drawing-room door; and Mrs M'Kenzie having learnt, in answer to her question, that the young ladies had that

moment arrived, ordered Donald to lead the way to the dining-room, where, for the purpose of giving weight to her displeasure, she took her place at the head of the table in solitary dignity.

Ellen gently apologized for their inadvertently protracted stay, and promised that they would be more careful in future, without alluding to the special cause of detention; but Louisa, whose ardent mind had been quite absorbed by the recent subject of conversation, exclaimed with great animation—

‘Indeed, dear mamma, we were so engrossed in talking over past shortcomings and future plans of usefulness, that time passed imperceptibly; and Ellen was giving me such a charming account of the children at Glenulva, that I want to do something for the poor neglected little creatures at Gleneden. You will help us, dearest mamma, will you not? the rather that, having made some foolish purchases lately, I am in straitened circumstances, and a little money will be indispensable. For the future, I shall try to be more prudent.’

A more unfortunate time for making the request could not have been chosen: hence, with

much dignity of manner, her mother coldly replied, 'I think, Miss M'Kenzie, that before young ladies enter on romantic schemes of usefulness, where there is no call of duty, it might be well to consider whether their nearest relatives have not some trifling claims upon their attention ; a matter in which, permit me to say, you are exceedingly remiss. Do me the favour, then, to make no further reference to the subject.'

The cousins were greatly disappointed, but submission was manifestly their present duty ; and instead of giving way to petulant impatience, as she would once have done, Louisa cheerfully united with Ellen in the studies and recreations which had for some time past given a fresh interest to her life. And ere long the patience of the young friends was amply rewarded : for, Mrs M'Kenzie having been visited by severe illness, their affectionate, unwearied attention, coupled perhaps with a little self-reproach, so drew forth her gratitude, that all opposition was disarmed ; and, on her recovery, she told them that they had really been such kind nurses, she felt herself somewhat in their debt : and if a

small sum of money would enable them to carry out any reasonable plan, it was very much at their service, provided they did nothing without consulting her, and asked of her no personal effort,—a thing to which she felt herself in every way unequal.

The cousins having expressed the warmest gratitude, Louisa mentioned that she had often heard her maid speak in the highest terms of a young woman, formerly a nursery governess, who had been compelled by delicate health to resign her situation, and was now residing with an aunt in the village, where she earned a scanty subsistence by doing needlework for the family in which she had resided, and the few others from whom it could be obtained. Her health was now improved, and as her character and acquirements were spoken of in the highest terms, Louisa thought she might be well fitted for presiding over the nucleus of a village school, provided a sufficient number of children could be collected to warrant the experiment.

Mrs M'Kenzie smiled incredulously, regarding the plan as a chimerical undertaking, originating in youthful enthusiasm, and soon to be

abandoned. But she gave her consent to their making the needful inquiries ; and the next day was fixed on for this purpose, when, in accordance with Ellen's plan, they were first to visit Miss Graham, and, should the result prove satisfactory, proceed to call for some of the cottagers.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was now the height of summer ; and how, meanwhile, had time sped on with Walter Gray ?—whom we left entering upon a new and trying period of his history, with a mind little prepared for the conflict, except in so far as a proud spirit and a resolute will could carry him through the battle of life. He was ambitious to hold a distinguished place among his fellow-students ; but when attained, it brought no solid happiness ; and, in weariness of spirit, he might have exclaimed—

‘ Ambition’s like a circle on the water,
Which never ceases to enlarge itself,
Till, by broad spreading, it disperse to nought.’

Professional study was supplemented by two hours devoted to private pupils. Thus his time was fully occupied, and the power of outward temptation lessened ; but, during the earlier

part of the college session, his heart continued in a bitter, rebellious state. About two months, however, before the close of the season, an event occurred which made an impression never to be effaced, a sudden and awful death having overtaken the young man who had exercised so baneful an influence on his character.

There was a period of darkness and conflict, during which his soul descended to the lowest depths of despair, while raging fever threatened to consume his young life. But at length he found joy and peace in believing, and restoration to health speedily followed. The word of God was now his most valued companion; and no longer read with a mind distempered by prejudice, he discerned power and beauty where before he had seen only feebleness and inconsistency.

Her brother's unusually protracted silence caused Ellen much anxiety; but when he did resume writing, there was that in the tone of his letters which sent a thrill of joy to her heart, although he made no direct allusion to the mental struggle through which he had passed. Her affectionate and judicious letters

were at this time very cheering and helpful to him. She spoke with warmest gratitude of her aunt's increasing kindness, and of the happiness she found in the friendship of Louisa, giving animated and playful descriptions of their little adventures, and of all that she thought would interest or gratify him; while she eagerly availed herself of the slightest hint in his letters that gave the opportunity of pressing on his attention the search after the highest knowledge: and, her heart glowing with gratitude to God, she marked with delight the increasing frequency with which he referred to questions of the most solemn import, on which he asked her opinion; never given without much prayer and study.

In consequence of the winter's intense study, and the period of deep trial through which he had passed, Walter was suffering a good deal from exhaustion, and was anticipating with great pleasure a short visit to Stratheden, when the offer of an appointment to accompany a young gentleman about his own age on a Continental tour, altered his plans, and compelled him to prepare for leaving Scotland without delay.

His travelling companion, Francis Maxwell,

younger of Maxton Hall, Roxburghshire, had just finished his university course ; and being an only son, and heir to an extensive property, his father wished him to have the advantage of visiting other countries, accompanied by an intelligent companion, before settling down at home to be initiated in the duties of a landed proprietor. Having himself lived for the greater part of every year amidst his tenantry, and cheerfully aided them in carrying out any real improvement, it was Mr Maxwell's warmest desire that his son should maintain the same pleasant relation to the tenants on the estate ; and Francis, a young man of the highest talent and principle, gave every promise of fulfilling his father's fondest hopes.

Observing that his travelling companion, with whom he had formed the closest intimacy, seemed reluctant to leave Scotland on such short notice, Maxwell drew from him the reason ; and kindly suggested that, as he had purposed winding up his season's travel by a Highland tour, they might visit Perthshire together towards the end of autumn.

In this arrangement Walter gladly acquiesced ;

and the family party at Stratheden, although greatly disappointed, endeavoured to rest satisfied.

Towards the end of March the young men's studies were brought to an honourable close ; and all arrangements being made, they set out on their travels, accompanied by Maxwell's faithful servant. And now, leaving the tourists to visit lake and mountain, city and ruin, so often and so well described, we shall follow our young friends, Louisa and Ellen, in their first timid effort at enlightening the inhabitants of Gleneden on the subject of youthful training and moral improvement.

Their first visit was naturally to Miss Graham, of whom Louisa's maid had given so favourable an impression. They found her, although not expecting visitors, seated by a brightly clean window, at a polished oak table, on which, besides portions of the work she was engaged on, were placed a few neatly-arranged books, and two or three sweet-smelling plants in small pots. With a modest but not awkward air, she arose and placed chairs for her visitors, who, she thought, might have heard of her desire to receive work ; but on Ellen's explaining their errand, and

asking whether she would be willing to give her aid in such an enterprise, a flush overspread her interesting countenance as she replied—

‘I am much stronger than I lately was, and dearly love children; yet I could not conscientiously undertake very heavy duties, lest I might not discharge them satisfactorily; but, if you are willing to make the trial, I shall be but too happy to do all in my power.’

The young ladies explained that a very few hours daily would be sufficient for a commencement; that the children would probably be very young, and the number limited; so that the fatigue would not be great. They then mentioned the proposed salary, in case they succeeded in collecting a reasonable number of children, with which Miss Graham expressed herself highly satisfied.

But the teacher’s speaking countenance seemed to indicate the presence of thoughts that would fain have utterance; and, encouraged by the gentle courtesy of Ellen, on whom she had fixed many an earnest gaze, she thus disclosed her feelings—

‘I feel impressed, dear ladies, that I speak to

those who will not misunderstand me. Surely He in whom I have put my trust has sent you at this particular time. The work on the table is the last I shall receive from the family in which I lived, as they are going abroad; and, just before you entered, my poor, unbelieving heart was trembling at the thought that I might become burdensome to my poor aunt; and, before I called, He answered.'

The young ladies were greatly pleased with Miss Graham's appearance and manner. Her countenance, although indicating rather delicate health, was pleasing and intelligent; her dress distinguished by scrupulous neatness and propriety; and her whole demeanour modest, yet self-possessed.

Considering that the number of scholars assembling would in all probability be very small, it was thought that the teacher's room would for the present be the best place of meeting; and the visitors rightly judging that nothing would be more likely to disarm prejudice, and interest Mrs M'Kenzie in the enterprise, than making her acquainted with the proposed teacher, it was arranged that she should call

the next evening at the Lodge, to learn the result of their visits to the neighbouring villagers.

Thus far Providence seemed to smile on their undertaking; and although Louisa felt some timidity in entering on a work so new to her, it was with lightened hearts that the cousins knocked at the door of the first dwelling in a long row of cottages, forming the hamlet of Gleneden, and for the most part inhabited by the families of men employed at the neighbouring quarries.

It was merely from courtesy that the ladies knocked, as both back and front doors stood wide open, affording an occasional glimpse of two or three little urchins at play, in the neglected garden, which bore the name of 'the back-yard.' The summons was answered by Mrs M'Kinlay, a comely but not very tidy matron, about thirty years of age, who made her appearance from a side apartment, which formed the 'ben' of the little dwelling; her countenance plainly expressing more surprise than pleasure, on hearing the errand of her young visitors. But, after a moment's awkward hesitation, she said, 'I'm sure they're never out o' mischief; an' so, if

they'll gang, which I'm greatly misdootin', ye're welcome to them. That little cuttie Jeannie's near nine year auld, an' micht be of use to keep the bairn; but she'll no tak' a tellin', nor do a thing she's bidden; so, as I was sayin', ye're richt welcome to her an' the twa laddies—if only they'll gang.'

The young ladies expressed a wish to see the children; whereupon the mother proceeded to the back-door, soliloquizing as she went—

'Hech, sirs! what's gaun to happen, that the gentry, that never fashed their heads about the bairns afore, should be wantin' them edicat noo!'

The children had left the back-door, and were now at the farther corner of the 'yard,' where a patch of the sweet-scented clover, had attracted a number of bees from a neighbouring hive. Hither the little mischievous urchins were in turn attracted, to prosecute the cruel and dangerous sport of treading upon the bees, and then possessing themselves of the honey with which they were laden. Perceiving their occupation, the mother exclaimed in an angry tone—

'Ye little hempies, if I were at ye! Jeannie,

I say, come into the house this moment, an' bring the laddies wi' you.'

But the children were too intent upon their sport to pay the slightest attention.

'Jeannie, d'ye hear?' cried her mother, in a more elevated tone; 'my word, lass, I'll gar ye hear in the deafest side o' your head!'

'I'm comin' the noo, mother, if I be spared,' at length replied Jeannie.

'Ye little impident smatchit, that I should say sae,' rejoined Mrs M'Kinlay, 'come into the house this instant moment, whether ye be spared or no; or—if I come till ye!'

The mother's temper being now thoroughly roused, experience told Jeannie that further parley might lead to unpleasant consequences; therefore, taking Norman by the hand, and followed by Roderick, she slowly sauntered into the house. Perceiving the ladies, she hung down her head, and stood with her finger in her mouth, looking at them through a profusion of bright but neglected ringlets, that shaded a face which, but for want of intelligence and cleanliness, would have been very lovely.

The poor child's appearance made a painful,

but not altogether hopeless, impression on the cousins; for there was an expression in her deep blue eye, as she raised it for a moment to Ellen's face, that seemed to say neglect had made her what she was.

'Jeannie, my wee woman,' said Mrs M'Kinlay, mollified by her daughter's tardy obedience, 'ye ken I wantit to send you an' the laddies to Glentroom schule; but it was ow'r far for Norman to walk. Noo, thae twa bonnie leddies are gaun to set up a schule here, an' they want you an' your brithers to gang; and I ken ye'll be gude bairns, an' do as ye are bidden.'

'But I dinna want to gang to the schule,' said Jeannie; 'I like better to pu' posies, an' play at the pal-al, an' catch the wee fishes in the burn; sae I wunna gang.'

This was rather discouraging; but, stimulated by her cousin's example, Louisa began to try her powers of persuasion on Roderick, commonly called Rory, and his younger brother Norman, two fine sturdy little fellows of seven and five years of age.

'You will come to the school, my little man?'

she said, addressing Rory, under the just impression that, if he were secured, Norman would surrender at discretion. 'You will come to the school and see pretty pictures, and hear about birds' nests, and learn to read about them yourself? and if you are a good boy, and mind your lessons, the cook at Stratheden will make a nice little cake for you at Christmas.'

'I wad like to see bonnie picters, an' play wi' the laddies,' said Rory, 'but the maister wad lick me. Johnnie Douglas gaed to the schule at Glentroon a while syne, but he ran awa', for he got his pawmies a'maist every day.'

'But there is to be no master in our school,' said Louisa, 'nor any big boys; only little boys and girls like yourselves, and a kind, gentle mistress, who will never punish you if you attend to your lessons and try to be good.'

The conversation had continued for some time in this strain, and Rory's decision was still hanging in suspense, when Jeannie ran forward, and with a bright smile exclaimed—

'Mammie, I'm gaun to the schule, if this bonnie leddy's to be the mistress.'

Ellen had improved the opportunity afforded

by her cousin's parley with Roderick, and, availing herself of the one hopeful feature in Jeanie's harangue—her evident love of flowers—she so insinuated herself into the poor child's good graces, that her shyness soon vanished; and, throwing back the sunny ringlets that hid her open forehead, she exhibited a countenance lighted up with so much intelligence and animation, as she told Ellen where the various treasures after which she inquired were to be found, that the young lady's heart was drawn towards the interesting though neglected child.

The arrangements were now easily adjusted, the mother promising to have the children's faces and hands clean, on the day appointed for the opening of the school. The other cottages were visited with various success. One woman, whose haggard countenance and miserable attire, bore unmistakeable evidence of habitual intemperance, exclaimed in great wrath—

‘I see nae business that the gentry has, to interfere atween puir folk, an’ their bairns, unless it were to gie them meat an’ claes. But catch them doin’ that!’ Whereupon she slammed the door with great violence.

At other cottages they were told, that the children could not be spared during the summer season, as the girls had to attend to the little ones while their mothers were engaged in field labour, in which the boys also aided; and some of the more advanced children were already at Glentroon school. But, on the whole, the result was satisfactory, twelve scholars having been promised, which was considered a sufficient number to commence with, especially considering the delicate health of the teacher; and it was hoped that, if the desired improvement were realized, other parents would be induced to send their children.

On returning to the Lodge, the cousins gave an animated description of their morning's adventures, with which Mrs M'Kenzie could not help being amused, although by no means certain that the family dignity had not been to some extent compromised, by her daughter's coming into such familiar contact with the lower orders. In truth, the humbling confession must be made, she was beginning to yield to the stream, not as yet so much from conviction, as from the bewildering effect of a certain

gentle opposition, that seemed to cross her path at every turn, and yet never came 'in such a questionable shape' as to warrant resistance. She had been made to feel, that although, at first sight, it seems a very dignified position, to have an entire minority concentrated in one's own person, especially with the reins of government in hand, it is by no means an invulnerable one, and that, unless the disposition be peculiarly dogged, human nature cannot stand it long, but will surrender from very weariness of the conflict.

Moreover, she could not but acknowledge to herself, that, since Ellen's unaccountable fascination had been thrown around her cousin, she had been much more gentle and affectionate, appearing to have more leisure for little acts of attention to her mother than when she had no systematic occupation whatever. Nor must the fact be overlooked (in her eyes one of great importance), that the personal appearance of both young ladies was greatly improved: in Louisa's case, the result of healthful exercise, mental and bodily, in exchange for the occasional excitement and more habitual ennui of her former life; while Ellen was rapidly passing from the

interesting girl into the lovely woman, her countenance beaming with an expression, which Mrs M'Kenzie could not but admire, although not fully appreciating its source.

Punctual to her appointment, Miss Graham made her appearance at Stratheden Lodge; when her modest intelligence and quiet self-possession, deepened the favourable impression of the first interview; while her respectful demeanour towards Mrs M'Kenzie, and the entire want of assumption or vanity in her dress and manners, impressed that lady with the idea of her fitness for managing a school, of which she had consented to be the nominal patroness. Indeed, a change seemed to be passing over her own character, which was less frivolous and self-centred than formerly; while, since an air of quiet cheerfulness had begun to pervade the household, she had become less dependent on the excitement of company, although still there was sometimes a fitful return to her former character. But the young ladies never failed to consult, and, if possible, make her a party in their occupations and plans, by which means she was often insensibly led to share in their enthusiasm.

The school was duly opened ; and interesting it was, although but the day of small things, to see twelve little children, formerly, for the most part, ignorant and neglected, now ranged around Miss Graham's orderly room : their looks expressing a strange mixture of awkward bashfulness and sly mischief, evinced in the ludicrous attempt to screw up their faces to perfect gravity, or the secret pinch inflicted on the next neighbour.

Mrs M'Kenzie accompanied the young ladies on this important occasion, and all were struck with the fact, that although the greater number of the little recruits had clean faces and hands, there was a sad want of decent clothing, especially among those children who had drunken parents. It was therefore agreed, that as the use of the needle was a mystery as yet unknown to the seven little girls present, some plain useful clothing should in the meantime be supplied, in the hope that ere long an influence might be brought to bear upon the parents which would induce more provident habits.

Miss Graham volunteered her assistance in planning and cutting out ; and Louisa felt sure

that her maid would gladly lend her aid. Nor would the young ladies themselves consent to be mere onlookers, but cheerfully contributed their share in the work,—one that brought tears, although not altogether tears of sadness, into the eyes of Ellen, as she recalled the brighter days, when one infinitely dear was her gentle and affectionate guide in such occupation.

Limited as was the number of Miss Graham's pupils, she had no easy task ; for, in almost every case, she had to contend with previous neglect, and in some instances with most stubborn intractable material ; but, strong in faith and patience, the fruit of her labours soon began to appear. Her affectionate manner, combined with systematic rule and quiet decision, so different from the alternate severity and over-indulgence to which most of them had been accustomed, seemed a thing not to be resisted ; and her influence was greatly strengthened by the almost daily visits of the ladies from the Lodge, who found in the teacher an unobtrusive but most valuable friend, from intercourse with whom they could derive both pleasure and profit.

Meanwhile, a higher principle than mere example was, in Louisa's case at least, silently at work; old things were passing away, all things were becoming new. She was now a deeply interested sharer with Ellen in studies which she would once have considered distasteful and irksome; while the removal of Mr M'Farlane to a better living, to which he had been presented by a former class-fellow and companion, led to the providential arrangement, that, until the appointment of a successor, the family should accompany Ellen to her place of worship, where the excellent and gifted pastor had often recalled the image of her beloved father.

Mrs M'Kenzie had on one or two occasions met with Mr and Mrs Stewart at the houses of the neighbouring proprietors; and could not but admit that he was an intelligent gentlemanly man, and his wife a pleasant lady-like woman. They had already made Ellen's acquaintance, and as they had both acquired much experience in the work on which the Stratheden ladies had entered, it was natural that they should be consulted; and thus commenced an intimacy, from which all parties derived great pleasure.

CHAPTER VII.

AS the season advanced, there was one absorbing anticipation, in which all the ladies at Stratheden, to some extent, shared. Walter Gray and his friend were expected before the end of September; and even Ellen's placid spirit was so deeply agitated, that she found it difficult to pursue any systematic occupation, and the intervening time seemed unnaturally protracted. Without any formal explanation, there was that in her brother's letters, which exceedingly cheered and comforted her; for while he gave delightful and animated descriptions of the fair scenes they visited, and the works of art they had an opportunity of examining, sentiments were expressed, and a pervading peacefulness and joy of heart evinced, which his sister thought could only proceed from one source. He spoke also with enthusiasm of his

travelling companion, as one whose society had not only afforded an amount of solid enjoyment, which he had never known in any former companionship ; but to whom he owed a weight of obligation that could never be repaid.

Francis Maxwell's ancient and honourable descent, combined with his great prospects, would, with a proper introduction, have ensured him the entrée of Stratheden Lodge under any circumstances ; but, besides Mrs M'Kenzie's real affection for her nephew and niece, there was something quite exhilarating in the anticipated advent of two fine young men just returned from foreign travel ; and as Maxwell (between whom and the family there seemed already to be a mutual acquaintance) had frankly accepted Mrs M'Kenzie's invitation to be her guest during his stay in Perthshire, all was bustle and preparation.

The cousins were seated one morning in Louisa's dressing-room, both so busily occupied, that for some time there had been little conversation : Ellen finishing a frock for Jeannie M'Kinlay, who was becoming a general favourite ; and Louisa engaged in embroidering

a birth-day present for her mother. Suddenly, looking up with a bright smile, she exclaimed, 'What do you think, Ellen? I have quite escaped from leading strings; having not only planned, but in part executed, a device of my own, in which, although you are a party nearly concerned, I have not even condescended to consult you, nor should at all have alluded to the subject, until the denouement, had not your sign-manual been necessary to give effect to the deed.'

Ellen's active needle was arrested, and, reflecting her cousin's smile, she inquired—

'What can you possibly mean?'

'Listen, ma belle cousine,' replied Louisa, 'and you shall have my full confession. You must know that I have a longing desire to make the acquaintance of that dear old nurse, of whom I have heard so much. Now, from portions of the nice sensible letters you have sometimes read me, I can perceive that she is quite pining for a sight of her "bairns;" and it occurred to me, that could we manage to have her here during Walter's visit, it would form a delightful family reunion. Moreover, apart from my impending

majority giving me some right to expect a little indulgence, I have been a better manager of late; so that, although money has flowed out in new channels, I am quite in funds.

‘I have therefore propounded the matter to mamma, with the understanding that I am to be responsible for the dear old woman’s travelling expenses, and have received her cordial assent. But wherefore silent, cousin mine? Surely you do not disapprove my plan?’

‘Louisa, my more than sister,’ replied Ellen, greatly moved, ‘how shall I sufficiently thank you for your considerate kindness? Surely, dear girl, you are the most marvellous of clairvoyantes, your vision penetrating not into houses merely, but into hearts: for at the moment you first spoke, my thoughts had wandered back to the last dreary evening at Glenulva, and I seemed again to behold the sorrowful face of poor Annie, as it appeared at the parlour door, looking paler and more sad in the silvery moonlight, as the confession was wrung from her affectionate heart, that she could “thole” her solitary musings “nae langer;” and if anything could add to the delight of Walter’s visit,

it would be the presence of that dear maternal friend.'

'But are you sure, darling, that the arrangement will be pleasant to every one, and that what may be considered her odd ways, may not give annoyance to some of the household?'

'I have thought of that, dear,' said Louisa, 'not with reference to their feelings, but hers, and therefore have ascertained that she can sleep, should she prefer it, at the cottage of Miss Graham's aunt, and have a home there, at any time she may wish to be quiet; although, of course, I should like her to be for the most part here.

'And, my own Ellen,' continued Louisa, 'dearest of sisters, most faithful of friends! did you but know the pleasure it gives me, to have even this trifling opportunity of showing my love and gratitude, you would not speak of obligation: for what do I not owe you? not only an amount of substantial present happiness, to which I was formerly an utter stranger, but, through Divine mercy, hopes that stretch beyond time, and will, I trust, only fade when they are absorbed in reality.'

‘ And now, dear, be pleased to write without delay, as, were any one else to do so, the invitation would lose more than half its grace ; and Annie might be apt to put the question, “ But are ye sure the news are true ? ” Joyful news I am sure they will be to her, and the sooner she receives them the better.’

Affectionately embracing her cousin, Ellen at once acted upon the suggestion ; and by the earliest possible post, a letter overflowing with affectionate gratitude was received from Annie, intimating her joyful acceptance of the invitation : whereupon it was arranged that she should arrive a day or two before the young men ; and Ellen had so won upon the affections of the whole household, that even the most thoughtless felt disposed to give the aged domestic a kind reception for her sake ; and Mrs M’Kenzie, who remembered the nurse as a valued servant in her youthful days, not only felt pleasure in communicating so much happiness, but her heart warmed towards the humble friend, of whose affectionate devotion to her sister’s family she had heard so much.

As Annie M’Donald was expected to arrive

at the railway station late in the afternoon, and was but an inexperienced traveller, Mrs M'Kenzie considerably gave orders that the carriage should be in waiting ; thus affording Ellen the opportunity she earnestly desired, of meeting her humble friend without witnesses : for such a flood of painful recollections rushed upon her memory, of all the agonizing scenes through which they had passed together, and of the circumstances of their parting, that she felt it would be an infinite relief, both to herself and Annie, to have no restraint on their feelings.

The longed-for day at length arrived, and Annie had scarcely set foot on the platform, when she was affectionately greeted by Ellen, who had been for some time anxiously awaiting her arrival. Her hand trembled violently, as she was led to the carriage ; but few words were spoken, until the door was closed and the homeward drive commenced. Then, still continuing to grasp Ellen's hand almost painfully, as if to assure herself that the meeting was no delusion, and sobbing convulsively, Annie's pent-up feelings burst forth : ' I'm greetin', darlin', ' she exclaimed, ' but, oh, my heart's

lauchin'! An' blessed be He that has spared me to see this day; an' blessin's on her kindly heart that thocht o' puir Annie for your sake. Sair, sair have I pined to see you: no that I thocht your heart could ever change; but, dear bairn, I langed to speak wi' you of a' the way by which the Lord has led us sin' we pairtit; an' to see for mysel' if Miss Herriet—Mrs. M'Kenzie, I mean—was as kind to you as she that's awa' wad ha'e been to her sister's mitherless bairn. An' noo wi' my ain e'en I see your face!—changed, indeed, but liker *hers* than ever. An', oh, need I say mair than that!

'Dear, faithful friend,' said Ellen, 'my joy at our meeting is equal to your own, for greatly have I longed to see you. The Lord has indeed been leading us by a way that we knew not; but to me it has not only been a right, but increasingly a pleasant way. Never, never can the past be forgotten, nor the void be filled that sore bereavement has made; but is it not sweet to realize the glorious rest that our dear ones now enjoy, and to feel that we are already reaping answers to the fervent prayers they offered up while yet with us? For, dear Annie,

I am convinced that Walter now knows the God of his parents; because he evidently enjoys a peace that no other knowledge can give: and the change seems some way connected with his travels abroad, at the necessity for which we, in our short-sightedness, were disposed to murmur, because it prolonged our separation.

‘And now, dear nurse, I know you will not speak of yourself, till I have told you how it has fared with me. You shall witness my happiness, and all the cause I have for deepest gratitude, for I cannot speak of it. But tell me whether you have found your stay at Ardinnan pleasant; useful I know you have been, but I want to know whether you have been as happy and comfortable as we all wish you to be.’

‘The Lord has been very gracious,’ replied Annie, ‘an’ I *ocht* to be happy and grateful; but thochts o’ better days are often sae borne in upon my spirit, that I’m afeard I repine. But, as you was sayin’, darlin’, I’m led by a right way, to try me an’ prove me, an’ show me what is in my puir idolatrous heart. But the thing that maist distresses me I *maun* tell you, for it presses sair on my spirit.

‘At Glenulva, the very air ye breathed seemed to be holy; an’ it was a’maist impossible to depart far frae the richt path, wi’ a’ its beauty spread out afore ye. But at Ardinnan it’s far different. Bell, my niece, is a decent lass, and anxious to bring up her bairns in a creditable way; but her heart’s ow’r muckle set on the world. And, oh, Miss Eilan, dear! it’s no gude for the spirit’s health, to be shut up frae godly society, especially if in the main you’re treated wi’ kindness: there’s the danger o’ “thinking of yourself more highly than you ought to think;” an’ comparin’ yourself wi’ those about ye, the conscience is in danger o’ becomin’ less tender, and the walk less wary. Then, instead of livin’ to the glory of God, and leadin’ others to behold it, ye not only lose your own peace, but bring dishonour on the holy name by which you are called.’

‘Well can I understand your feelings, Annie,’ said Ellen; ‘for your experience has not been unlike my own. When I first came to Stratheden, past joys and sorrows were so vividly impressed on my mind, and the future as well as the past seemed so dreary and joyless, that my

spirit was ready to faint within me. But a time followed of more real although less apparent danger: the kindness I received—so much greater than I had anticipated—and the evident impression on all around me, that I was a decided Christian, or, perhaps I should rather say, “righteous overmuch,” led for a short time to something like self-satisfied security; and I was permitted to seek, nay, in some measure to find, happiness in mere earthly affection and occupation. But I was not suffered to continue long in this perilous state; the snare was broken, and I escaped.

‘Now, by Divine mercy, I not only enjoy peace myself, but my cousin, whom I am sure you will dearly love, stimulates and aids me in every good work; and, surrounded by the mercies and blessings of the present, I can with greater calmness recall the chequered scenes of the past, and cherish the hope that He who has so wondrously upheld and guided hitherto, will never leave nor forsake me. Thus, dear friend, it will doubtless be in your experience: the breaking up of the happy household at Glenulva, and the separation from the children of the

manse, could not but be deeply painful to your affectionate heart; but all shall work together for good; and who knows, dear nurse, whether we may not one day be restored to each other? Meanwhile, I cannot doubt that you were sent to Ardinnan for good, both to yourself and others. To the children especially, I feel certain that you will be a rich blessing, as you were to us.'

'The Lord grant it, dear,' said Annie; 'an' surely it's a token for good, that He has permitted me to see your face again, an' hear ye speak sic words as suld be spoken by Eilan Gray, the child o' prayer and promise—the dochter of parents noo angels in heaven.'

The time seemed too short, for all that was to be spoken at this first interview; and, amidst such free interchange of thought, the drive to the Lodge was speedily brought to a close; and Annie having had time to compose her spirits, she was prepared to meet, with her usual modest self-possession, the warm reception of Louisa, and the kind though somewhat stately courtesy of her mother.

Every other feeling being absorbed in the joy

of being near her 'bairn,' she gratefully accepted the offer of a small apartment in the immediate neighbourhood of Ellen's, where she was at once installed, and surrounded by every little comfort that considerate kindness could suggest; while the favourable impression they had received of her character, and their desire to oblige Miss Gray, whose condescending kindness had won all hearts, induced the servants to show every attention to one, whom they might otherwise have considered an oddity.

The next day Annie was taken to visit the school, and one or two of the villagers in whom the young ladies felt a special interest; and, being one who could not eat the bread of idleness, she begged that, in the arrangements for the reception of the young men so anxiously expected, she might be allowed to have a share, and soon proved herself a most valuable assistant.

Considering the circumstances under which they parted, and how long a time they had been separated, Ellen may have wished that her brother had been arriving without a companion, and that there had been fewer witnesses of their meeting; but her heart was so full of happiness

and gratitude, that such thoughts could not be cherished.

The anticipated evening at length came, and with watchful anxiety did the little family party listen for the first sound of carriage wheels on the gravel walk of the avenue. At length their near approach was distinctly heard ; and, forgetting everything but intense joy at her brother's return, Ellen rushed forth to meet him, and was soon clasped in speechless emotion to his bosom.

From an instinctive reluctance to intrude on the sacredness of such a meeting, Francis Maxwell remained in the carriage until Walter turned to look for him, when he approached, and was thus presented—

‘Ellen, I have more pleasure than I can express in introducing you to Francis Maxwell, next to yourself, my best earthly friend.’

With graceful frankness was her hand extended to her brother's friend ; and, entering the house together, they were met in the hall by Mrs M'Kenzie and her daughter, who gave to their young relative and his companion a most cordial reception.

But foremost, amidst a little group of domes-

tics clustered behind, was a face that at once caught Walter's eye; and, hastening forward, he grasped Annie's hand, and gazed into her countenance, as if to assure himself that it was indeed the dear maternal friend, with whom his earliest associations were so closely connected. Annie's feelings were too deep for language; and, turning to Mrs M'Kenzie, the young man said—

‘My dear aunt, how shall I sufficiently acknowledge your considerate kindness, in arranging that nothing should be wanting to complete the happiness of this joyful meeting? Dear Annie, I do indeed rejoice to see you! How well, I had almost said how youthful, you look! and how fares it with you in your new home?’

‘Blessin's on your kind heart, Mr Walter,’ replied the nurse; ‘I never had a hame sin' I left Glenulva, but the Lord has been very gracious, an' the happiness o' this day is a'maist mair than my silly heart can bear.’

Feeling that the interview had become too exciting, and had better not be protracted, the young man kindly said—

‘You must sleep soundly, dear nurse, to pre-

pare for a long crack with me to-morrow ; so I wish you a good night.'

Then, giving his arm to Mrs M'Kenzie, he led the way to the drawing-room, where, 'the sober certainty' of happiness succeeding to the joyful excitement of meeting, cheerful conversation was kept up until it was time to prepare for the evening meal. When the young men returned, having changed their travelling dresses for more suitable costume, Mrs M'Kenzie had the opportunity of observing more at leisure the striking improvement that had taken place in her nephew's person and manner, as well as the very prepossessing appearance and gentlemanly bearing of his friend ; nor dare we venture to affirm, that certain airy phantoms, which had floated before her busy fancy, even prior to the arrival of the travellers, did not then and there acquire life and substance, representing an ancient baronial residence in the south of Scotland, with a lively, bright-eyed young lady, whose acquaintance we early made, presiding there as 'Lady of the Manor.'

Eleven months had passed away, since, in deepest sorrow, the brother and sister had taken

a last farewell of Glenulva. The intervening period had been most eventful to both, and now they were for a time restored to each other, their hearts filled with gratitude, and buoyant with hope. Never was there a happier party: the still handsome countenance of the lady of the mansion, was wreathed in its brightest smiles; while the young ladies, either as intelligent listeners, or sharers in a lively conversation, where the gentlemen took the lead, contributed their quota to the general enjoyment.

But Walter's gaze had occasionally rested so much more fixedly on his cousin's countenance, than was consistent with his usual good breeding, that her heightened colour manifested some little annoyance; perceiving which, the young man at once frankly exclaimed—

‘Pardon me, cousin, I have been exceedingly rude and inconsiderate; but short as the period has been since we last met, you are so strangely altered, that, trying to discover whence the change arose, my eyes have unconsciously reverted too often to your face.’

‘Have I become altogether hideous?’ inquired Louisa gaily.

‘You have become wondrously like Ellen,’ replied the young man, looking affectionately at his sister; ‘and perhaps it may be a brother’s partiality, but I cannot discern anything very frightful in her face.’

‘I thank you, dear cousin,’ responded Louisa with deep feeling; ‘that compliment does indeed commend itself to my heart. Ellen has been to me more than a sister; and if I am not the vain trifler I was when you first knew me, she has been the instrument in the change.’

Perhaps other eyes than those of the affectionate brother, were attracted towards the modest countenance of her, most nearly interested in these remarks; but she was too much absorbed in grateful and happy musings to perceive it.

Time glided on imperceptibly, and it was not till a very late hour that the party thought of separating for the night; when, drawing his sister aside, Walter whispered—

‘We must have a long conversation to-morrow, darling, for I have much to tell you; but this time you will not, I trust, have to shed such bitter tears as I have often caused you.’

With a full heart, Ellen affectionately pressed his hand; and not trusting herself to reply, hastily retired: and if tears that night bedewed the couch at which she knelt, to pour forth the feelings of a grateful heart, surely they were not bitter!

After breakfast on the following morning, the young ladies naturally wished to exhibit to their visitors, the beautiful scenery and other objects of interest in the neighbourhood; among which, the village school, that had afforded them so much pleasure, of course took a prominent place. The work had already advanced to such an extent, as to give the greatest encouragement; and several additional children having recently been sent, the little apartment was quite crowded.

As Mrs M'Kenzie was suffering from severe headache, and the young people thought of prolonging their ramble to a beautiful glen, at a considerable distance, she did not accompany them, but watched their departure from the window of the breakfast-parlour with great complacency; the arrangement of the couples, although rather unusual, being quite to her satisfaction: Louisa accepting the offered arm

of Maxwell, while Ellen leaned with confiding affection on that of her brother.

The school was first visited, when Miss Graham received them with her usual modest grace, and exhibited some of the work executed, and the knowledge acquired by her more promising pupils, whose very appearance testified to the success of her labours. The young men were greatly interested in this hopeful commencement of a village school. To Maxwell, especially, it had a touching interest, as it recalled the self-denying beneficence of a dear departed mother, who had taken a lively interest in such work ; and he was ready to give or receive hints, to be treasured up with a view to future usefulness.

The day being remarkably fine, the young people next set out on their purposed ramble, amidst the beautiful scenery in the neighbourhood, when the brother and sister enjoyed the opportunity they so earnestly desired, of conversing freely together of all that had befallen them during their separation.

For a short time after leaving the cottage the party kept up an animated general conversation ;

but, entering into the feelings that could not fail to influence her cousins, after so lengthened a separation, Louisa proposed diverging a little from the path they had chosen, to show her companion a beautiful and extensive view, from a peculiarly fine point of sight, to which he, at once appreciating her motive, cheerfully assented; and setting off at a somewhat accelerated pace, they managed to keep for a considerable time a good way in advance of their companions.

Presently, drawing his sister's arm more closely within his own, Walter thus commenced the conversation—

‘I need not ask you, Ellen dear, whether you remember the last gloomy evening we spent at Glenulva; nor whether you have forgiven the deep sorrow I then caused you. My heaven-daring folly has, I trust, been forgiven by Him who might justly have struck me to the earth in righteous indignation; but by me it can never be forgiven. And, O! how have I longed for such an opportunity as this to tell you of all the way by which I have been led in judgment and in mercy; for such a multitude of thoughts

rushed upon my memory when I endeavoured to tell you by writing, that the attempt was fruitless.'

'My own brother,' replied Ellen, 'not less fervently have I longed for this happy meeting; for absence only seemed to render you more dear. Nay, the very prayerful anxiety I had on your account bound you more closely to my heart. But that is all over now, dearest Walter, is it not? You have never directly alluded to the subject; but for some time past the spirit of your letters has given me the joyful assurance that your mind is no longer tossed on the troubled billows of uncertainty, but has found rest and peace where alone they are to be obtained.

'But tell me how in every respect it has fared with you since we parted; for all, all will be interesting.'

'You know too well,' responded her brother, 'the gloomy, rebellious spirit in which I returned to Edinburgh—at enmity with myself, with the world, and, dreadful thought! at enmity with Him who was even then dealing with me in love and mercy. My altered circum-

stances necessitated increased exertion ; and it was in a bitter although resolute spirit I entered on the new path, my proud, unregenerate heart ever suggesting the galling thought, that I was superior in intellect to many who obtained honours, simply because, more favoured by fortune, they could command leisure and every facility for study, while I had to toil on amidst the drudgery of instructing uncongenial minds.

‘ With this envious eye did I regard him, who is now dear to me as a brother—my invaluable friend, Maxwell ; and, till an event occurred which changed the whole current of my thoughts, his generous efforts to win my confidence and friendship were coldly repelled.

‘ At this time, Ellen, your dear, affectionate letters, while they sometimes caused deepest self-reproach, had a wonderfully soothing effect on my troubled spirit, and seemed to cast an uncertain gleam of light across the dark future. They reminded me of early happy days, and of a peace and cheerfulness to which I was now a stranger, but which you, although a sharer in all my bereavements and difficulties, evidently still possessed. Whence, I thought, could the

difference arise? for I knew that, naturally, your feelings were even more acute than my own. Could it be that there was a reality in that divine support of which Christians spoke, but which was a favourite subject for sarcastic ridicule with my brilliant friend Roland?

‘Recalling my long-neglected promise to you, I one evening opened my mother’s Bible; and various little annotations inscribed by her tremulous, feeble hand, so recalled the days of her gentle, patient suffering, that I could not but press the volume to my lips.

‘The wondrous beauty of the narrative that first met my eye, at once excited the deepest interest; and my attention had become completely absorbed, when the door opened, and my evil genius, in the form of Frederick Roland, entered the room, unannounced, and without knocking, as had become the practice in our familiar intimacy.

‘Elevating both hands, he pretended to stand aghast; and then, with mock gravity, apologized for disturbing me while engaged in so praiseworthy an occupation. Presently, after having indulged in a boisterous fit of laughter, he exclaimed—

‘“Ye gods ! what an edifying spectacle this would have been, for a saint like Frank Maxwell, but it is quite thrown away upon a graceless fellow like me ; yet not altogether thrown away, for it has let me into a secret that I little suspected. Here have I been making myself most miserable, because of late you have been looking so wretchedly ; and fancying that the midnight lamp was insidiously consuming your strength, I, in the plenitude of my benevolence, arranged, and came here to announce, a plan, whereby, being out of harness to-morrow, you might enjoy a free run in the country, in company with two other choice spirits, to make no account of your humble servant. And behold the mystery solved ! In place of studies invigorating to the mental, although it may be trying to the physical powers, here you are, poring your eyes out, and imbibing all manner of dismal notions from a little antiquated Bible, by the aid of which your grandmother probably learnt to be a very proper young lady.”

‘The indignation roused by Roland’s concluding remark rendered his ridicule for the moment pointless, and I haughtily replied—

“It is, indeed, my mother’s Bible—a mother whose memory I love and honour too deeply, to have her name introduced in a conversation like this. I thank you for your very considerate interest in my health; but I have other plans for to-morrow, and shall not leave town.”

“Gramercy, fair sir!” responded Roland, “I had no intention whatever to wound your feelings; but verily I perceive the potion hath already wrought marvellously. In the days of former darkness, you agreed with me in thinking that, after the exhausting labour of six days, some recreation on the seventh was indispensable; but, in the nomenclature of the saints, Sunday is ‘the Lord’s day,’ and having already imbibed somewhat of their spirit, you are afraid to pilfer any portion of it, lest He by whom you suppose its better observance is enjoined, should visit you with condign punishment.

“But, dear Walter,” he added, now assuming the frank, affectionate manner which it was always difficult for me to resist, “jesting apart, surely you will not suffer your once free spirit to be trammelled by obsolete notions, that ought to have been buried with your covenanting great-

grandfathers—or, rather, with the ancient Jews,—for even if all that is recorded in that Book, were true, the Sabbath only formed one of the ritualistic observances, imposed upon that perverse race, so strangely, and yet in some respects appropriately, termed ‘the Lord’s *peculiar* people.’

“ But this point shall be examined in detail on some future day; to-morrow, at least, you will not refuse us your company? There’s a dear, good old fellow; I have said it was your haggard countenance, that induced me to plan the excursion; the dog-cart is bespoken; and I have persuaded Stanley and Marshall to relinquish another engagement, that they may accompany us. Surely you will not be so shabby as to leave us in the lurch?—and I promise you we shall be on our very best behaviour.”

Shocked as Ellen was, in listening to such profane language as had never before assailed her ears, and in thinking of the contaminating influences to which her brother had been exposed, she was too deeply interested to interrupt his narrative by a single remark; and after a moment’s pause he continued thus—

‘ Sister, I could recall every word of this conversation, for it was burnt in upon my memory by subsequent events ; but the detail is too painful ;—suffice it to say, that with shameful weakness I at length suffered myself to be persuaded that, the excursion having been planned on my account, I could not for this time at least honourably escape. But the wretched feeling of misery, often graciously sent as a premonition of evil, when we are about to do violence to conscience (and mine was never utterly stifled), was gnawing at my heart ; and to escape the torture, I resolved that this should be my last Sabbath excursion. . Alas ! who can calculate the results of our deliberate transgression ? Had I remained firm, and spoken even up to the feeble measure of light I then possessed, the assigned object of the excursion would at least have been taken away ; and, it may be, the fearful consequence averted. But I hurry on to a scene that can never be recalled but with horror and anguish.

‘ I need not say that that night my mother’s Bible was not reopened. I slept little, and in the morning met my companions at early breakfast ; and, the weather being very fine for the

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season, we started for Habbie's Howe, apparently in exuberant spirits ; although one of the party at least was at heart most miserable.

' Our conveyance was one of those light two-wheeled vehicles, with an elevated seat, in which gay young men are so fond of dashing along the streets; and Roland, being an experienced driver, held the reins, as was customary on such occasions. He was, as usual, the life of the company: never had he been more sparkingly gay ; and, alas ! never more profane. I occupied the seat by his side, and for several miles we proceeded on our journey at a rapid rate ; but having fallen into rather a taciturn mood, I had for some time been taking little part in the lively conversation kept up by my companions, when, Roland having turned to address some brilliant sally to Marshall, who sat behind me, I happened to raise my eyes, and observed immediately in advance a large stone, with which, but for the most skilful guidance, one of the wheels must inevitably come in collision. I hurriedly called out, " Mind your hand, Roland ;" but it was too late, or perhaps my words even ensured the catastrophe ! The reins were hastily pulled,—I fear

on the wrong side,—and in an instant the vehicle was dashed to the ground with tremendous violence.

‘For a moment all were so stunned that the extent of the calamity was not realized; but I, being very slightly hurt, was the first to recover presence of mind, and immediately proceeded to unharness the horse, whose struggles to get free from his painful situation threatened additional injury to poor Stanley, who had already suffered severely.

‘Marshall had, like myself, been little injured. But what of Roland? He spoke not, moved not. Alas, Ellen, he never spoke again! Suddenly precipitated to the ground, and his head coming in violent contact with the newly repaired road, severe fracture of the skull and instant death had ensued.’

Ellen shuddered, and became deadly pale; but no word was uttered to interrupt a narrative in which she felt so intensely painful an interest; and, after a brief interval, the young man thus resumed:—

‘I remember, as in a dream, flying to the nearest village in quest of the needed assistance;

but how Marshall and I struggled through that fearful day, I cannot tell. Even now, I dare not recount in detail, the depths of darkness into which my spirit subsequently fell : it is too dreadful ; and but for the tender, judicious care of Francis Maxwell, whom a long-suffering God graciously sent as a ministering angel, death or insanity would probably have been the result.

‘A severe attack of fever ensued ; but the bodily suffering was almost forgotten amidst the intense agony of spiritual distress. There was no need of arguments upon the evidences now. I felt the truth of God’s Word, and the consciousness of His dealing with me, in my inmost soul ; and would have given worlds, had I possessed them, for the assurance of pardon and acceptance with Him, whom I had formerly despised and rejected.

‘My long silence, Ellen, at this time, must have caused you much uneasiness ; but I felt comforted by the thought, that my subsequent letters would impart cheering hopes to your affectionate heart. Your correspondence, dear girl, was at this time made very precious to me,—the clear, simple faith manifested in your letters

giving power to Maxwell's arguments: and both were needed; for when temptation to unbelief had lost its power, the adversary assailed me with temptation to despair,—setting in array before me the early advantages and convictions against which I had sinned, charging me with the murder of Roland, and triumphantly asking, Can such a course of heaven-daring iniquity be forgiven? At length, after many alternations of hope and the deepest despondency, the text that had so often met my eye, or fallen coldly upon my ear,—“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,”—was brought home with living power to my heart, saying to the tempest that had so long raged within, “Peace, be still;” and from that hour, no abiding doubt has clouded the peaceful assurance with which I have been favoured. But hard study and mental suffering had considerably shattered my health; and the generous proposal of my friend, that I should accompany him on a Continental tour, with a salary so liberal, that it will carry me through the approaching winter, without the necessity of taking pupils, came to me most providentially, and has proved in every respect delightful and beneficial.’

With murmured words of thanksgiving, Ellen raised her tearful eyes to her brother's face, and, replying as much to the look as the words, he exclaimed—

‘You ask, dearest sister, What shall we render? Shall we not look with wonder and gratitude on the past, even when we recall its deep sorrow; and show, by the glad, spontaneous service of renewed hearts, our gratitude to Him who has so wondrously fulfilled the promises, in reliance on which, our beloved parents were enabled to triumph over death?’

Not in words could Ellen at that moment respond to her brother's appeal; but, clasping her hands affectionately on his arm, the countenance which she raised to meet his earnest gaze, was more eloquent than spoken language, telling of joy, gratitude, and high resolve in mingled emotion too deep for utterance.

CHAPTER VIII.

IF the flight of time had not been noted by the brother and sister, neither had it passed heavily with Louisa and her companion. Individuals sometimes meet for the first time, not as strangers, but as friends ; and thus had Walter's letters taught the family at Stratheden Lodge to regard his travelling companion. It was Maxwell's first visit to the Highlands ; and familiar as he was with the exquisite scenery of his native county, there was a wild, majestic grandeur, often alternating with scenes of fairy loveliness, that gave to the 'land of the mountain and flood' a new and peculiar charm, which he had a mind fully to appreciate.

The conversation likewise turned upon Walter and his sister,—a topic in which both felt the warmest interest ; and while Francis spoke in the

highest terms of his friend, dwelling on the advantage he had derived from his guidance in study, and the pleasure he had enjoyed in his society, Louisa, warming with a theme so congenial to her affectionate heart, spoke with a sister's partiality of Ellen's character, in which she could discover no flaw ; and deeply interested her companion by an account of the pervading change which her cousin's gentle influence had produced on the household.

The agitation resulting from sorrow, leaves traces which cannot speedily be removed ; but it is far otherwise with joyous excitement : and very soon the brother and sister were able to re-join their companions with serene and cheerful countenances. As it was now time to return to the Lodge, the little party took the nearest path thither, beguiling the way by animated conversation on interesting subjects ; and arriving in time for luncheon, when they were joined by Mrs M'Kenzie, her headache relieved, and the invalid morning costume only retained, because it was elegant and becoming. A small party of intimate friends, including Mr and Mrs Stewart, had been invited to dinner ; and as the morning

had been rather a fatiguing one, the young ladies withdrew early, that they might enjoy a little rest, before dressing for the evening.

Such times they usually spent together in Louisa's dressing-room; and on this occasion both had much that was interesting to communicate. But Miss M'Kenzie was unusually silent and thoughtful, while Ellen, whose heart had been relieved of a heavy burden, was so gay and lively, that they seemed for the time to have changed characters.

Throwing her arm around her cousin's neck as they rested together on the sofa, she archly inquired—

‘Has Huldbrand's representative at length appeared? and all confidence between us being at an end, are we henceforth to enact the novel character of rivals?’

‘Nay, dear girl,’ replied her cousin, affectionately embracing her, ‘rivals we shall never be, except in sisterly affection for each other. But I have been dreaming over the past and the future, as you were wont to do; and oh! Ellen, it is a sorrowful past, an uncertain future! The present, indeed, is all that heart could de-

sire ; and when I contrast its bright, and, I hope, not unprofitable hours, with the utter blank, in regard to all true happiness and usefulness, that marked my existence before you came to Stratheden, the predominant feeling is deepest thankfulness ; but then, ' passing away ' seems to be inscribed on all our enjoyments, and a shade of sadness steals over my spirit, when I think of the uncertain future. Where and in what circumstances shall we all be a few years hence ? For, Ellen, we cannot always remain as we now are.'

' Leave the future, darling,' responded her cousin, ' with Him who has so graciously cared for the past ; and help me to rejoice and give thanks ; for, indeed, my heart has almost more happiness than it can bear—more gratitude than I can find words to express.'

Sympathizing most deeply in her cousin's joy and gratitude, Louisa listened with absorbed attention, as she gave a brief epitome of her brother's narrative ; but when, at the close, they rejoiced and gave thanks together, a feeling of awe and sadness stole over their spirits, as they thought of the unhappy Roland, so early, so

suddenly called into the presence of Him whom he had despised and rejected.

Louisa had, in her turn, much that was interesting to communicate; especially did she gladden Ellen's heart by an animated report of all that Maxwell had said in her brother's praise. Of the stranger himself they spoke in the highest terms; for, apart altogether from his distinguished personal qualities, he had found, in his generous kindness and warm friendship for Walter, a sure avenue to the hearts of the cousins; and it is questionable whether at that moment either of them remembered, that he was young, wealthy, and handsome.

Ellen now retired to her own room, wishing to have a little time for quiet thought before dressing for dinner, and promising to call for Louisa on her way to the drawing-room. When all were assembled there, Mr Stewart being the only minister present, had the honour of taking Mrs M'Kenzie down to dinner and sitting at her right hand; nor could she help mentally contrasting the polished ease and self-possession with which he performed the little amenities of the dinner-table, with the somewhat awkward

and fawning demeanour of him, who had on former occasions occupied the seat of honour. Mr M'Ivor of Arnmore, a very old and intimate friend, presided at the lower end of the table; and the party being well assorted, there was less ceremony and more real enjoyment than usually distinguished 'the grand dinners' at Stratheden Lodge. But although there were among the guests, agreeable and intelligent people of both sexes, and two or three of the class that Louisa had designated 'merely ornamental,' we do not purpose diverging from the straight line of our narrative, to introduce them individually.

The ladies had not long returned to the drawing-room, when they were followed thither by the gentlemen; and amidst animated conversation and music, to which Maxwell and Walter Gray lent the aid of their rich, deep-toned voices, the evening glided rapidly away.

Having been much occupied during the day, Ellen had only caught an occasional glimpse of Annie as she bustled about, rendering herself generally useful; but, retiring to her room shortly after the departure of the guests, she

found her aged friend quietly seated at her knitting, and was greeted on entering with so bright a smile, that she felt sure there was something pleasant to communicate.

‘I couldna gang to my bed, darlin’,’ said Annie, ‘till I had telled you o’ my heart’s gladness, an’ rejoiced wi’ you ow’r the Lord’s goodness to us a’. Bein’ a wee thocht tired this afternoon, I was sittin’ wi’ my Book in my ain bonnie bit roomie, when somebody chappit at the door, an’ wha should it be but our ain Mr Walter, wi’ this beautifu’ shawl in his hand, that he had brocht a’ the way frae Paris for his mother’s nurse? It’s far ow’r grand for the like o’ me; but, O! wasn’t it kind an’ mindfu’? But, Miss Eilan dear, I grat like a bairn, when your brither sat doun beside me, wi’ my hard hand claspit as kindly in his, as gin I had been his mother, an’ spoke o’ your blithe young days an’ o’ them that’s awa, an’, best of a’, darlin’, telled me that the God of his fathers was now his ain God.’

‘We have, indeed, deepest cause of gratitude and joy, dear Annie,’ replied Ellen; ‘and where should orphans like us seek for sympathy, both

in our joys and sorrows, if not from her who has been to us a second mother? As to your shawl, I think Walter has displayed more discretion than could have been expected from one so inexperienced in such matters: it is handsome and substantial, but by no means "grand;" and I hope you will give him the pleasure of seeing you wear it on a "grand" occasion to which we are looking forward. But, Annie, what do you think of my brother's friend? Remembering your deep-seated antipathy to "flunkeys," I have feared that his valet's presence in the servants' hall might lessen your comfort. With my aunt's ancient factotum, Donald, I perceive you are already on excellent terms; but you may feel less at ease with a younger stranger, especially an Englishman.'

'Na, na, Miss Eilan,' responded Annie, 'although he *has* an English tongue in his heid, Charles is nane o' your upsettin' whipper-snappers, like maist servin' men—ae thing afore their master's face, and anither ahint his back—but a douce, weel-principled lad, mair betoken that he serves in a Christian household. I had a lang crack wi' him the day; an' he says

the servants at the Hall wud a' gang down on their bended knees, to do onything for Mr Frank, he's such a kind master. Our Mr Walter an' him are just like brithers; an' Charles heard him promise to be at a grand gatherin' that's to be at Maxton Hall next month, when the young squire comes of age.'

Seldom in our beloved Scotland does the brightest day close undimmed by a single cloud; and Annie's concluding words, like that cloud, cast a shadow over the close of the bright and happy day through which Ellen had passed; sending a chill remembrance to her heart, that present happiness was too intense to be enduring. She longed to be alone, that she might pour forth the feelings of a grateful heart, and seek the needed strength for duty or trial; therefore, in all sincerity, complaining of fatigue, she bade the nurse an affectionate 'Good night.'

Brightly, but all too swiftly, did the hours glide on at Stratheden Lodge, diversified by pleasant excursions and visits, or the deeper enjoyments of the home circle; but the first week of October had passed away, and the day of parting, which they would gladly have forgot-

ten, was no longer distant. But, meanwhile, an event was in prospect, in which all parties felt the liveliest interest—the twenty-first birthday of the young heiress.

In former times, this auspicious day would have been celebrated by a magnificent entertainment, to which all the aristocracy within a circuit of several miles, would have been invited; while, Mrs M'Kenzie's direct connection with the humbler tenantry having ceased at her husband's death, she would not have felt that they had any special claim on her notice. But Louisa had learned to respect and feel a warm interest in her poorer neighbours, with several of whom she had made her mother acquainted; and it was agreed that they should have a share in the day's enjoyment. But this was not enough: her heart overflowing with happiness and gratitude, Louisa wished to commemorate her entering on a new era in life, by some memorial that would benefit the district. Much had the matter been talked over between the cousins in private, while occasional hints had been thrown out in conversation with Mrs M'Kenzie; but now a committee of the whole house was summoned,

and Mr Stewart having had much experience in all that concerned the interests of the humbler classes, he was requested to preside.

The thoughts of the young ladies naturally reverted to the school, with which their first efforts at usefulness in the village had been so pleasantly associated. Its success had exceeded their most sanguine anticipations. The harvest season having closed, more children had an opportunity of attending; while Miss Graham's judicious system, supported by the kind attention of the ladies, had produced so visible an improvement on the pupils, that parents who at first stood aloof were induced to send their children, and the little apartment, in which the work was commenced, had become quite overcrowded.

Under these circumstances it was Miss M'Kenzie's wish to obtain a more commodious school-room; but in none of the cottages could the desired accommodation be found. She therefore seemed shut up to the alternative of building a modest school-house—an undertaking rendered less formidable by the abundance of stone in the immediate neighbourhood; besides, there was

a portion of waste ground at the end of the village, on which Louisa had for some time past had her eye, and with which she had ascertained that her kinsman, Allan M'Kenzie, was willing to present her.

Indeed, the heir-at-law had recently sought every opportunity of ingratiating himself with his young relative, as, apart from her numerous personal attractions, being a man of practical business habits, he could not but perceive that her fortune, united to his possessions, would make a very complete thing, and enable him to carry out sundry extensive improvements which he had long been contemplating, but for which his annual income did not supply the means.

Had Mrs M'Kenzie not been engaged in building an ærial castle for her daughter in the county of Roxburgh, such an arrangement might probably have met her highest approbation; but, under existing circumstances, she felt no desire to incur an obligation to Mr M'Kenzie, — a feeling evidently shared by Walter Gray, who seemed most unaccountably bent on discovering faults in the proposed site. Louisa was less quick-sighted in such matters than she

might once have been : hence, the attentions of her matter-of-fact connection, although they had not escaped her mother's quick eye, had seemed to her merely the natural result of their relative positions. But as she looked, in some surprise, from her mother to her cousin, a light seemed to break in upon her mind ; and, with flushed cheek and hurried accent, she said, 'Let us abandon this site, then, at once ; and I now remember that our old friend M'Ivor, Arnmore, to whom part of the village belongs, while one day rallying Ellen and me on what he termed our "fiery zeal in accelerating the march of intellect," playfully offered us a piece of ground, equally suitable, on which to erect an "institution for the general instruction and moral elevation of the district," at the rent of a peppercorn annually, if demanded.'

Maxwell had hitherto been a silent member of the committee, although his animated countenance showed the lively interest he felt in the discussion ; but now, turning to Louisa, he gaily said —

'To you, Miss M'Kenzie, as the presiding genius in this goodly plan, must a solitary wayfarer address his petition. I aspire to the

honour of being accepted as a partner in the enterprise, that I too may be permitted to set up a memorial stone to commemorate one of the happiest periods of my life; and which, I venture to hope, may sometimes recall to me the memory of beloved friends, until, in the good providence of God, we meet again. You have determined on erecting a school-house: will you allow me the privilege of adding accommodation for your interesting protégée, Miss Graham?’

Before answering, Louisa cast a rapid glance around the family circle. Her mother’s face was radiant with approving smiles; for, was not this almost equivalent to proposing a life partnership? And the countenance of that inexplicable young man Walter Gray, expressed sly satisfaction. But, although Ellen’s heightened colour showed that she was a deeply interested listener, her downcast eye was not raised to meet that of her cousin. Again light seemed to break in upon Louisa’s mind, and, frankly extending her hand, she with a bright smile accepted Maxwell’s generous offer.

Leaving the ladies to deal with M’Ivor, more

generally termed 'Arnmore,' the gentlemen undertook to make all the necessary arrangements, Mr Stewart kindly promising the use of a plan, on which the school at Glentroon had been built.

M'Ivor was a warm-hearted, benevolent old gentleman, who had the greatest possible pleasure in promoting the comfort of his tenantry, after what he considered the good old fashion. He would have scorned to eject or expatriate families that had dwelt on his property for generations, either for the greater gain arising from large farms, or for the sake of game preserves, much as in his younger days he had loved the chase. It was his delight to dispense liberal Christmas dinners, with plenty of home-brewed ale; to which were added, when required, blankets and warm clothing. And when the church and country awoke to a higher sense of duty towards the rising generation, and additional schools began to be planted, he gave his money when asked, although not with his wonted alacrity, being by no means certain that this was not an innovation on the good old system, under which the people had lived very

contentedly. And why should not the parish schools, that had been such a blessing to the country since the days of the Reformation, be sufficient to instruct the peasantry of the present day? Personal aid on the part of the higher classes formed no part of his system, and in his own case was never dreamed off: hence, he, in the first instance, made himself very merry at the expense of the young ladies, whose romantic enterprise he prophesied would soon be abandoned.

But, when he saw the amount of temporal comfort and moral improvement, which had already resulted from the experiment, he generously confessed his error, and accorded his warmest approbation. Moreover, although an old bachelor, he was exceedingly fond of young people, and Louisa had exercised an absolute sway over him, from the time that, as a beautiful wayward child, she was permitted to search his ample pockets, for the sweetmeats sure to be secreted in one of them, on the condition of clambering on his knee, to pay for the theft in kisses; and now that she was 'woman grown,' and Ellen had obtained an almost equal place in his affections, he could deny them nothing.

Therefore, secretly pleased, but amidst pathetic lamentations over his own folly, the old gentleman not only consented to present his young friends with the required site, but to lay the foundation stone.

All difficulties being now obviated, the arrangements advanced with great speed ; and the 20th of October was anxiously anticipated by many, especially the scholars and their parents, to whom it was a holiday of no common interest. The weather was still fine for the season, clear and bracing, although no longer warm ; but, as a precaution against the sudden showers apt to fall in mountainous districts, two ample tents were erected in a neighbouring field,—the one containing refreshments for grown-up spectators, and the other an ample supply of good things for the children, which Arnmore had insisted on providing.

The lovely water-lily and native heather which, in their season, abounded in the neighbourhood, would have formed an elegant and appropriate decoration ; but, with most of the field flowers, they had passed away. The garden and greenhouse, however, yielded their treasures ; and that

‘the heather bell’ might not be wanting, every scholar was presented with a sprig of Cape heath, then in luxuriant blossom in the conservatories at Stratheden and Arnmore.

It was not till seated at the breakfast-table on the auspicious morning, that the young ladies, in the exuberance of their gaiety, ventured to rally their old friend, who sat opposite, on his anticipated maiden speech; when the look of blank dismay which overspread his honest countenance was so ludicrous, that it elicited peals of laughter from all present, which they vainly attempted to restrain within polite limits; the old gentleman himself at length joining so heartily, that the tears ran down his cheeks. As soon as he could command breath enough, shaking his clenched hand in the face of his young tormentors, he exclaimed—

‘You mischievous gipsies! are you not ashamed to make game of a man old enough to be your grandfather? Don’t exasperate me any more, or I’ll be guilty of breach of promise; and what will you do then? But shall I not have my revenge one day, when you have to stand with demure faces, and promise to love,

honour, and obey them over whom you now tyrannize? And I shall be there to see!’

The weather proved remarkably propitious; and the spectators, who had been invited to meet at the spot selected, about twelve o’clock, arrived, for the most part, before that hour. Shortly after it, the special duties of the day were commenced, by the whole assemblage singing a portion of Psalm ciii.; after which, Mr Stewart offered up a short appropriate prayer, and then, in a few concise sentences, expressed the pleasure it gave him to be present on so happy an occasion. He next introduced,—or rather stated how unnecessary he felt it to introduce,—the venerable friend so well known to them all, who, at the request of the young ladies, had kindly consented to perform the duties of master mason.

On stepping forward to receive the trowel from Walter Gray’s hand, Arnmore looked absolutely bashful. He had attended a county meeting, and at the convivial dinner party that followed, acknowledged, in a few blunt sentences, the honour of having his health drank; but his present situation was altogether new, and in no

small degree trying to him. His kind heart, however, rejoiced in the gaiety and cheerfulness with which he was surrounded; and, having performed the customary ceremonies, he thus addressed the assemblage:—

‘Friends and neighbours,—I have lived among you for the greater part of my life, and therefore need not tell you that I am no public speaker, and would gladly have avoided making the attempt; but my dear young friends having laid their commands on me, I must obey.

‘There have been many changes since my early days, and I frankly confess that I have been slow to believe they were all improvements. In particular, with reference to education, I used to think that the good old parish schools, which had elevated the Scottish peasantry above those of almost any other country, must be sufficient for the wants of the present generation, and that the style of education now given to the humbler classes, would make them discontented, and unfit them for the position in which Providence had placed them; but having witnessed the result of the experiment, this day so happily placed on a more permanent

footing, I have to confess my error; and add my warmest wishes for the future success of Gleneden school.

‘I may not be here to witness it,’ said the old gentleman, and a touch of sadness was in his voice; ‘but as the autumn leaves that now fall around us will soon be succeeded by the bright foliage of spring, so may my place among you be filled by a better and a more useful man.’

‘I conclude by again expressing my heartfelt wishes for the success of Gleneden school; and my earnest hope that the dear young friends with whom the plan originated, and who have so kindly watched over its progress, may have a rich reward in the blessings of a grateful peasantry, rendered more sober, industrious, and happy by their means.’

‘You will, I am sure, gladly join with me in a hearty vote of thanks to the foundress of the school, whose birth-day you will be in no danger of forgetting; and in a fervent wish for long life, health, and happiness to her, and to those associated with her in the good work.’

Often had the neighbouring echoes caught up and repeated the foeman’s war-cry or the

hunter's halloo, but never did a heartier or better-omened cheer reverberate through the glen, than that which arose at Arnmore's signal. Silence being restored, young Maxwell stepped forward, and, gracefully bowing, thus addressed the assemblage :—

‘In our beloved Scotland, my friends, and especially amidst your Highland glens, so famed for hospitality, the place of honour is ever conferred on the stranger; and thus alone can I account for the honour bestowed on me, of returning thanks on behalf of the ladies, for the hearty expression of your good wishes, so enthusiastically bestowed. Allow me to add my own fervent hope, that the Divine blessing may rest on the work so auspiciously commenced. I have spoken of myself as a stranger, yet ventured to address you as friends, because both in the lordly hall and the humble cottage, has my hand been clasped in kindly welcome; and I have found rest and refreshment while wandering amidst scenery of which any country might be proud.

‘I rejoice to see here Christian friends of every rank, as well as of various denomina-

tions. Error as well as truth is being sown broadcast; and well does it become true Christians, forgetting denominational distinctions, to unite together in promoting what our honoured forefathers termed "the godly up-bringing of the young," that in these threatening times they may be prepared for whatever is in store for them.

'I should have liked to say a few friendly words, to the parents and children of the labouring classes; on the great benefits resulting from even a scanty store of knowledge, acquired in youth, and improved by self-culture; often raising our countrymen to the most distinguished positions in our own and other lands. I might speak of James Ferguson, of John Hunter, and many others, who were almost entirely self-educated, but who rose to great eminence, their names still living in the annals of their country; but I have already trespassed on your time, and am too young and inexperienced a man to venture on so wide a field. I therefore content myself with expressing my earnest hope that the parents may be enabled, by example and precept, to give effect to the

instruction of the school-room ; and that the children, by affectionate obedience to their parents, may show that they are acquiring the knowledge which is profitable for time and eternity.

‘ Our valued friend, Arnmore, has spoken of himself as in “ the sere and yellow leaf ; ” but I am sure you will all agree with me in wishing, that he may rather resemble the evergreen pine of his native mountains, which, instead of giving place to the foliage of the coming spring, stands in venerable dignity amidst the saplings that rise up around, and, in their turn, confer shelter and beauty on the parent tree. And as I cannot allow our friend to do good by stealth, even if he should “ blush to find it fame,” I conclude by saying, that, while the grown-up visitors of every rank who have favoured us with their presence on this happy occasion will find refreshments in the neighbouring tent, over which waves the banner of the M’Kenzie’s ; in that distinguished by the time-worn standard of M’Ivor, the children will find all manner of good things provided by Arnmore. Old and young will, therefore, I have no doubt, unite

with me in three hearty cheers for our honoured friend, Ronald M'Ivor of Arnmore.'

Most heartily was the call responded to by loud and repeated cheering; but M'Ivor ventured no other acknowledgment than that of raising his hat and bowing profoundly.

After a brief pause, the children sang the parting hymn, and Mr Stewart pronounced the benediction, when the assemblage broke up, the greater number wending their way to one or other of the tents, while the select party invited to dine at the Lodge proceeded thither.

CHAPTER IX.

IN the ever-varying drama of this change-ful life, joy and sorrow alternate in such rapid succession, that we are made to feel the wisdom of the axiom, 'It remaineth that those who weep be as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not.'

We left the family at Stratheden Lodge, amidst the enjoyments of the social circle, at the close of a day undisturbed by one jarring element, except the intrusive thought, that the day of separation was at hand. But ere a few weeks had passed away, deep sorrow and anxiety had entered the lately happy household.

The departure of the young men had left a great blank; and, to the joy of the cousins, Mrs M'Kenzie determined on spending the latter part of the winter in Edinburgh. But

an arrest was laid on her plans, by a sudden inflammatory attack, similar to that from which she had formerly suffered, but infinitely more severe.

The faithful nurse had been on the eve of returning to Ardinnan, and, with a very heavy heart, was making her little arrangements; but Mrs M'Kenzie's illness commenced, providentially, before Annie had taken her departure; and thus the young ladies, amidst their deep anxiety, had the benefit of her experience and affectionate assistance.

The illness had been so sudden and alarming, that, in the first instance, every thought was concentrated on the means of relieving acute bodily suffering, and averting the danger which seemed to be imminent. But at length the disease gave way under a vigorous system of treatment, although the extreme prostration of strength still caused deep anxiety, and required the most unremitting care. But now a marked change in Mrs M'Kenzie's demeanour became apparent. During former illnesses she had been so irritable and impatient, that great forbearance was required on the part of her at-

tendants. But on this occasion, even when suffering greatly, and unable to express her wants, there was less restlessness than might well have been expected; and, except when an expression of sadness or anxiety stole over her countenance, it evinced patience and placidity.

For a time, all conversation was strictly interdicted, lest it should produce an accession of fever; but at length the doctor pronounced his patient free from danger, and only requiring care and nourishment. Annie, who had been in attendance when Dr Munro pronounced this favourable verdict, hastened to communicate the joyful tidings; and with thankful hearts the young ladies accompanied her to the sick chamber.

Mrs M'Kenzie received them with a sweet smile, and, extending both hands, exclaimed, 'Dear girls, my children both! bless you, bless you for all your unwearied affectionate care! I am weak still, and may not tell you all my full heart would fain utter; but sit by my bedside, and let me look on your dear faces, until sleep steals over me, and I am sure that I shall awake refreshed and strengthened.'

Not trusting themselves to speak, but each imprinting a kiss on her pale cheek, the cousins took their places as desired, and soon had the comfort of seeing the cherished invalid sink into a deep slumber.

For a time they feared to break silence even by the faintest whisper; but at length Ellen said, in a low voice—

‘Louisa, I have *so* longed for one of the confidential talks we used to enjoy, for my mind has been filled with troubled thoughts, and I wanted your sympathy. Now that our anxiety regarding your dear mother is graciously relieved, surely the prevalent feeling is deepest thankfulness? But, while I especially have to acknowledge the long-suffering grace of our heavenly Father, I have a sorrowful confession to make.

‘Nearly fourteen months have passed away, since, with a desolate heart, I left the home of my childhood; and could I then have been assured that at Stratheden I should find a home, a mother, a sister, and that my beloved brother should be all my fondest hopes could desire, a brother in the Lord as well as in the closest

earthly ties, should I not have felt that the joy and gratitude would be almost more than my heart could contain? Yet, when Maxwell and Walter left us, while such deep cause for gratitude still remained, I gave way to a sorrowful, nay, I fear a listless, repining spirit, that must have been most offensive to God; but judgment and mercy have united in bringing me back to the right way. Do I err, darling, in suspecting that your experience has been somewhat similar?’

‘As face answereth to face in a glass, dearest Ellen,’ said Louisa, ‘has my experience answered to yours. I have never known the desolating trial from which you have suffered. Yet, surrounded by every comfort, and even luxury, my heart was a stranger to true happiness—ever “seeking rest, and finding none”—until, by your agency, I was introduced into a new and brighter world, and woke up to the consciousness of talents and responsibilities, which gave an aim and an enjoyment to life, of which I had never before conceived; and it seemed impossible that I should ever return to the listless, unprofitable existence of former days.

Yet thus too nearly it has been. A stranger might not have discovered the change, because I endeavoured to go through the accustomed round of duty; but affection is quick-sighted, and you, Ellen, doubtless discerned that my heart was not in it; nay, that, in the spirit of Jonah, I almost fancied I did "well to be angry," because a period of unwonted happiness had passed away like a dream. In my dear mother's alarming illness, the deserved rod was made distinctly visible; but in rich mercy it has only been suspended over me, and I trust its warning voice has not been unheeded. O, Ellen, in theory and aim, we give the subordinate place to earthly affections and enjoyments; but when trial and disappointment are sent, even although it be but "light affliction," how far are we from realizing the Apostle's experience, "None of these things move me!"

'So He giveth His beloved sleep,' whispered Ellen, gazing fondly on the placid countenance of her aunt, whose soft regular breathing gave evidence that the disease had indeed been subdued. 'You cannot think, Louisa, how dear she has become to me:

it almost seems as if my own precious mother had been restored ; and even the personal resemblance that drew my heart towards her at first sight appears more striking, since her illness.'

'My beloved mother is indeed changed,' replied Louisa ; 'and with what shame do I look back on my former quick perception of the little natural defects in her character, which circumstances had tended to foster, but which, I am sure, are among the things that have passed away : and how happy we shall all be, when, by Divine mercy, she is restored to health !'

'Even should the Edinburgh scheme be abandoned ?' said Ellen with an arch smile.

'Yes, naughty one, even in that sad alternative,' responded Louisa, with heightened colour, 'for my heart is so full of thankfulness, that the mountains will no longer look bleak, even in their wintry covering ; and, in your own language, I can leave the future with Him who has so graciously cared for the past.'

After a peaceful slumber of two hours' duration, which the cousins beguiled in pleasant and profitable conversation, Mrs M'Kenzie

awoke refreshed, although still feeble. And Annie, whose affectionate forethought ever anticipated the invalid's slightest want, appeared in answer to the bell, bearing a tray, on which were neatly arranged such articles of light nourishment and cooling fruits as might tempt the returning appetite, not forgetting a more substantial luncheon for the young ladies.

With folded hands and upward look the invalid silently returned thanks for the needed refreshment; and Annie's heart swelled with grateful emotion at the well-deserved tribute of praise bestowed on her culinary skill. Indeed, to Ellen's infinite delight and the gratification of the whole household, there seemed to be a tacit understanding that Annie was not to return to Ardinnan, but be retained as a humble friend rather than a domestic,—one whom no kindness or familiarity could spoil, because she had learned of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, to give honour where honour is due, and receive kindness as undeserved favour, bestowed by His gracious hand. Thus the regard and attention, which nothing in her manner de-

manded, was freely bestowed by all who had learned to estimate her worth.

Refreshed and strengthened by the nourishment, which she could now take with relish, Mrs M'Kenzie turned to Annie, and, with a pleasant smile, said—

‘You have been quite a tyrant, nurse; but I must have liberty of speech now, and those dear girls will be responsible for my keeping within bounds.’

With a quiet smile and shake of the head Annie left the room; when, beckoning the cousins to approach nearer, the invalid thus addressed them:—

‘My darling nurses, to whose patient, unwearied kindness I owe so much, having, I trust, sincerely returned thanks to Him who has bestowed such rich, such undeserved mercy, let me with a full heart bless you for all the tender care that, joined to the ceaseless watching of that faithful creature, has, under God, been the means of detaining me among you. I trust that by newness of life I may, as grace shall enable me, “redeem the time,” so much of which has been wasted; but I cannot feel happy until

I have expressed the deep regret that much in the past has caused me with reference to you both—to you especially, my Louisa. Alas! how have I discharged a mother's duty, either by precept or example; nay, when in our sweet Ellen the much-needed friend was graciously sent, did I not for many a day thwart her affectionate efforts for our good to the full extent of my power?—stubborn nature never being thoroughly subdued until the hand of the Lord was laid upon me. Louisa, my child, your mother asks your forgiveness.'

'Mother! dearest mother!' said the weeping Louisa, fondly embracing her, 'you ever sought my happiness, even before either of us knew in what the highest happiness consists, and watched over me with all a mother's love. It is I who have deepest cause of contrition for unnumbered failures in duty as a daughter; but let us forget the past, except in so far as it gives occasion for grateful praise, and seek grace to guide us in all wisdom and love for the future.'

'And now, my Ellen,' said Mrs M'Kenzie, extending her hand, 'what shall I say to you? I am but a feeble learner yet, dear girl, and

almost tremble at the thought of returning to a world which, although it never gave solid happiness, was so lately all in all to me. Dear as you now are, I did not at first love, because I did not understand you. My plans for Lonisa seemed to be disappointed, and her affections absorbed, by a youthful stranger, whose power I could not comprehend, even when it began to be exerted over myself. And not without an obstinate struggle did I yield to the conviction that my former views of duty had been marked by systematic error, and, as a natural result, my life by practical inutility. Nay, even now the former train of thought sometimes returns so vividly, that I am led to question whether the apparent change of heart is real, or merely resulting from the influences by which I am surrounded.

‘Yet, on this bed of suffering, my mind has been very deeply exercised, thoughts of the past and future being often alike appalling; and surely the “peace in believing” which I now for the most part enjoy must come from Him who has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus as “the God of peace.” But, O! my beloved children,

let your hearts bless the Lord, that in early youth you have been made to know "the way of life," and have thus escaped many of the regrets and hindrances that beset the path of those whose best days have been given to the world.'

To the cousins, this scene was extremely painful, and fearing that the protracted excitement might be exhausting to Mrs M'Kenzie in her still delicate state, they thought it time to retire. Resigning their place to Annie, with injunctions to read a little, if required, but not suffer her charge to enter into conversation, they left the room to prepare for a walk into the village, which had not been visited for a considerable time, but whither they were now induced to go by a report that their little favourite, Jeannie M'Kinlay, was rather seriously ill, and had expressed an anxious wish to see them.

Engrossed by their own domestic anxieties, the young ladies had not been made aware that a severe cold, from which Jeannie had suffered shortly after the gala day, and which, as 'only a cauld,' had given Mrs M'Kinlay no alarm, had speedily issued in a low intermittent fever,

followed by all the distressing symptoms of rapid consumption. It was, therefore, with deep grief, not unmingled with self-reproach, that the cousins entered the little apartment where Jeannie lay, and beheld the change which a short period of suffering had made on the sweet countenance of their little favourite. Beautiful she still was, more dazzlingly so than when health glowed on her cheek and sparkled in her eye; but the fire of hectic fever was manifestly drinking up her young life, and as with a sweet smile she held out her emaciated hand, they could only take it in silence, and endeavour to repress the emotion that might be too agitating to the poor sufferer, herself deeply moved.

Ellen was the first to regain self-possession, and bending over the lowly couch, she whispered words of tenderness and sympathy.

‘I’ve wearied sair to see you baith,’ said the dear girl, ‘and sometimes thocht that puir Jeannie would be awa’ afore ye cam’; but I couldna ask ye to leave the leddie in her distress. Dinna greet,’ she added, looking on the cousins with fond affection. ‘I’ll never see the bonnie glen again, and I am wae to leave the

frien's that have been sae kind to me; but I am gaun to HIM that's been kinder than a'.'

Here the poor mother's sobs and loud lamentations could no longer be repressed, and, clasping her hands, she exclaimed—

'My bairn! my dear bairn! I canna part wi you! I've been a sinfu', careless mother; but, oh! my punishment's greater than I can bear.'

Knowing Mrs M'Kinlay's affectionate, impulsive nature, and sympathizing with her deep distress, the visitors strove to soothe and console her; but Jeannie, whose character seemed at once to have emerged from childhood, was her most effectual comforter.

'Dear mammy,' she said, 'it's no because the Lord's angry wi' you that He's takin' me to Himself; it's because He wants you to mind that this is no your hame. I'm but a young, senseless lassie, an' dinna like to speak sae to you, but love wunna let me be silent.'

'You and my faither maun try to follow me, and bring Rory an' Norman wi' you. My wee sister is there already; and, oh! it seems as if I couldna be happy even wi' Jesus if ane o' you were wantin'.'

‘I’ll try, my bairn, I’ll try,’ sobbed the poor mother; ‘but, oh! Jeannie woman, my heart’s a’maist burstin’.’

The remarkable development of their young friend’s character was as unexpected as consolatory to the young ladies. They knew that she had been an object of special interest to Miss Graham, and had marked the striking improvement in her deportment, as well as her rapid progress in education; but the dear child’s native diffidence had prevented their discerning the still more rapid advance she was making in the highest knowledge—that which can be clearly revealed to the little child, and yet forms the brightest glory of manhood.

Fearing the injurious effect of excitement upon the youthful sufferer, and to compose the feelings of all present, Ellen opened the little prize Bible that lay on Jeannie’s pillow, and, in a subdued voice, began reading the sweet and solemn words which, in ages gone by, have shed a healing balm on so many wounded spirits, and will continue to minister consolation until the last redeemed soul shall have exchanged faith for vision:—

‘Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in Me.

‘In My Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

‘And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.’

The reader’s voice faltered, and, closing the Book, she hid her face in Jeannie’s pillow, and burst into tears.

The Christian religion is the only true leveller of those artificial distinctions which too widely separate the different grades of society, and acts not by degrading the higher classes and unduly exalting the lower, but by silently diffusing that leaven which makes them one in Christ Jesus. The Christian poor will still give honour to whom honour is due, and obey those whom the arrangements of God’s providence have set over them ; but if, at the same time, they are brethren and sisters in Christ, what a sweetness does the relation acquire !—elevating the one class, and making the other feel that there is no condescension in holding affectionate intercourse with

those whom God has distinguished by the indwelling of His Spirit.

Thus it was that in the little sick-chamber all earthly distinctions were forgotten ; fading as they shall do in the light of eternity.

Throwing her wasted arm around her friend's neck, and resting her cheek on her shoulder, Jeannie murmured words of love and consolation.

‘ Dear leddie, dinna greet for me ; I have little pain now, and soon I will be in the land where there is neither sickness nor sorrow, and where never mair will I vex His Spirit that laid down His life for me. You have been kind kind to me—and so has Miss M’Kenzie; and I love you—I love you baith. May He that has had mercy on me, reward and bless you ! My mither will miss her Jeannie ; but, dear leddies, you will speak comfort to her heart, an’ lead her to Him that can comfort them that mourn. An’ Miss Graham will learn Rory an’ Norman, as she learnt me, to honour and obey father and mother ; an’ to love the heavenly Father that sent His Son to save sinners. But I’m weary, weary,’ said the little sufferer, ‘ an’ canna speak ony mair the noo.’

‘All shall be as you wish, darling,’ said Louisa, affectionately embracing her ; and not trusting themselves to allude further to her sinking health, the cousins took their leave, promising to return ere long.

CHAPTER X.

IN the enjoyment of that unclouded peace which so greatly contributes to the restoration of health, Mrs M'Kenzie's convalescence rapidly advanced, affording the young ladies the opportunity of spending much time with their sweet little protégée, to whom they frequently carried little delicacies, and messages of love and consolation from her who would gladly have joined them in their visits. Miss Graham, too, was a frequent and much prized visitor at the cottage : no longer as the faithful instructress, but reverently taking her place in that higher school, where her favourite pupil had made such marvellous progress ; and feeling it a precious privilege, not only to smooth the pillow of the youthful sufferer, but to strengthen her own faith by beholding the power of sustaining grace.

The snow still lingered on the mountain-tops

and in the deep valleys, although in the sheltered garden at Stratheden the earlier spring flowers—the snowdrop, the hepatica, and the crocus—began to peep timidly forth; but for one lovely Flower there was to be no earthly spring-time: the bud of promise was not to exhale its fragrance in this ungenial clime, but to bloom for ever in that better land,

‘ Where everlasting summer reigns,
And never-withering flowers.’

One bright afternoon the three friends met at Mrs M‘Kinlay’s cottage: the thought was unspoken, but all felt that never again would they listen to the voice of her who had been the object of such affectionate solicitude, and had become so exceedingly dear to them all.

The poor mother, worn with watching, and her impetuous grief hushed into a silent but deeper anguish, raised her sorrowful face for a moment, but did not venture to speak; while the father, having silently motioned the ladies to seats, turned away to conceal the tears that streamed down his sun-burnt cheek. The younger children, awe-stricken in the presence of the king of terrors, stood beside their mother, gazing

fixedly on the sunken countenance of their sister, whose deepening slumber seemed to indicate that life was ebbing, and that thus she would pass gently away, without again holding intercourse with those who so fondly loved her.

But ere long a slight restlessness interrupted the deep respiration, and, languidly opening her eyes, Jeannie beheld all she most tenderly loved surrounding her lowly bed.

A sweet smile irradiated her face; and, extending her arms as if she would fain enfold them all in one fond embrace, the dying girl's feeble voice was once more heard, murmuring words of peace and love—

‘Dear friends, I thocht I would never see you mair until we meet afore the Throne; but He is rich in mercy—rich in mercy! Puir Jeannie's near hame, an' would be wae to leave ye a' but for the thocht that soon soon we'll meet again!’

Casting an affectionate look on her parents, she then said—

‘You'll be kind to them, dear leddies, when I'm awa', an' no let them forget Him that has shown such kindness to me, a puir sinfu' lassie!’

Fervently was the promise given; and each

in succession, kissing Jeannie's pale cheek, whispered some word of hope and consolation, commending her, with full hearts, to Him whom she had found to be indeed 'rich in mercy.'

The members of the family now drew near to exchange the last fond embrace, and listen to such brief parting words as the dear girl's rapidly failing strength would permit. To her mother she said—

'Dear mammy, you'll come? The Master calls; and, oh! He'll give you strength and consolation—

' "Peace that will comfort you through life,
And save your soul in death." '

With clasped hands and uplifted eyes she then exclaimed—

'I canna see you now; but, oh! there's no darkness, no pain! Sing to me; O sing—

' "The hour of my departure's come,
I hear the voice that calls me home." '

All present were too deeply affected to comply with Jeannie's request; but Ellen, bending over her, softly whispered those lines, which have found a response in so many Christian hearts when drawing near the gates of the Eternal

City. But exhausted nature again gave way, and the dying girl sank into a restless slumber.

All stood for some time in silence around the bed; but ere long it became evident that the young life was rapidly ebbing, leaving little hope that consciousness would ever return; and, feeling that their protracted absence might be causing uneasiness to Mrs M'Kenzie, the cousins took an affectionate leave of the afflicted parents, and spoke a few soothing words to the children, leaving in the comfortable assurance that, Miss Graham having kindly promised to remain until all was over, nothing would be wanting that Christian kindness or experience could suggest.

Early on the following morning Roderick came to Stratheden, bringing, with a heavy heart, the expected tidings that his sister had breathed her last late on the previous evening, consciousness never having returned.

Although the sad event had been expected for some time, there was sincere mourning at the Lodge. Jeannie had become exceedingly dear to the cousins, and they had hoped that her lovely example might have been greatly blessed to the other children; but He who 'doeth all

things well' had arranged otherwise; and they were at length enabled to feel that He might make the death of the young disciple the means of diffusing a more quickening influence than her life could have accomplished. Meanwhile it was sweet to feel assured that the first summoned away from the little flock, in which they had taken so warm an interest, was indeed a lamb of the fold, and had become such through the agency of the village school.

Most deeply could Mrs M'Kenzie now sympathize in all the joys and sorrows connected with the labour of love in the village; and as she thought of the Lord's gracious dealings with herself, the overflowings of a grateful heart could not but lead to the question, ever the result of a saving change—

'What shall I render to the Lord
For all His gifts to me?'

And as such a question, sincerely asked, must ever issue in practical results, although she could not as yet take a personal share in works of benevolence, she entered with warm interest into the consultations held by the cousins, and gave pecuniary aid when required.

But it is time we should return to Walter Gray, who, after fulfilling his engagement to be present on the auspicious occasion of his friend's majority, had returned to Edinburgh, and entered on his last term at the university. At Maxton Hall he had met with the warmest possible reception, and witnessed the pleasant spectacle of a wealthy and liberal landlord holding friendly intercourse with an attached and prosperous tenantry, while the affectionate respect with which they regarded the young master was quite touching.

Envy and discontent no longer rankling in Walter's bosom, he could heartily rejoice in his friend's splendid prospects, and return to the battle of life in a healthful, trustful spirit, well aware that there were numerous difficulties to be overcome, but knowing the source whence strength and courage for the conflict might be drawn, and assured that, rugged although his path might seem, it was 'a right way,' set before him by infinite wisdom and love.

The powerful intellect which enabled him to attain the highest academic honours no longer inspired a feeling of haughty superiority, but,

received as a Divine gift, tended to deepen his faith; while a sense of past unprofitableness, with reference to the highest ends of existence, quickened his energies, and added preciousness to his brief periods of leisure.

Mrs M'Kenzie had gained so much strength, that a change to the Lowlands was now considered not only safe, but advisable: and Walter gladly set forth in quest of a sheltered residence in the southern suburbs of Edinburgh, where, having found one exactly to his taste, it was visited again and again, that he might make sure of every arrangement being such as would contribute to the comfort of the anxiously expected tenants.

Arnmore greatly felt the temporary breaking-up of a household where, for so many years, he had been a daily visitor; and alleging that he had taken a longing to visit Edinburgh, which he had not seen for many years, and, moreover, that it was quite improper that three ladies, and one of them an invalid, should travel so great a distance attended only by servants, he determined on escorting them, and paying a long-promised visit as he returned home. This

arrangement was most agreeable to the ladies, as it relieved them of the cares attendant on travelling, ensured pleasant society, and made the cousins less uneasy at the thought of taking a long journey in their beloved relative's still delicate state.

Mrs M'Kenzie felt less fatigued by her journey than had been anticipated; and Walter having escorted the party to their pleasant quarters, with which they were quite charmed, he gladly accepted his aunt's invitation to take up his abode at Newington so soon as his books, etc., could be removed, which he mentally promised should be on the following day.

The joy arising from the intercourse of attached relatives, even after a brief separation, is, like the heart's anguish, a thing with which the stranger cannot intermeddle; and sensible of this, M'Ivor withstood Mrs M'Kenzie's kind invitation, and, after the first bright evening spent with the united family, took up his quarters with an old friend, residing in the west end of the city, although a part of every day was still spent at Newington, where he was ever a welcome guest. The evening hours were for

some time devoted to the enjoyments of the home circle, and midnight would often surprise the family group amidst the most delightful interchange of thought; while for each swiftly returning Saturday (Walter's only leisure-day) was usually planned some pleasant excursion in a neighbourhood rich in beautiful scenery to an extent which few cities can boast.

Nor was a little congenial society wanting. Mrs M'Kenzie had several friends in Edinburgh, and Walter had made the acquaintance of a few families of cultivated mind and sound religious principle, who gladly availed themselves of his permission to visit the strangers, with whom they were soon upon intimate terms. It was Ellen's first visit to the Scottish metropolis; and those familiar with its numerous points of attraction had great pleasure in exhibiting their native city to one who could so well appreciate its historic interest and romantic beauty.

It was therefore a period of the highest enjoyment to all, not excepting the faithful Annie M'Donald, who, surrounded by all she most fondly loved, and privileged in the ministrations of an earnest and gifted pastor, never

once complained that the 'grand town' was 'eerie.'

Mrs M'Kenzie had purposed returning to Stratheden early in June; but very little persuasion was required to induce an alteration of plan, to the effect that, as Walter was to receive his degree on the first of August, they should remain in town until after that auspicious day, and be the first to congratulate him on his new honours,—the rather, that they had the prospect of at least a year's separation, as the graduate, being too young to settle in practice, had accepted the situation of assistant-surgeon on board an East Indiaman, obtained for him by an early friend of his father's; and would ere long be summoned to join his ship.

How many young hearts have beat high with hope and joy on the memorable first of August, as, issuing from the College gates, they received the congratulations of relatives or friends, and with lightened spirits entered on a new era in life, to many not unmixed with deepest anxiety; yet, the first great undertaking having been brought to a happy issue, there seems a bright earnest of future success.

Walter, as on former competitions, took the highest place among the successful candidates; and if a tear started to Ellen's eye, at the remembrance of those who would have shared so amply in her joy, it was speedily chased away by the consoling thought, that they should all one day rejoice together over the consummation of infinitely higher hopes.

We dwell not on the 'lingering, longing,' but happily not 'last farewell;' neither do we purpose following Walter, now Dr Gray, on his voyage to the far distant East, or even returning with the Stratheden family to their Highland home, where, amidst plans of usefulness, varied by innocent recreations and the sweets of social intercourse, the twelve months of separation glided on peacefully, if somewhat lingeringly, and unmarked by any striking incident.

Before saying 'adieu,' however, to the friends whose fortunes we have so long followed, we must, in a few brief sentences, narrate how it now fares with each of them.

Nine years have passed away, and it may be asked, Were Mrs M'Kenzie's early plans realized? Alas! as commonly happens in such cases, they

never once entered the minds of the parties most nearly concerned; yet, amidst good-humoured confessions of her former schemes, the worthy matron frankly acknowledges that all things have been arranged in love as well as in wisdom.

Ellen Gray, as the beloved and honoured wife of Francis Maxwell, fills the place designed for her cousin; and, uninjured by affluence and rank, unites her gentle influence with that of her husband in promoting the happiness of all within her reach.

About the time when Dr Gray's return was expected, the younger Maxwell persuaded his father to accompany him on a Highland tour, accepting at the same time a warm invitation to join the family circle at Stratheden, and meet his friend.

Mr Maxwell greatly enjoyed, and was easily persuaded to prolong, his visit at the Lodge, being quite charmed with the whole family; but Ellen soon won from him a regard almost paternal, which on her side was reciprocated by the warmest esteem and the truest respect. There was the most entire confidence between the father and son: hence Mr Maxwell was no

stranger to the sentiments which Francis had long cherished towards the sister of his friend; and now Ellen felt that from the depth of her heart she could respond to these sentiments, although hitherto she had scarcely suspected their existence, either in her own case or Maxwell's, having fancied that her brother formed the chief tie to the intimacy. She felt the prospect of leaving relatives so fondly beloved; but the regret was softened by the old gentleman's assurance that she should be to him as a daughter.

And what of our friend Louisa? We recognise her in the lively but gentle and still youthful-looking matron, who presides so gracefully over the household of an eminent medical practitioner, whose high attainments, united to his wife's fortune, enabled him, early in life, to take a distinguished place among his professional brethren. Need we name Walter Gray?

On the auspicious day that united the cousins to the men of their early choice, with no common prospect of happiness, Arnmere was not only 'there to see,' but, with a full heart, gave Louisa to her husband; while the elder Maxwell, by his own express desire, performed

the paternal duty towards Ellen. Several years ago he was summoned away, after a short severe illness, endured with Christian fortitude, during which he felt the rich consolation of a daughter's kind offices, united to those of a most affectionate son.

Shortly after her daughter's marriage, feeling Stratheden very desolate, Mrs M'Kenzie succeeded in obtaining a tenant, who, she felt assured, would carry on the plans of usefulness her family had commenced; and bidding a thoughtful adieu to the scene of so many important changes, she removed her household to Edinburgh, where, living in the immediate neighbourhood of Dr Gray's residence, she finds no lack of interesting employment, and greatly enjoys the society and privileges of the Scottish metropolis.

The faithful Annie M'Donald still lives, as much valued, although not quite so active, as when we first made her acquaintance. Her principal home is at Maxton Hall, where, from the heads of the household down to the little prattlers in the nursery, all regard her with affection; but a portion of every year is spent

at the houses of Mrs M'Kenzie and Dr Gray, where she is ever a welcome guest, usually returning to Roxburghshire with the Maxwells, who pay at least an annual visit to Edinburgh.

One forenoon, returning from his first round of visits, the Doctor, hearing merry voices from the nursery, opened the door and looked in, when he saw Annie in the midst of a happy little group, to whom she was engaged in 'telling stories.'

'Well, my poor nursey,' he archly inquired, 'are you still without a hame?'

'Ah! Doctor,' she replied, 'you bring my sins to remembrance, and the Lord's undeserved mercies. Weel do you ken I have *three* hames, where I'm aye sure of a kindly welcome.' Then, lowering her voice, she reverently added, 'And, blessed be His name, the hope of dwellin' for ever in a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!'

THE END.







